



2018 OECD GLOBAL **ANTI-CORRUPTION & INTEGRITY FORUM**

Corruption, Gender and Migration

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Abstract

This paper investigates migrants' gendered experiences of corruption on route to Europe by analysing how corruption can lead to migration and how experiences of corruption during the migration process differ for men and women. The main population of interest are men and women who migrated to Europe using the central Mediterranean route, including both forced and irregular migrants. Research on migration and corruption is still in its infancy and this paper adds to the literature on the migration-corruption nexus in two main ways. First, it furthers the knowledge of gendered *experiences* during migration, which are still understudied, by investigating in a comprehensive manner how women and men are affected by different forms of corruption throughout the migration process. In doing so, it focuses especially on experiences made while leaving the country of origin as well as on experiences made during transit. Second, it advances the small body of literature discussing gendered *forms of corruption*, such as sextortion, with a specific focus on the role of underlying gender norms such as patriarchy. This study is based on qualitative research, including desk research and 67 semi-structured interviews with experts and male and female migrants, which were conducted between November 2016 and May 2017.

Keywords: migration, corruption, sextortion, gender, trafficking, smuggling

The opinions expressed and arguments employed herein are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the OECD or of its member countries.

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This paper was submitted as part of a competitive call for papers on integrity, anti-corruption and inclusive growth in the context of the 2018 OECD Global Anti-Corruption & Integrity Forum.

1. Introduction¹

The complex relationship between migration and corruption has started to receive increased attention by scholars and policy-makers (Carling *et al.* 2015). While initial research focused mostly on corruption as a facilitator of migration (e.g. Bales 2007; Richards 2004; UNODC 2013) an increasing body of literature also explores the role of corruption as a push factor for migration (e.g. Ariu and Squicciarini 2013; Dimant *et al.* 2015; Merkle *et al.* 2017b) and the impact of migration on corruption in the country of origin (e.g. Batista and Vicente 2010; Beine and Sekkat 2014). Yet, the research on this multifaceted relationship is still lacking nuance. One major element that is missing is the analysis on how the link between corruption and migration is gendered². Slightly less than half of international migrants worldwide are female (UN DESA 2017) and the gendered experiences of migration have received increasing attention among scholars and policy makers (for an overview see Fleury 2016). At the same time, research also indicated that corruption experience differ for men and women (e.g. Boehm and Sierra 2015). For this reason, experiences of corruption during the migration process are expected to vary for male and female migrants, as well as different migrant groups (e.g. forced and voluntary, regular and irregular migrants). Therefore, this paper investigates the gendered experiences of corruption of irregular and forced migrants on route to Europe. We analyse both the gendered role of corruption as a driver of migration as well as the gendered corruption experiences during the journey. The research focuses on the experiences of men and women migrating to Europe via the Central Mediterranean Route.

This paper adds to the newly developing literature on the migration-corruption nexus in two ways. First, it furthers the knowledge of gendered *experiences* during migration, which are still understudied by investigating for the first time in a comprehensive manner how women and men are affected by different forms of corruption throughout their migration journey. In doing so, it focuses especially on experiences made while leaving the country of origin as well as on experiences made during transit. Second, it advances the small body of literature discussing gendered *forms of corruption*, such as sextortion, with a specific focus on the role of underlying gender norms such as patriarchy.

2. Methodology and data

Previous studies have shown that academic literature on the migration-corruption nexus is scarce (see for instance Merkle *et al.* 2017b), and these usually do not apply a gender perspective. This study is

¹This paper is in part based on two research projects for the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Entwicklungszusammenarbeit (GIZ): Merkle, Reinold, Siegel (2017b; 2017a).

² For this purpose, gender is defined as “social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men or girls and boys. As opposed to sex, which refers to a biological condition, these attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed” (UN WOMEN Training Center 2017)

therefore largely exploratory in nature and follows a qualitative research approach. It is based on desk research and 67 semi-structured interviews with experts and male and female migrants, which were conducted between November 2016 and May 2017. Interview guides were developed based on a review of key academic literature on migration, corruption and gender. Two rounds of interviews with experts were conducted. The first round (n=24) focused on the role of corruption as a push factor for migration, while the second round (n=43) focused on gendered experiences of corruption during the migration process. Experts interviewed included policy makers, representatives of local, national and supranational government organisations, international organisations, non-governmental organisations, practitioners in the field of migration, corruption and/or gender and academia. Interviews with experts were conducted in person or through skype or telephone depending on constraints of time and distance. All interviews have been anonymized to ensure the anonymity of those who asked for it. References to interviews throughout the paper have been randomly assigned.

Where possible both female and male migrants were interviewed to gain first-hand knowledge about gendered corruption experiences during the migration process.³ Between March and May 2017, 8 migrants were interviewed. They were invited to participate in the research with the help of stakeholders and practitioners. Due to the sensitivity of the topic, all migrant interviews were anonymised and conducted in person.

3. Gendered experiences of corruption during migration

The following sections analyse the experiences of corruption throughout the journey, separating the migration journey into country of origin, transit (and arrival). It is important to remember that the separation between origin and transit countries is not always clear cut as “all countries can be categorized as either. In the case of Nigeria, it’s an origin country for trafficking to Europe but a destination country for many West Africans” (Expert Interview 16). While keeping this in mind, it is still helpful to use these broad distinctions for the purpose of the analysis because migrants’ experiences differ significantly, once they have left their country of origin. Therefore, distinguishing between origin and transit countries contributes to a better understanding of migrants’ experiences during different stages of the migration process. The analysis for this paper is limited to the country of origin and transit for mainly two reasons. For one, all interviewees agreed that most corrupt encounters occurred during these two stages. For another, while some hints were given by the interviewed migrants of corruption in the destination countries, often these seem to have been of different nature and based on a general mistrust in and fear of public officials, especially the police, rather than actual corrupt experiences. Hence, the experiences of corruption upon arrival should be further researched at a later point.

³ The research has been examined and approved by Maastricht University’s Ethical Review Committee Inner City Faculties (ERCIC).

In the context of the recently perceived upsurge in irregular⁴ and forced⁵ migration to Europe, human smuggling and human trafficking have come to the forefront of discussions. While both phenomena heavily rely on systematic corruption (Shelley 2014), it is crucial to distinguish between them as they are fundamentally different. Human smuggling refers to “the procurement [...] of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident” (Art. 3(a), UN Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, 2000). As such the practice usually happens with the consent of the migrant and does not involve exploitative or violent measures. In contrast, human trafficking refers to “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation” (Art. 3(a), UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, 2000). In some cases, the lines between smuggling and trafficking can be blurred. For the analysis, it is important to note that the status of migrants can change throughout their journey. As one expert noted: “Females can find themselves in transit locations being absorbed in trafficking networks, whereas they were just on an irregular migration pathway, so recruitment can happen in transit.” (Expert Interview 29).

3.1. Experiences of corruption in the country of origin

This section examines corruption experiences of (potential) migrants, both male and female, in the country of origin and their effects. Corruption can directly and indirectly affect individuals. An example of a direct effect is when individuals participate in corrupt acts, for example paying a bribe to access certain services. In contrast, indirect effects refer to cases where individuals are affected by the corrupt acts of others (Boehm and Sierra 2015). Examples for indirect effects are the embezzlement of development aid that was supposed to benefit a certain population and taxpayers’ money flowing into grand corruption.

In the context of the origin country, it is important to distinguish between three different kinds of direct and indirect effects: On the one hand, experiences of corruption in the country of origin can lead to migration aspirations. On the other hand, corruption in the home country can impede or facilitate migration.

⁴ Irregular migration – also known as undocumented or unauthorized migration – refers to mobility outside countries’ rules and regulations and can come in various forms such as entering a country without authorization or required travel documents or staying in a country after visa or travel documents have expired (IOM 2011).

⁵ Forced migration, in contrast to voluntary migration, is defined as a “movement in which an element of coercion exists, including threats to life and livelihoods, whether arising from natural or man-made causes” (IOM 2011). Yet, the distinction between forced and voluntary migration is not always clear-cut.

For one, corruption can directly and indirectly shape migration aspirations in the country of origin. Interviewees agree that high levels of corruption within a country can affect (democratic) institutions and social protection systems leading to unequal opportunities for citizens. Resulting imbalances in terms of access to power and resources can encourage individuals especially of disadvantaged populations to seek opportunities abroad (Barbieri and Carr 2005 and Expert Interviews 29, 4). Merkle, Reinold and Siegel (2017b) developed a theoretical framework explaining the various ways in which different forms of corruption can directly and indirectly impair the seven dimensions of human security⁶ and consequently lead to migration intentions (see Appendix 1).

Corruption can impede (regular) migration in and from the country of origin. High levels of corruption in countries of origin can increase the costs of migration and consequently make (regular) migration less affordable, for instance when high bribes are required to obtain regular travel documents. This can ultimately lead to involuntary immobility. This concept refers to a situation in which an individual wants to migrate but is not able to do so (Carling 2002). In some countries, women can be disproportionately affected by involuntary immobility due to patriarchal structures. Where the access of women and girls to economic and social capital is restricted, or women are not allowed to travel or leave the country without the consent of a male relative or household member, their options for migration are limited.

For another, corruption can enable regular and irregular migration in and from the country of origin. In the context of regular migration, corruption can be a way to speed up administrative processes, for instance, when issuing travel documents. Where options for regular migration are limited, corruption is crucial in facilitating irregular migration such as obtaining fake travel documents (through middlemen) (OECD 2015 and Expert Interviews 11,35,21,26,41) and bribing border officials when leaving the country (OECD, 2015). In addition, migrants oftentimes need the help of smugglers who know the route out of the country and smuggling is facilitated through corruption (Expert Interviews 11; 35). Corruption can enable female migration in and from countries where it is prohibited and thereby help to overcome involuntary immobility (Fleury 2016; Ferrant and Tuccio 2015) . In many prominent countries of origin, women seem to be more dependent on middlemen such as smuggling networks due to their disadvantaged position in societies limiting their access to information, financial and social capital. This dependency increases their risk of exploitation and vulnerability to becoming victims of human trafficking (Gosh 2009; Fleury 2016; Kawar 2016). Hence, women's vulnerability to corruption and associated risks like becoming victims of trafficking can be attributed to patriarchal structures in their home countries which assign different roles to men and women.

⁶ The seven dimensions of human security include economic security, personal security, political security, community security, health security, food security and environment security (UNDP 1994).

Corruption does not only enable international migration, but can also facilitate internal migration in countries with high levels of corruption. It has been reported that internally displaced persons (IDPs) and families in Syria rely on smuggling networks for their own protection and access to basic goods and services. In this context, IDPs are vulnerable to typical forms of corruption like bribery and extortion as well as atypical forms of corruption such as sextortion, forced marriages and boys having to join armed groups (Expert Interview 31).

3.2. Experiences of corruption during transit

Once migrants leave their countries of origin with or without corruption, transit for most of them is filled with corrupt encounters. For the purpose of this article, transit migration is defined as a situation between emigration and settlement. It is assumed that migrants do not have the intention to remain living in transit countries. Interviewees agree that migrants experience the most intense forms of corruption in transit.

[Transit often is] a period where opportunist use corruption, where you have corrupt officials, corrupt systems. They see opportunities in migrating populations, and they're quick to jump and exploit those opportunities whereas perhaps in the source countries it's more deliberate, more planned, more structured. During transit it's more opportunistic perhaps, particularly with migration flows that are going now. (Expert Interview 36)

The question of why migrants are more vulnerable to corruption during transit is often simply a case of lack of connections and the necessity to use corrupt exchanges for things that would usually be achieved by a social network. Hence, the idea of vulnerability is a difficult concept which covers many different areas and combines a lot of factors; "It can be about a lack of networks and a lack of social capital and of course the more you move from your country of origin, along that transit route to your destination country, the further and further you move away from your social network, from family, from things you're familiar from, you become by virtue of being a stranger, you become vulnerable." (Expert Interview 36)

Corruption can enable migration during transit. Migrants' experiences of corruption during transit are manifold and can occur at any stage. Interviews with migrants and experts show that bribes are expected, for instance, for sharing information with migrants, for letting migrants continue their journey, for officials to ignore fake travel documents and to prevent denunciation (OECD 2015). This applies to transit countries in various parts of the world including West African countries, Turkey, Bulgaria and Mexico to name only a few examples. Migrants are especially vulnerable to corruption and abuse during transit since they depend on middlemen like smugglers. Migrants, deprived of legal migration channels to get out of Turkey for example "need to contact smugglers and sometimes they require having sex with one of the daughters in order to agree to facilitate the migration. It can also happen on route. They already started travelling and the smuggler says that in order to continue then

we require sexual services affecting both women and children“ (Expert Interview 24). Crossing the Sahara Desert without smugglers is also a task that the interviewees determined impossible. The harsh environmental conditions and the presence of bandits in the region would almost certainly lead to death (Expert Interviews 11; 6). One Nigerian migrant described her encounter with these bandits: “They [the armed groups say] come, if you don’t have sex with me I will kill you, with a gun or a knife, all those things. So many girls were afraid. They had no choice” (Female Migrant).

In particular, when crossing borders migrants experience corruption in various forms. Border officials have been reported to only let migrants pass in return for bribes whether they are travelling through regular means or not (Female Migrant). In addition to monetary forms of corruption, it has been reported that middlemen, including smugglers and traffickers, pay border officials with female migrants (Expert Interviews 26; 31; 7; 4; 6; 13), implying that each vehicle transporting migrants always has to carry female migrants for payment (Expert Interview 6). The same is true for checkpoints guarded by soldiers along the route (Expert Interview 13, Migrants). Smugglers and traffickers seem to work together with officials (Expert Interviews 6, 17, 21), which makes it almost impossible for migrants to distinguish between state and non-state actors. While the official definition of corruption only refers to state actors with entrusted power, the distinction is blurred during transit.

Besides experiencing corruption as a means to organise the journey, it is also sometimes experienced as the only way for (irregular) migrants and refugees to get access to basic services like (reproductive) health care (Expert Interview 16) or humanitarian aid (OCCRP 2014). In refugee camps, female migrants have been reported to engage in transactional sex for basic services as well as protection from other migrants (Expert Interview 12). This shows that transactional sex can become a survival strategy for female migrants and migrant families especially where services are mainly delivered by men (Chene 2009; UNHCR and Save the Children 2002; Gosh 2009; Amnesty International 2016).

The irregular status during transit makes people most vulnerable to corruption and exploitation. “In Lebanon for example, we have some reports of people forced to have sex in order to have their legal status recognized or in order to cross the borders. This is really a key issue. In a legal situation, most of these risks are gone because corruption arises from contacts with smugglers and so on. This is kind of a repeated pattern, not context specific, that we see everywhere” (Expert Interview 31).

Corruption can impede onwards migration during transit. One interviewee reported that she was stranded in Libya, one of the main transit countries for migration from Africa to Europe, for almost one year until she had enough money to pay corrupt border officials to migrate onwards (Female Migrant).

The concept of involuntary immobility in Libya is also receiving more attention as a consequence of the European Union’s and Italy’s deal with the Libyan government (Times of Malta 2017; Dalhuisen 2017). In the 2017 Malta Declaration, the European Council in accordance with a prior European

Commission Communication (European Commission 2017) decided to expand collaboration with Libya as the “main country of departure” beyond Operation SOPHIA in order to “significantly reduce migratory flows along the Central Mediterranean route and break the business model of smugglers” (European Council 2017). Consequently, thousands of migrants are stranded in Libyan detention centres under inhumane conditions, which was confirmed by our interviews with migrants and experts. This is underlined especially by migrants being reluctant to talk about their experiences in Libya. While for instance migrant women share their experiences with sexual violence and forced prostitution in other transit countries, they hardly talk about experiences in Libya. As one interviewee puts it: “It is pure violence and women hardly talk about it. It must be appalling experiences that they cannot talk about. They can talk about their forced prostitution in Italy, Spain and Greece but about their experiences in Libya [...] they say ‘it was no good’” (Expert Interview 10). Female migrants in Libyan prisons have also been reported to be forced into transactional sex for basic goods and services (Expert Interview 23). Corruption has also been reported to facilitate exploitation of women and girls during transit. As one expert explained, corruption enables a form of temporary marriages in Syria’s neighbour countries. “You have religious figures and official authorities facilitating these kinds of marriages even though they are illegal. So, if you take Lebanon or Jordan, there were Syrian girls subject to these kinds of marriages. So, that Jordanian or Lebanese or also sex tourists could come, have the marriage for a few days or weeks, sexually abuse them and then leave” (Expert Interview 31).

The amounts of bribes migrants report can vary extensively: It has been reported for instance that Turkish officials let migrants continue their journey towards Europe for very small fees. In contrast, migrants in the ECOWAS region often arrive at their destination without having any money left due to corruption throughout the journey (Expert Interviews 11;1). Latin American women transiting through Mexico have been reported to work in prostitution to be able to afford their journey through Mexico where it is required to bribe police officers as well as cartels (Expert Interview 27). As already pointed out where enormous bribes are expected this can lead to involuntary immobility until the migrant receives or earns the required sums. Migrants also reported severe punishments for the inability to pay for corruption. “There was a lot of police. When you get to the border they say stop. You bring money for them and then if you didn’t give them money they would beat you, they will tell you to sit down in the sun. You will be there until you find something on you or beg someone to just give me some money. [...] They will make sure that they will beat you as nastily as possible. Oh god I hated it” (Female Migrant).

4. The Gender Dimension

With two seminal papers (Dollar *et al.* 2001; Swamy *et al.* 2001) gender became an integral part of corruption research and current explorations on the topic are centred around three major questions (Wängnerud 2014): are women less corrupt? How does corruption affect men and women differently?

And how do women help in the fight against corruption. Yet, as our analysis on experiences during migration shows, the existing research, in large parts oversimplifies the understanding of gender by focusing solely on women and only in rare instances on gender, i.e. socially constructed roles, activities, attributes, behaviour's, personality traits, relationships, power and influence that a society conceptually attributes to men and women (Prince 2005). Therefore, while the above questions are important in their own right, our research showed that they omit two fundamental discussions: a) how are forms of corruption determined by gender and b) how do gender norms themselves impact exposure to and experiences of corruption. Exploring migrants' experiences of corruption showed how important analysing these questions is to get a deeper understanding of the connection between gender and corruption.

4.1.1. Forms of corruption – the role of sextortion

The experiences of corruption of migrants, male and female, are shaped by many factors. In many instances, where legal channels are not available, corruption is a necessity to enable the migration process. As migrants are moving further from their social networks, they rely on corruption to create connections to navigate their journey and to allow them to cross borders, in these cases is not necessarily seen as something negative. As expert stated:

“If you made a conscious decision to migrate and a conscious decision to use an illegal route then the degree of agency, cooperation, acceptance, indeed the degree of welcoming corruption can be vastly different. There will be people who say I want to migrate from A to B, legal systems don't allow me to do it. So, I will use illegal systems and I am very grateful that there are corrupt officials that can help me.” (Expert Interview 36)

Yet, the corruption experiences are not all equal and the form of corruption that a migrant is exposed to is fundamentally shaped by gender. Typical forms of corruption discussed as enabling migration include bribery, coercion, extortion and fraud (OECD 2015), these mirror a classic understanding of corruption focusing on a male centric view of the exchange of money and goods. As one of the male migrants interviewed for this research shared his experience: “They [the border guards] always tell you ‘we're going to help you’. What they mean is that if you give them money maybe they help you” (Expert Interview 18).

Analyzing the corruption experiences during migration show an important flaw in this common understanding of corruption – it is not just money or goods, in many cases it is also female bodies which are the currency. This intersection of corruption and sexual violence has been coined ‘sextortion’⁷ and while some attention has recently been given to this gendered form of corruption (IAWJ 2012), most research still focuses on a classic -monetary understanding. Women in these cases

⁷ Sextortion is “the abuse of power to obtain a sexual favour“ (IAWJ 2012).

of corruption are not just the participant in the corrupt exchange, but at the same time also the means. The research in the context of migration also showed another nuance. Women's bodies are frequently used as a means of exchange for an entire group. A male migrant recounts: "The border guards see that there are women in your convoy, they stop the pick-up and take the women. You can wait three or four days, sometimes one week, you never know how long, until the time they can satisfy all their desires [pause] and they come back" (Expert Interview 18).

Experiences with corruption have far-reaching consequences on the psychological and physical well-being of migrants. Migrant women's experiences with sextortion in particular can lead to psychological and physical trauma, unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.

In Libya it is very bad, they sleep with you. Many of them do not use condoms because men [Pause] you don't know the sickness they have or anything, you can take it home from them. So, when you get to Italy you can be sick, they can be pregnant, lot's of them don't know the father, the father is in another country. So that is very bad. But there are girls that [inaudible] there is a lot of pain, maybe man came and slept with you in that condition and you get pregnant and you can't say that you don't want to. I can't explain this/ as in very risky. I can't invest any hope my friends or relatives, as in come to Libya, or pass through that route, it's very risky. (Female Migrant)

Men also face extreme violence throughout their journey and our interviewees reported of severe beatings for men by corrupt officials, yet in the context of corruption their experience is significantly different: while men pay with money, "women's experiences [of corruption] are shaped by the fact that, if they have nothing, they still have female bodies" (Expert Interview 2).

4.1.2. The role of gender norms

Having established that male and female migrants are frequently vulnerable to different forms of corruption, it is essential to acknowledge where these differences originate. Gender is only one category of disadvantage which is interlinked with other such categories like race, class and ethnicity. It is the interconnection of these multiple layers of disadvantage or oppression that shape corruption experiences of male and female migrants (Crenshaw 1990; Burman 2003; Valentine 2007; Bastia 2014; Echazu 2010). The interviews for this paper identified several categories that seem to play a large role in increasing gendered vulnerabilities, especially education, physical or mental disability and pregnancy or travelling with children was mentioned by most interview partners. The factor that was most dominant throughout the discussions however was the role of gender norms in shaping experiences of corruption. Patriarchy, which is "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Walby 1989, p.214), has not been widely discussed in corruption research, but the research for this paper shows that gendered experiences of corruption

cannot be understood without understanding the role of gendered power imbalances, i.e. patriarchal structures, in society.

This is true for both the experiences in the origin and the transit country. As many of our expert interviews recounted, the availability of funds for corruption is often determined by gender norms in the home country. While families in patriarchal societies often collect money to send a male relative on the migration journey, women travelling alone frequently leave against the will of their family and hence without the family's financial and emotional support. This leaves them not only more vulnerable to sextortion, as the only available means of payment is their body, but also increases their risk to be caught up in trafficking networks. Structures in the home country also can make women less likely to ask for help or protection, as one of the experts stated: "They come from patriarchal societies where their vulnerability is emphasized as part of the culture and it goes beyond issues like physical strength, it goes on issues that a person will have been born into, nurtured and brought up in a culture that makes them subservient to men" (Expert Interview 36).

Patriarchal structures in the country of origin and transit also make women easier targets, especially when they are travelling without male relatives and are far from their family:

With a lot of culture, the abuse of a women is less likely to bring retribution than the abuse of a man. An example, if you're [...] mistreating a man, there's always the chance, as a corrupt official, that you might upset someone, that might be related to someone important, they might be related to this and so on. Women are, in a lot of places, seen much more as a commodity or a good, or something that's fair game. You know, and once women have left their country of origin, they're in that transit space, there are less powerful factors about the honour of the women or the family will protect them – these things are gone and have fallen away during the transit journey. (Expert Interview 36)

Yet, travelling with male family members does not automatically guarantee protection. Where women do not have a say over what will happen to them male family members frequently use females as a pawn to get ahead in the migration journey (Expert Interview 29).

Merkle and Alberola (forthcoming) argue that sextortion itself is a perfect example of patriarchal power structures:

The notion of sextortion is the paradigmatic example of how gender relations and power relations are intertwined within corruption. Sextortion as a form of corruption is the direct result of a patriarchal configuration of power in institutions, where power is systematically held by male hegemony and exerted principally against women and non-masculine men. The gender regime of corruption results in women being disproportionately affected by the phenomenon, since they are targeted by the most violent forms of corruption. Because

sextortion is at the intersection of corruption and violence against women, the concept is able to reflect both unequal gender relations and unequal power relations in societies, which makes the term particularly useful to observe and recognize women and men's experiences of corruption. (Merkle and Alberola forthcoming, p.16)

The experiences of men and women during their migration journey clearly show that a much better understanding is needed of how patriarchy influences corruption experiences and the vulnerability to specific forms of corruption.

5. Conclusion

Migrants experience corruption at various occasions in the country of origin as well as during transit. Corruption can lead to migration aspirations, enable migration or impede it (i.e. involuntary immobility). This paper finds that corruption comes into play whenever legal options for migration are limited and is a constant throughout all stages of the migration process for many migrants. Despite being exploratory in nature, this research provides some crucial insights into the gendered experiences and forms of corruption during migration. While both men and women routinely encounter corruption during different stages of the migration process, this paper finds that women are especially vulnerable to atypical forms of corruption such as sextortion in addition to more typical forms of corruption that are also experienced by men. Women travelling alone are also especially exposed to corruption and sexual exploitation along the way. Furthermore, we find that underlying gender norms play a crucial role in shaping the experiences of corruption both in the home country and during the journey. For example, we find that women from highly patriarchal societies frequently travel with little financial resources and are therefore often more vulnerable to sextortion and abuse. The research also discovered another layer in the relationship between gender and corruption. Frequently, women are not only participants in the corrupt exchanges but are commodified as the means of exchange for groups of migrants when crossing borders. While official definitions of corruption mostly refer to state actors with entrusted power, the distinction between state and non-state actors asking for payments is blurred in many transit countries. These experiences with corruption and severe violence by state and uniformed non-state actors also partly explain why many migrants are scared of authorities upon arrival in Europe. Lastly, experiences with corruption and consequences of non-payment have serious consequences for male and female migrants' short- medium- and long-term physical and mental health.

The findings of this paper highlight that more regular channels for migration need to be created so that individuals are not forced into irregular channels which increases the risk of encountering corruption and violence during the journey. In addition, the results of this research show that it is crucial to move away from a male centric view of corruption to a more inclusive approach, including gendered forms of corruption such as sextortion.

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Appendix 1

