



# Corruption From a Religious Perspective: An Analytical Study

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the issue of corruption from a religious perspective, particularly Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism, using a qualitative analytical approach. The purpose of the study is to understand the moral and ethical concepts underlying the prohibition of corruption and to evaluate the role of religion in shaping individual and societal awareness of integrity, honesty, social responsibility, and justice. Data were obtained from secondary sources, including religious texts (the Qur'an, Hadith, Bible, Tripitaka, Vedas, and Bhagavad Gita), academic articles, journals, theses, and anti-corruption reports. The analysis was conducted using thematic and content analysis methods, emphasizing themes such as integrity, justice, moral ethics, and religiosity. The findings indicate that all four religions reject corruption and emphasize the formation of moral values in individual and societal life. Islam emphasizes the principles of trust (*Amanah*), justice, and the spiritual consequences of corrupt practices; Christianity highlights moral ethics through teachings of love, honesty, and social responsibility; Buddhism emphasizes honesty, avoidance of harm, self-control, and the karmic consequences of immoral actions; while Hinduism stresses dharma (moral responsibility), karma, and social justice as guiding principles that reject self-interest and misconduct. The findings affirm that religion plays a crucial role as an instrument in fostering an anti-corruption culture, particularly when moral and ethical values are internalized through education, professional training, and the strengthening of social institutions. This study contributes to a multidimensional understanding of corruption and provides a foundation for integrated prevention strategies from religious and moral perspectives.

**Keywords:** Corruption, Religious Perspective, Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism

## INTRODUCTION

Corruption is regarded as a phenomenon that weakens institutions and undermines public trust in the efficiency of leadership in government administration (Mohd Zaidi et al., 2023). The term *rasuah* is said to originate from the Arabic word *al-riswah*, which, according to Ibn Manzur, refers to a baby bird or chick stretching out its head to be fed. This term has been absorbed into the Malay language and is interpreted as "*menumbuk rusuk*" (literally "nudging the ribs"), which carries the same meaning as giving inducements or bribes (Nur Syakiran & Md Zawawi, 2004). In addition, *risyawah* also refers to a form of mediation used to achieve a particular goal through persuasion. From a terminological perspective, *risyawah* can be defined as a form of giving intended to uphold falsehood (Nurul et al., 2023).

Malaysia's Prevention of Corruption Act (1960) explains that acts involving the giving or receiving of gratification intended to obtain personal interest and that are contrary to one's official duties constitute an offence categorized as corruption (Mohd Zaidi et al., 2023). Therefore, corruption refers to the act of giving rewards or inducements to an individual in return for assistance in matters that contravene established laws or regulations (Nur Syakiran & Md Zawawi, 2004). Individuals who are arrested and found guilty of corruption will be subjected to severe penalties under the applicable laws (Azman et al., 2023a).

At present, corruption has become increasingly prevalent within society and has become normalized, particularly in the service sector (Mohd Zaidi et al., 2023). This phenomenon does not only involve low-ranking officers but



also individuals of high status. Corrupt practices occur not only among government officials but also among the public and within the private sector (Ahmad et al., 2023b). Typically, recipients of bribes are individuals who hold important positions or possess authority capable of influencing decisions. Among those frequently associated with this issue are government employees. According to reports issued by the Malaysian AntiCorruption Commission (MACC), corruption cases most reported involve abuse of power and misappropriation of illicit funds (Azman et al., 2023b). A newspaper report indicated that nearly half of reported corruption cases involve civil servants, suggesting that the level of integrity within this sector remains at an alarming level (Sinar Harian, 2021). Such issues have negative impacts on the country, including tarnishing the government's image, reducing national revenue due to leakage and tax evasion, and undermining foreign investor confidence (Ahmad et al., 2018).

There are several types of corruption commonly practiced in society, one of which is political corruption. Political corruption is a form of conduct or activity that can damage a nation (Zaidi et al., 2023). This type of corruption is among the most frequently recorded and is usually committed by politicians or national leaders (Syed Radzuwan, 2013). Political corruption can be divided into several forms, including vote-buying and the purchase of electoral support. According to Mohamad Agus (2005), such practices are considered political corruption because they involve rewards or payments in exchange for maintaining power and winning specific positions (Hairuzzaki Yusof, n.d.). Another form of political corruption is cronyism or nepotism. Nepotism refers to the tendency to appoint family members to certain positions based on familial ties rather than actual qualifications (Ahmad, 2018). This type of corruption often occurs among government officials and individuals with political power, where relatives or family members are appointed to important positions to ensure close relationships and shared interests are preserved (Mustanir et al., 2017).

In conclusion, corruption has increasingly become endemic within society. This phenomenon arises when personal integrity weakens, leading to greed and the pursuit of luxury beyond one's legitimate income. Ethical values among citizens also remain at an insufficient level, as some individuals perceive corruption as a normal occurrence in the execution of daily tasks. This issue requires serious attention, as statistics show a worrying annual increase in corruption cases. Such increases not only hinder the development of a country's administrative system but also negatively affect public perceptions of responsibility and trust in daily affairs. This problem must be addressed through comprehensive cooperation among all levels of society and authorities, supported by strict law enforcement and the cultivation of trustworthiness and honesty in professional duties. Therefore, awareness of strong personal integrity, discipline in performing responsibilities, and ethical conduct must be continuously nurtured through the involvement of all segments of society.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Corruption is one of the social, political, and economic challenges that frequently occur across various national contexts. However, when examined from a religious perspective, corruption is not merely regarded as social misconduct but also as a serious moral violation. In Islam, corruption is associated with betrayal of the values of trust, dishonesty, and injustice, which are fundamental moral principles emphasized in the Qur'an and Hadith. Raya et al. (2025) emphasize that corruption constitutes *fasād* (corruption or moral decay), which can damage society if left unchecked. Corrupt practices are also viewed as contrary to professional ethics and social responsibility, as they erode public trust in institutions and administrative systems. Within the context of Shariah, Hadith condemn dishonest behaviour even though specific punishments for corruption are not explicitly stated, indicating that corruption falls under reprehensible acts subject to discretionary punishment (*ta'zīr*) (Ab Rahman et al., 2023). In other words, corruption is not merely an economic or political issue but a serious moral and spiritual violation.

In the broader discourse, integrity has gained increasing attention as a core moral value in shaping ethical individuals, organizations, and societies, particularly in the era of globalization and rapid technological advancement. Integrity plays a crucial role in ensuring transparent and accountable service delivery systems. However, its implementation faces numerous challenges, including social pressure, moral dilemmas, material temptations, and the influence of popular culture. Mokhtar et al. (2026) argue that a lack of deep understanding of the concept of integrity contributes to its erosion, ultimately threatening social stability, public trust, and national development. Their study, employing qualitative content analysis of previous literature and secondary data, highlights that integrity must be strengthened at three key levels: personal, organizational, and societal.



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Without comprehensive intervention strategies, efforts to combat corruption may remain fragmented and ineffective.

The literature indicates that an individual's level of religiosity has a significant relationship with anti-corruption attitudes. Heryadi et al. (2023) found that individuals who strongly adhere to religious values tend to reject corruption because it is considered sinful and detrimental to moral integrity. Other studies in organizational contexts in Indonesia show that religiosity influences not only individuals but also organizational culture, which in turn affects corrupt behaviour in the workplace (Maulidi et al., 2024). This emphasis suggests that religion has the potential to function as a mechanism for corruption prevention not only at the individual level but also systemically, through the formation of professional ethics and integrity-based organizational cultures. This aligns with Mokhtar et al. (2026), who stress that integrity development must occur simultaneously at personal and institutional levels to ensure sustainability.

However, the relationship between religion and corruption is not necessarily linear or consistent. A cross-national study by Shadabi (2013) shows that corruption levels are not always lower in countries with religious majorities, including Muslim and Christian countries. This finding suggests that other factors, including culture, religious institutional structures, and social context, also influence the effectiveness of religion in combating corruption. Laras (Year) emphasizes that highly hierarchical religious systems may not directly prevent corruption; rather, it is the cultural and social values derived from religion that influence individual behaviour. For example, Protestantism, which is less hierarchical, is often associated with lower levels of corruption compared to more rigidly structured religions, indicating that how religion is practiced at the societal level may be more important than formal religious teachings themselves. These findings reinforce the argument that integrity must be internalized and institutionalized beyond symbolic religiosity.

Studies within the Christian context also demonstrate the role of religion in shaping anti-corruption attitudes. Falako (2021), examining the Nigerian context, found that Christian teachings have the potential to prevent corruption through the formation of moral awareness and the influence of church institutions. However, the study also highlights a gap between religious teachings and social practice; when religious teachings are not practically internalized, the effectiveness of religion in preventing corruption may be diminished. This suggests that religion alone is insufficient to combat corruption without being supported by moral education, legal enforcement, and the development of a culture of integrity.

In addition to these findings, Othman et al. (2022) highlight that education and public awareness play a crucial role in fostering integrity and combating corrupt practices. Their study identifies key focus areas such as integrity, the role of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC), community engagement, and youth awareness. Effective measures to address corruption include understanding corrupt practices, eliminating the abuse of power, shaping public perception against corruption, educating about its consequences, developing anti-corruption institutions and strategies, emphasizing experiential learning, applying diverse approaches from past and present, and enforcing corruption laws. Future efforts should focus on instilling integrity, ethical values, discipline, and a strong sense of responsibility among the younger generation to eradicate the culture of corruption and strengthen societal resilience against it. These strategies correspond with Mokhtar et al. (2026), who advocate comprehensive and continuous interventions to nurture integrity as a long-term societal investment.

In the context of corruption prevention, religious-based moral education is also viewed as a key strategy. Ab Rahman et al. (2023b) assert that religious moral education should be instilled from an early stage, either through family institutions or formal education. This education aims to produce individuals with integrity, high moral awareness, and the ability to reject corrupt practices. Values such as honesty, accountability, and justice should not only be taught but also practiced in daily life. By integrating these moral values into education and professional training, individuals are better equipped to uphold integrity in various situations, including work, administration, and social interactions. This approach reflects the personal-level integrity framework discussed by Mokhtar et al. (2026).

Furthermore, the development of organizational cultures grounded in religious and ethical values has been shown to reduce the tendency toward corruption. Maulidi et al. (2024) demonstrate that institutions emphasizing ethics, integrity, and religiosity within organizational structures can cultivate work cultures that reject corruption. This includes the implementation of codes of ethics, moral awareness training, and the strengthening of monitoring systems. Such institutional reinforcement supports the organizational-level integrity dimension highlighted by



Mokhtar et al. (2026), where systemic transparency and accountability mechanisms are essential in preventing misconduct.

Despite numerous studies emphasizing the role of religion in the prevention of corruption, several criticisms exist. One criticism is that religion can be used as a political or symbolic tool without producing real effects on societal behaviour (Shadabi, 2013). In such contexts, religious teachings may exist only formally but are not practically applied by society or institutions. Therefore, the effectiveness of religion in combating corruption largely depends on the internalization of moral values in daily life, the strengthening of social institutions, and society's willingness to adhere to ethical principles. This perspective aligns with the societal-level integrity challenges identified by Mokhtar et al. (2026), particularly in addressing social pressures, cultural norms, and material temptations that weaken moral commitment.

In summary, the existing literature indicates that corruption from a religious perspective is a multidimensional issue involving morality, ethics, education, institutions, and social structures. Corruption is not only considered social misconduct but also a spiritual and moral violation. Integrity, as a foundational moral value, must be cultivated at personal, organizational, and societal levels to effectively address corruption. Religion and education together have the potential to function as mechanisms for corruption prevention through the formation of individual moral awareness, value-based education, and the strengthening of organizational culture. However, the effectiveness of these approaches depends on the internalization of moral values in practical life, alignment between teachings and social practices, strong institutional support, and comprehensive integrity-building strategies. Through this integrated approach, religion and public education can not only shape anti-corruption attitudes but also contribute to the development of an ethical, just, transparent, and responsible society.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative analytical approach, as its primary objective is to evaluate and analyse the concept of corruption from religious perspectives, specifically Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism. This approach is appropriate because it allows the researcher to explore the moral meanings, ethical principles, and spiritual values underlying the prohibition of corruption, as well as to understand how religion shapes individual and societal awareness of integrity and honesty (Shadabi, 2013). The study is descriptive-analytical in nature, focusing on the interpretation of religious teachings and their implications for anti-corruption behaviour, rather than adopting a quantitative approach that measures levels of corruption or individual religiosity.

The data sources consist of relevant and credible secondary materials. These include primary religious texts such as the Qur'an and Hadith for Islam, the Bible for Christianity, and the Tripitaka as well as Buddhist moral and ethical teachings. In addition, data were obtained from academic articles, journals, theses, anti-corruption reports, and official documents that examine the relationship between religion and corruption (Raya et al., 2025; Ab Rahman et al., 2023b). In the Buddhist context, teachings such as *Ahimsa* (non-violence), *Satya* (truthfulness), and core moral precepts emphasize the avoidance of actions that harm others, including corrupt practices. These values were analysed to assess their compatibility with principles of integrity and ethical governance in modern society (Gombrich, 2006).

Data were collected through a systematic literature review and digital document searches using academic databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and ScienceDirect. Keywords employed included "corruption," "religion and corruption," "Islam and corruption," "Christianity and corruption," and "Buddhism and corruption." This process ensured that religious perspectives were examined comprehensively and that the selected literature allowed for critical comparison of similarities and differences in each religion's approach to corruption prevention (Heryadi et al., 2023).

Data analysis employed both thematic and content analysis approaches. In identifying the key themes, the study adopted an inductive thematic analysis process grounded in close textual reading and systematic coding of religious and scholarly sources. Relevant texts were examined line by line to identify recurring moral concepts, ethical injunctions, and normative principles related to corruption and integrity. Statements, narratives, and doctrinal prescriptions that explicitly or implicitly addressed issues such as misuse of power, dishonesty, injustice, and moral accountability were coded and grouped into preliminary categories. Through constant comparison across Islamic, Christian, and Buddhist texts, these categories were refined into broader analytical themes, including integrity, honesty, social responsibility, accountability, and the role of religiosity in shaping



ethical behaviour. This iterative process allowed themes to emerge organically from the data rather than being imposed *a priori*, ensuring that the analysis remained grounded in the religious texts themselves while also enabling meaningful cross-religious comparison.

Subsequently, the study compared Islamic, Christian, and Buddhist perspectives by evaluating similarities and differences in moral teachings, individual responsibility, and practical implications within organizational and societal contexts (Falako, 2021; Laras et al., 2006). Interpretations were conducted critically to assess how religious teachings can be applied in contemporary settings, including moral education, professional ethics development, and the cultivation of integrity-based institutional cultures. The analysis further emphasizes that the effectiveness of religion in preventing corruption depends not merely on doctrinal prohibition, but on the internalization of moral values and the support of enabling social and institutional structures.

To ensure validity and reliability, several strategies were employed. First, source triangulation was conducted by comparing religious texts, academic studies, and official reports. Second, each document was evaluated in terms of credibility, relevance, and contextual appropriateness. Third, the analysis was carried out reflectively and critically to minimize researcher bias, while incorporating multiple religious perspectives to enhance the robustness and inclusivity of the findings (Ab Rahman et al., 2023a).

This study has several limitations. Its primary focus is on Islamic, Christian, and Buddhist perspectives, while other religions are referenced only where relevant. The study is analytical rather than quantitative and therefore does not statistically measure levels of corruption or religiosity. The data used are secondary in nature, relying on prior literature and potentially constrained by the context or interpretive bias of original authors. Nevertheless, this approach remains appropriate, as the study emphasizes the analysis of moral concepts, ethical reasoning, and religious teachings that are not readily quantifiable.

Overall, this research methodology enables a comprehensive understanding of corruption from multiple religious perspectives Islam, Christianity, and Buddhism by emphasizing the role of religion in shaping moral awareness, value-based education, and the development of integrity cultures. Through a qualitative analytical approach, the study evaluates the practical implications of religious teachings in modern organizational and societal contexts and provides recommendations for strengthening corruption prevention through education, professional ethics development, and the reinforcement of social institutions (Raya et al., 2025; Shadabi, 2013; Gombrich, 2006).

## DISCUSSION

### Religion as Internal Moral Governance: A Conceptual Model for Addressing Corruption

Corruption constitutes a form of governance failure that arises not only from weaknesses in legal systems and enforcement mechanisms, but also from moral deficiencies within individuals. Therefore, effective anticorruption efforts must go beyond external control mechanisms and give due attention to the development of internal moral governance. In this context, religion functions as a comprehensive value system that shapes moral orientation, regulates behaviour, and continuously reinforces individual integrity. The conceptual model of religion as internal moral governance can be understood through several key mechanisms, namely the formation of conscience, divine accountability, communal moral surveillance, and ethical habituation.

#### i. Formation of Conscience as an Internal Control Mechanism

Religion serves as a primary agent in the formation of individual moral conscience through the process of value internalization. Religious teachings instil fundamental concepts such as trustworthiness, honesty, justice, and the prohibition of unjustly appropriating the rights of others. These values are not merely understood cognitively but are internalized as moral commitments that shape an individual's character. In the context of corruption, a conscience shaped by religious teachings acts as an initial barrier before any unethical act is committed. Individuals with a strong moral conscience experience internal conflict when confronted with opportunities for corruption, even when the risk of detection is low. Corruption is no longer perceived merely as a technical offense or a violation of the law, but as a betrayal of trust and a transgression against one's own moral values. According to Kohlberg (1984), higher levels of moral development are characterized by an individual's capacity to make decisions based on universal ethical principles, which aligns with the role of religion in shaping intrinsic moral judgment.



## ii. Fear of Divine Accountability and the Transcendent Dimension

A distinctive feature of religion as internal moral governance is its emphasis on the transcendent dimension, namely the belief that every human action will ultimately be held accountable before God. Belief in divine punishment and reward renders religious moral control continuous, transcending space and time, and independent of the presence of formal enforcement agents. In the context of corruption, this belief plays a particularly significant role in situations where opportunities for corrupt practices are high, and the likelihood of detection is low. Fear of divine punishment, coupled with the awareness that no action is hidden from God's knowledge, creates a form of self-regulation that is often more effective than external surveillance alone. Pargament (1997) argues that religious beliefs influence behaviour through orientations of meaning and spiritual accountability, which ultimately shape individuals' ethical choices.

## iii. Communal Moral Surveillance and Religious Social Norms

Beyond individual internal control, religion also establishes a system of informal moral surveillance through the community. Religious communities define norms of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, thereby creating social expectations regarding integrity and honesty. Individuals who violate these norms face not only legal sanctions but also social condemnation, loss of reputation, and erosion of communal trust. In the context of corruption, such social pressure functions as an additional preventive mechanism. Corrupt acts are perceived not only as personal misconduct, but also as actions that tarnish the dignity of one's family and the religious community one represents. Durkheim (1956) noted that religion plays a role in sustaining social solidarity through the formation of collective norms, which operate as social controls against deviant behaviour, including corrupt practices.

## iv. Ethical Habituation through Repetitive Religious Practices

Religion further shapes internal moral governance through the process of consistent ethical habituation. Religious practices such as daily worship, self-reflection, and moral reminders serve to strengthen self-discipline and ethical awareness. This process transforms moral values from abstract principles into integral components of daily life. Such habituation is crucial in preventing corruption because it cultivates a stable moral identity. Individuals who consistently practice religious values are more inclined to reject corruption, as such behaviour contradicts the self-image and integrity they have continuously developed. Treviño, Weaver, and Reynolds (2006) emphasize that ethical behaviour within organizations is influenced by the interaction between personal values and repeated practices that collectively shape an ethical culture.

## v. Conceptual Synthesis: Religion and Anti-Corruption Governance

Overall, religion as internal moral governance provides a holistic framework for corruption prevention. The formation of conscience regulates intentions, divine accountability governs hidden actions, communal surveillance shapes social behaviour, and ethical habituation ensures long-term consistency of integrity. These four mechanisms are mutually reinforcing and complementary. Consequently, efforts to combat corruption should not be confined solely to institutional reforms and legal enforcement but should also be supported by the cultivation of religious and moral values as an internal, value-based preventive strategy. This approach has the potential to produce individuals of high integrity who reject corruption not merely out of fear of legal punishment, but because of deep moral and spiritual awareness.

## **Religious Perspectives on Corrupt Practices**

Based on the findings of this study, corruption is universally recognized across religions as a serious moral and ethical violation. Religious perspectives highlight that corruption constitutes a major sin, contradicts integrity and justice, undermines individual moral values, erodes public trust in institutions and leaders, and provokes divine displeasure. These perspectives collectively reveal that corruption is not merely a legal or administrative issue but a profound moral, spiritual, and social problem.

## **Corruption as a Major Sin**

Corruption is fundamentally an act of betrayal, abuse of power, and unjust appropriation of others' rights. Religions classify it as a major sin because it stems from greed, selfishness, and dishonesty, eroding moral



character while destabilizing social systems. In Islam, corruption (*al-Kabā'ir*) involves violations such as betrayal of trust (*amanah*), unlawful acquisition of wealth, and oppression. The Qur'an (4:31) emphasizes that avoiding major sins ensures forgiveness for minor ones, highlighting the grave spiritual consequences of corruption. Both the giver and the recipient of bribes are considered equally culpable, as corruption undermines justice and social welfare (Harun & Hassim, 2017b; Al-Qaradawi, 2009). In Christianity, corruption opposes divine mandates of justice and truth. Scripture (Exodus 23:8; Deuteronomy 16:19) illustrates how bribery distorts judgment and constitutes rebellion against God's will (Maryono, 2014). Buddhism frames corruption as an immoral act rooted in greed (*lobha*) and ignorance (*avijjā*), producing negative karma and obstructing inner peace (Gethin, 1998; Harvey, 2000). In Hinduism, corruption is considered *adharma*, violating cosmic order (*rita*) and ethical duty (*dharma*), particularly when perpetrated by leaders, resulting in societal harm and accumulation of negative karma (Radhakrishnan, 1951; Sharma, 2000). Across all traditions, corruption is a moral and spiritual offense with both personal and societal consequences.

### **Corruption as Contrary to Integrity and Justice**

Corruption inherently undermines the principles of integrity and justice, compromising honesty, transparency, and fairness in personal and societal life. Islam emphasizes that authority should be exercised with trust (*amanah*) and justice; corruption transforms leadership into a tool for self-interest, harming governance and oppressing the vulnerable (Qur'an 4:58; Umar, 2015). Christianity views corruption as a betrayal of divine commands, contaminating justice and human relationships (Proverbs 17:23; Friday, 2017). Buddhism highlights that corruption violates Right Action and Right Livelihood, fostering societal suffering and obstructing compassion (Harvey, 2000). Hinduism stresses that corrupt acts breach *Rajadharma*, converting governance into self-serving practices and eroding social trust (Kangle, 1969; Radhakrishnan, 1951). These perspectives demonstrate that integrity and justice are central to ethical conduct, and corruption fundamentally threatens both individual morality and social harmony.

### **Corruption Undermines Individual Moral Values**

Engaging in corruption erodes personal ethical values and moral character. In Islam, corruption damages *akhlik*, diminishing trustworthiness and social responsibility, while generating spiritual emptiness (Rahman, 2021). Christianity frames corruption as a sin that defiles human moral values, replacing compassion and justice with greed and deceit (Yosefo, 2022). In Buddhism, corruption arising from greed and ignorance generates negative karma, obstructs adherence to ethical precepts, and impedes inner peace (Gethin, 1998; Harvey, 2000). Hinduism emphasizes that corruption contaminates the soul (*ātman*) and binds individuals to negative karma, distancing them from spiritual liberation (*moksha*) (Sharma, 2000; Klostermaier, 2014). Thus, moral character development emerges as a primary defence against corruption, with religion providing the ethical framework to guide behavior.

### **Corruption Causes Public Loss of Trust in Institutions and Leaders**

Corruption severely erodes public confidence in institutions and leadership, undermining social stability and governance. Islam regards leaders as trustees (*amanah*) accountable to both people and Allah SWT; corrupt acts by leaders breach divine and societal trust, weakening governmental legitimacy and social cohesion (Surah alNisa 4:58; Sanusi & Syed Ismail, 2016). Christianity stresses that leaders are moral exemplars; their engagement in corruption creates public distrust and societal cynicism (Friday, 2017). Buddhism notes that corrupt practices disrupt social harmony, leading to collective suffering (Harvey, 2000). Hinduism underscores that violations of *Rajadharma* by leaders result in social injustice and disharmony, compromising public confidence in governance (Kangle, 1969). Across these religions, corruption among leaders threatens societal stability by undermining trust and social order.

### **Corruption Provokes Divine Displeasure**

Religious teachings also highlight the spiritual consequences of corruption. In Islam, corruption attracts divine curse, affecting both the giver and receiver (Harun & Hassim, 2017b). Christianity emphasizes that corruption damages one's relationship with God and violates divine mandates of truth and justice (Maryono, 2014). Buddhism underscores karmic consequences, where corrupt acts motivated by greed and ignorance generate future suffering (Harvey, 2000). In Hinduism, corruption is an act of *adharma* that disrupts cosmic order and



accrues negative karma, distancing individuals from spiritual liberation (*moksha*) (Klostermaier, 2014). Hence, corruption is condemned not only for social and legal reasons but also for its spiritual ramifications, which motivate ethical self-regulation.

In conclusion, the findings reveal that all major religions Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism agree that corruption is sinful, immoral, and deeply detrimental to individuals and society. It undermines integrity and justice, erodes moral character, diminishes public trust, and provokes divine displeasure or karmic consequences. Corruption arises from greed, self-interest, and excessive attachment to personal gain, threatening moral, social, and spiritual harmony. Addressing corruption effectively therefore requires a comprehensive approach that combines law enforcement with the internalization of moral and religious values. Embedding ethical principles through education, professional training, and the strengthening of social institutions lays the foundation for a sustainable anti-corruption culture. Continuous awareness and practice of noble values promote justice, social stability, and national prosperity, affirming that corruption is not merely a social or administrative issue but a profound moral and spiritual challenge that must be tackled holistically.

**Table 1: Summary of Religious Perspectives on Corruption**

Subtopic	Islam	Christianity	Buddhism	Hinduism
<b>Corruption as a Major Sin</b>	Corruption is classified as <i>al-Kabā'ir</i> (major sins) because it involves unlawful consumption of wealth and betrayal of trust. Both the giver and receiver of bribes are cursed by Allah SWT, indicating God's wrath toward this act (Al-Qaradawi, 2009; Harun & Hassim, 2017a).	Corruption is regarded as a serious sin because it distorts truth and blinds moral judgment. Exodus 23:8 and Deuteronomy 16:19 explicitly prohibit accepting bribes as they lead to injustice.	Corruption is considered an immoral act that violates the Five Precepts ( <i>Pañca Śila</i> ), particularly the prohibition against taking what is not given. It is driven by greed and ignorance and produces bad karma (Gethin, 1998).	Corruption is regarded as an act of <i>adharma</i> that violates <i>dharma</i> and cosmic balance. The <i>Manusmriti</i> states that those who accept bribes will bring destruction to society (Radhakrishnan, 1951).
<b>Contrary to Integrity and Justice</b>	Islam emphasizes trust ( <i>amanah</i> ) and justice in leadership. Corruption undermines integrity because decisions are made based on bribes rather than truth (Qur'an, 4:58; Umar, 2015).	Integrity and justice are core Christian values. Corruption corrupts both by diverting the course of justice (Proverbs 17:23).	Corruption contradicts Right Action and Right Livelihood in the Noble Eightfold Path because it involves dishonest conduct and livelihood (Harvey, 2000).	Corruption violates <i>Rajadharma</i> , as leaders are expected to govern justly. Abuse of power is considered a betrayal of moral responsibility (Kangle, 1969).
<b>Undermines Individual Moral Values</b>	Corruption erodes moral character and cultivates greed and self-interest, distancing individuals from honesty and trustworthiness (Rahman, 2021).	Corruption taints the sanctity of life and enslaves individuals to greed, thereby damaging their relationship with God (Yosefo, 2022).	Corruption plants bad karma, creates inner distress, and obstructs peace of mind and enlightenment (Gethin, 1998).	Corruption pollutes the soul ( <i>atman</i> ), nurtures <i>lobha</i> (greed), and obstructs the attainment of <i>moksha</i> (Klostermaier, 2014).
<b>Causes Loss of Public Trust in Institutions and Leaders</b>	Leaders are trustees of the people. Corruption undermines trust and can lead to social instability and communal division	Corrupt leaders fail in their moral responsibilities and trigger a crisis of trust within society (Friday, 2017).	Although less institution-focused, corruption damages social harmony and collective trust by producing injustice and suffering	Corruption violates <i>Rajadharma</i> and causes people to lose trust in governance, leading to social disharmony (Kangle, 1969).



	(Sanusi & Syed Ismail, 2016).		(Harvey, 2000).	
<b>Provokes Divine Wrath / Spiritual Consequences</b>	Corruption invites the curse of Allah SWT and damages the relationship between humans and God, as well as the blessings of life (Harun & Hassim, 2017b).	Corruption invites God's punishment because it corrupts justice and truth commanded by God (Proverbs 17:23).	Corruption results in negative karma that produces suffering in both present and future lives (Harvey, 2000).	Corruption violates <i>dharma</i> and <i>rta</i> , resulting in bad karma and spiritual as well as worldly suffering (Klostermaier, 2014).

Source: Research Study 2026

Comparatively, all four major religions unanimously reject corruption, even though their theological approaches differ. Islam and Christianity emphasize corruption as a major sin that directly invokes God's wrath, whereas Buddhism and Hinduism stress the consequences of karma and spiritual harm. Nevertheless, they all agree that corruption stems from greed, undermines integrity and justice, and threatens societal well-being. This demonstrates that corruption is a universal moral issue that requires solutions based on spiritual and ethical values, not merely legal measures.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, corruption has increasingly become an endemic phenomenon across societies worldwide, reflecting not only institutional weaknesses but also profound moral failures at the individual and collective levels. Corruption commonly arises in contexts where integrity, trustworthiness, and ethical restraint are eroded, often driven by greed and the pursuit of material affluence beyond one's legitimate means. When corrupt practices become normalized in everyday social and administrative interactions, societal ethical standards deteriorate, fostering permissive attitudes that lower moral resistance and facilitate unethical decision-making for personal gain. Across religious traditions, corruption is unequivocally condemned because it fundamentally violates the moral and ethical principles expected of believers. In Islam, corruption is regarded as a grave sin that constitutes a breach of trust (*amanah*) and justice (*'adl*). Christianity teaches that corruption defiles the sanctity of life and undermines both one's relationship with God and the moral fabric of the community. Buddhism emphasizes that corrupt behavior generates negative karma, cultivates mental suffering, and obstructs the attainment of inner peace. Similarly, Hinduism underscores the principles of *dharma*, *karma*, and social justice, wherein corruption represents a violation of moral duty and disrupts social harmony.

Despite the strong religious prohibitions against corruption, its persistence within religious societies highlights a critical gap between doctrinal belief and ethical practice. This disparity suggests that ritualistic religiosity alone does not necessarily translate into moral conduct in the absence of effective institutional accountability and sustained ethical socialization. Consequently, efforts to combat corruption must adopt an integrated approach involving all stakeholders, particularly governments, through robust legal enforcement, institutional integrity strengthening, and the cultivation of honesty and trustworthiness among the public. Equally important is the early inculcation of moral and religious education, especially among younger generations, to foster a deeply rooted anti-corruption culture. Through the consistent internalization of ethical values and heightened awareness of social responsibility, corruption can be meaningfully reduced, thereby promoting national stability, social justice, and sustainable prosperity.

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