

Study on Reasons of China's Official Corruption

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Abstract: How to prevent and decrease corruption deserves significant research in politics, administration and management in China. Corruption at or above provincial and ministerial levels will hold up economic development, undermine public order and even affect social stability. Since the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, China's anti-corruption efforts have intensified, and a large number of provincial and ministerial officials have been caught in corruption and bribe-taking in a short period of time. Studying and discussing the causes of their corruption can offer some enlightenment and suggestions for the future anti-corruption work, which does good to the healthy development of China's political economy and the maintenance of social stability. This paper adopts the method of empirical analysis to investigate the situation of provincial and ministerial officials who have fallen from power since the 19th CPC National Congress. The current study reveals that officials in the same place of birth who work in the same organ are more prone to corruption; the longer they join the Party, the more likely corruption will occur. Premised on the results of the current study, the current study comes up with the following suggestions: to intensify the assessment of officials and ideological education; to establish and perfect the supervision system; to strengthen the formulation of relevant laws and regulations; to improve supervision over officials and their families; to consolidate personnel assessment.

1. Introduction

Since General Secretary Xi Jinping first proposed to fight “tigers” and “flies” at the 18th National Congress of the CPC, the anti-corruption efforts have gradually increased. A large number of senior officials above the provincial and ministerial levels have been removed from their posts. The fall of these officials indicates that the anti-corruption work will continue to be carried out vigorously. At the 19th session of national congress of the communist party of China, Xi Jinping once again stressed the need to strictly control the Party in an all-round way, crack down on corruption, execute zero tolerance for corrupt officials, and continue to make efforts for political integrity and clarity. Corruption is the greatest threat the Chinese Communist Party faces and a phenomenon that the people abhor. Compared with the influence brought by corruption at the grassroots level, the corruption of officials at the provincial and ministerial levels and above will bring even worse influence. Most of the officials at the provincial and ministerial levels and above are in power in a region or a department of the country, and they hold great power and public resources. Once corruption occurs, it will cause uneven distribution of social resources, hold up the healthy development of regional or national economy, even affect the position of the Chinese communist party in the hearts of the people, cause people's distrust of political parties, and tremendously threaten social stability. Hence, how to prevent and decrease the corruption of provincial and ministerial officials is extremely urgent and plays a highly significant role in maintaining social stability and steady economic growth in our country. This paper principally analyzes the causes of corruption among provincial and ministerial officials and attempts to propose ways to prevent and decrease corruption. The second part principally briefs the research results and theories at home and abroad, the third part briefs the data sources and methods of this research, the fourth part presents the research results gained by analyzing these 42 samples, and the fifth part is the conclusion and enlightenment.

2. Literature Review

Since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, China's anti-corruption efforts have become intensified, with a large number of provincial and ministerial level officials and above losing their posts. A large number of scholars have studied and expounded the reasons why senior officials lost their posts and the ways to decrease corruption. Their research results are summarized as below.

In regard to theoretical research, He Qi (2019) explored the operation mechanism and formation factors of family corruption, and holds that family corruption is the result of multiple factors, and it should be managed by continuously perfecting the system and reinforcing management. However, he only made a brief summary without case analysis and data support. Feng Li (2017) analyzed the attitude of American scholars towards corruption, which they believed is associated with culture. Despite that the analysis of American scholars carries the color of western centralism, it offers certain enlightenment to China's anti-corruption. Andrew Wedeman (2012) expounded the double paradox of corruption in China as well as its three solutions. In his view, corruption lags behind economic growth but does not plunder economic lifelines, and some anti-corruption measures in China have already taken effect. Zeng Ming and Zhang Huiteng (2016) viewed college students' trust in the government from the point of view of college students. They held that the better the official's style of work, the greater the anti-corruption efforts, the higher the trust of college students.

With respect to empirical research, Li Xiaohui (2017) has explored the age level, positions and corruption reasons of 112 provincial and ministerial-level officials who have fallen off power since the 18th National Congress of the CPC, believing that officials who hold core power are more prone to corruption, the main reason for corruption is bribery, and Party committees and governments are the departments where corruption occurs frequently. However, in terms of research, his research principally adopts econometric analysis and case study, but lacks further empirical analysis on corruption. Li Yaoqin and Xu Xixiong (2016) collected provincial panel data from 1998 to 2009, proving that religious culture also exerts a certain inhibitory effect on corruption. They consider that the more backward the system is, the stronger the inhibitory effect of religion on people. Daniel Treisman (2000) explored several "corruption perceptions" indexes compiled by the enterprise risk survey from 1980s to 1990s, holding that countries with Protestant tradition, history of British rule, more developed economy and more imports are under a lower degree of "corruption", while the federal states are more "corrupt", and long-term contact with democracy can decrease corruption. Yu Yajie and Chen Wenquan (2017) have conducted an analysis and investigation on 88 provincial and ministerial officials who have fallen from power since the 18th National Congress, considering that lax spirit after becoming high-ranking officials is a significant reason for corruption. However, they have conducted an overall analysis, lacking rigorous empirical analysis and failing to cover all cases. Xie Jun (2013) made statistics on the situation of 41 provincial and ministerial officials who have fallen from power since the 18th CPC National Congress, holding that the rapid transformation of the economic system and the lag of the political system reform are the causes of corruption, but the analysis of the causes lacks rigorous and reliable empirical analysis. Li Songfeng (2015) compared and analyzed the official property declaration systems of 20 countries, viewing that the property declaration system has limited effect on preventing corruption and needs continuous development. The system construction needs to be designed based on the actual situation of the country, but the date is mostly secondary. Guo Xiajuan and Tu Wenyan (2017) analyzed whether women are more honest than men with certain experimental data and investigation data, concluding that women are less tolerant of corruption than men. Chen Dacai and Lv Yueying (2017) compared and explored the research methods used by overseas scholars, holding that domestic research should learn from overseas advanced methods and adhere to the national conditions simultaneously. Sun Zhijuan (2016) attempted to analyze the causes of corruption among officials, believing that there are three main reasons, namely, unstable ideology, imperfect political system and law, and imperfect supervision mechanism. However, she only gave a brief description without data support. Xiong Chunyang (2015) analyzed the causes of corruption from the point of view of socioculturology. In his view, the reasons for corruption are over-utilitarianism, emphasis

on interests and anti-social tendency of public servants. Zengke He (2000) explored the extent, form and characteristics, causes and effects of corruption in China today and the anti-corruption efforts of the Communist Party and the government of China. From his perspective, the coexistence of the dual economic system provides a lot of incentives and opportunities for corruption. The low income of officials makes them seek additional income, the loopholes in regulatory policies and the weak political system are the causes of corruption. Yuhao Feng(2018) pointed out the role of social forces in anti-corruption, and held that building a social anti-corruption system, cultivating a clean culture, improving the level of social participation, strengthening social supervision, promoting anti-corruption education, and improving the legal system can decrease corruption. Deng Song and Li Muwen (2017) studied and analyzed 50 cases of corrupt provincial and ministerial officials from 2009 to 2015. They held that the increase of personal desires and the defects of the system are the causes of corruption, but they lack rigorous empirical analysis.

By reading and summarizing the references, the main reasons for corruption are as below: first, officials' income is not high and thus they seek other income, which results in corruption; second, the imperfect political system leads to corruption; third, weak personal consciousness and pursuit of personal satisfaction give rise to corruption; fourth, the imperfection of legal system and supervision system causes corruption; fifth, the rapid transformation of economic system and the lag of political system reform are the causes of corruption.

3. Research Methods

This paper collects the list of 42 provincial and ministerial officials who have been removed from their posts since the 19th CPC National Congress. The data are principally from Xinhuanet and the website of the State Supervision Committee of the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection. The current study collects information on the level of provincial and ministerial officials, college background, time of joining the Party, time of starting to work, etc. In regards to college background, 1 point is for the first batch of universities for students to apply, 2 points are for ordinary first batch of universities, 3 points are for universities of Project 211 and Project 985, 5 points are for military schools, 6 points are for Party School of the Central Committee of CPC, 7 points are for Party School of the Provincial Party Committee, and 8 points are for foreign universities. With respect to official level, 1 point is given to officials at the Sub-Provincial level, 2 points to officials at the Ministerial-level, 3 points to officials at the Bureau-Director level, 4 points to officials at the Sub-national leader, 5 points to officials at the National leader, and 6 points to General.

In the current study, the method of empirical research is principally adopted to carry out correlation analysis and multiple linear regression on the data collected in the sample, such as gender, age, nationality, universities and positions, aiming to find out the influencing factors of official corruption, then reflect the characteristics of official corruption directly through the analysis of individual cases, and finally draw a conclusion.

4. Research Results

4.1 Analysis of the basic situation of corrupt officials at the provincial and ministerial levels and above

The current study conducts descriptive statistical analysis on 42 provincial, ministerial and above officials who have fallen off power. The basic situation is as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Analysis on the Factors Influencing the Corruption of Officials at Provincial and Ministerial Levels and Above

Variable	Sample number	Mean value	Standard deviation	Minimum value	Maximum value
Gender	42	1	0	1	1
Nation	42	1.07	0.26	1	2
Year of birth	41	1957.87	4.61	1950	1966
Time of joining the Party	35	1981.51	6.22	1971	1995
Year of employment	38	1977.81	6.84	1963	1990
Undergraduate colleges and universities	35	2.68	2.08	1	8
Master's university	39	4.35	2.28	0	8
Doctoral university	41	1.17	1.99	0	8
Rank	42	1.47	1.01	1	6
Age	41	61.12	4.61	53	69
Time of starting to work	38	41.18	6.84	29	56
Party standing	35	37.48	6.22	24	48

Of the 42 samples collected, three officials are ethnic minorities and the rest are all Han. The 42 officials who have fallen off power are all men, with the maximum age of 69, the minimum age of 53 and the average age of 62. The average years of having been Party members are 38, the maximum 48 and the minimum 24. The average working time is 42 years, the maximum 56 years and the minimum 29 years. The average time of starting to work is earlier than the time of joining the Party, and most people joined the Party after working. Most of the officials have postgraduate education or above, while the officials with poor undergraduate education take on-the-job postgraduate education or Party school education to obtain academic qualifications, and a few officials pursued undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral studies from prestigious universities. Although their birthplaces are all over the country, officials with the same birthplaces are closely linked. For instance, Zhang Jiehui and Liu Qiang, who were also born in Liaoning Province, were investigated one after another within a month. After investigation, it was found that they had worked in the petrochemical system, sold official posts and titles for a long time, and engaged in non-organization activities such as canvassing votes. In November 2018, three senior officials in Shanxi Province have fallen off power consecutively, of which Shangguan Jiqing and Qian Yin'an were partners once working together. The reason for the removal from their posts was the illegal construction of the Qinling Villa and a series of corruption incidents were involved behind the illegal construction. Xiang Lili and Qin Guangrong who have been removed from their posts in May 2019 were both born in Hunan, and Xiang Lili worked under the leadership of Qin Guangrong. Xiang Lili was also removed from his post eight days after Qin Guangrong surrendered. Most of the officials have postgraduate education or above, but many of their undergraduate schools are universities and technical secondary schools, and only a few of them are from universities of Project 985 and Project 211. Most of them achieve higher education through on-the-job postgraduate education. Of these 42 officials, 3 were transferred from the university system to government agencies and then fell off power. Most of them were investigated and dealt with for violation of discipline, corruption and bribery and were eventually expelled from the Party.

4.2 Correlation analysis of the influencing factors of corruption among officials at and above provincial and ministerial levels

The current study makes a correlation analysis on the influencing factors of officials at and above provincial and ministerial levels, and the basic situation is as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Correlation Analysis of Influencing Factors of Corruption of Officials at and above Provincial and Ministerial Levels

	Crime	Reason	Transfer	Doctor	Master	Bachelor	Work	Time of joining the Party	Year of birth	Rank
Crime	1.000									
Reason	0.560*	1.000								
Transfer	0.150	-0.194	1.000							
Doctor	0.188	-0.044	0.167	1.000						
Master	-0.045	-0.022	-0.210	0.106	1.000					
Bachelor	-0.007	-0.175	0.082	0.182	0.210	1.000				
Work	0.209	0.206	0.064	0.263	0.050	0.301	1.000			
Time of joining the Party	0.402*	0.112	-0.008	0.355*	0.138	0.365*	0.730*	1.000		
Year of birth	0.290	0.199	0.054	0.311	0.077	0.301	0.910*	0.775*	1.000	
Rank	-0.077	-0.078	0.039	-0.236	-0.062	0.040	0.013	-0.266	-0.313*	1.000

Note: (1) ***p<0.001,**p<0.01,*p<0.05

Based on the correlation analysis, it can be found that the time of joining the Party is associated with crimes, indicating that the longer the time of joining the Party, the more likely corruption will occur. The judgment of a crime is associated with the cause of corruption. Those who violate the law or discipline less severely will be treated as Party members and demoted. Officials who are corrupt, undermine normal election activities, have personal style problems or abuse their power are mostly confiscated of the illicit money, removed from office, expelled from the Party and sentenced. The term of imprisonment is usually more than 10 years, and very few officials have been sentenced to life imprisonment. Most of the sentenced officials have actively reformed or reported other officials with problems in prison and received a reduction of sentence. Of the 42 samples, 3 were transferred from the university system to work in government authorities. Based on the correlation analysis, it is found that there is no relationship between crimes and post transfer. There is no relation between the reasons and crimes of officials' corruption in undergraduate, master and doctor colleges. In the statistical process of the samples, officials came from different schools and there is no connection between schools. However, many officials whose undergraduate colleges are not good or who intend to continue their studies have mostly chosen the Party School of the CPC Central Committee as their graduate schools or received training in the Party School of the CPC Central Committee. Despite that the majors are different and the time for going to school is different, most of them are alumni or senior students. Hence, it is believed that this alumni relationship provides a link for these officials and is also one of the causes of corruption.

Table 3 Analysis on Influencing Factors of Corruption of Officials at and above Provincial and Ministerial Levels

	The seriousness of the crime
Party standing	-.045*** (0.033)
Length of working period	0.064 (0.046)
Doctor's university	.067 (0.068)
Age	-.091*** (0.071)
Rank	-.010*** (0.200)
Intercept	6.912 (2.465)
Sample number	34
LR chi-square value	2.06
Prob>F	0.1012

Notes: (1) ***p<0.001,**p<0.01,*p<0.05;(2) Standard error in parentheses

Through regression analysis, it is found that the reason for sentencing has a great relationship with the time of joining the Party, which is consistent with the conclusion reached by correlation analysis, indicating that the longer the time of joining the Party, the greater the probability of corruption. Crimes are also linked with the time of starting to work. Doctoral colleges and universities have no influence on the sentence, suggesting that academic qualifications and colleges and universities are not the reasons that affect the sentence. Age is also related to the crime, the age of senior officials who fall off power is mostly in their 50s and 60s. Rank is also a significant factor that affects the crime. Generally speaking, the higher the rank, the more power one has, the more people will wish to use their power to do things, so there will be more bribe-givers. If one is tempted by power and money for a long time, one will inevitably be shaken, and a momentary slip will lead to corruption, which will be out of control from now on. Hence, the greater the power one has, the more corrupt things will be, and the more serious the crime will be as well.

5. Conclusion and Enlightenment

Most of the existing researches adopt the methods of empirical research and theoretical research, briefly describe the existing concepts, simply describe their own findings and come up with their own suggestions. A small number of researchers will make charts based on the collected samples to make specific analysis. This paper principally collects the data of provincial and ministerial officials who have fallen from power since the 19th National Congress. The time limit is May 2019, and the data is relatively new. Through descriptive statistical analysis, correlation analysis and regression analysis, it is concluded that official corruption is linked with the following factors: first, it is related to the time of joining the Party. The longer the time of joining the Party, the more likely corruption will occur. Second, it is relevant with the place of birth. Officials with the same place of birth are more likely to collude with each other and lead to corruption when working in a unified organization. Third, it is concerned with the rank of officials. The higher the rank, the greater the power and the more temptations faced, the more likely corruption will occur. Based on the research results, the following suggestions are proposed:

5.1 Intensify the assessment of officials and ideological education

Through regression analysis, it can be known that it is not that the longer one has been admitted to the Party, the less corrupt he or she will be. The provincial and ministerial officials who have fallen off power have a Party standing of several decades. Under the ideological education of the Party, they are still greedy in taking bribes. The reason for this is that as “old Party members”, they are already familiar with all sorts of education and assessment work of the Party, and ideological reporting and learning are merely procedures and do not take it to heart. Hence, the assessment of Party members should be reinforced, and assessment methods should be constantly changed. Apart from that, senior officials who are “old Party members” have often been separated from the grassroots for a long time. In the long-term process of being an official, they have unconsciously separated themselves from the people, believing that only they themselves are important and forgetting the essence of serving the people. Hence, ideological education needs to be continuously consolidated so that they can clearly understand their positions and responsibilities.

5.2 Establish and perfect the supervision system

Currently, China's supervision over corruption is insufficient. Senior provincial and ministerial officials are often the leaders of a region or a department, and the supervision over them is insufficient. They grasp the greatest power in a region. No one can supervise them in this region except themselves. They have enough time and methods to prepare for the supervision of the central government. Moreover, for geographical reasons, it is unable to carry out regular supervision and inspection, and that is why a large number of officials at and above provincial and ministerial levels fell off power in a short period of time during the strict inspection period. Secondly, as officials at the provincial and ministerial levels have great power, even if a supervisory organization finds traces of corruption and intends to conduct a search, there will be many unfavorable factors. Most

officials have their own relative network, which brings inconvenience to the supervisory agencies. Hence, it is necessary to intensify the restriction on the power of provincial and ministerial-level officials and give supervisory agencies sufficient power to handle affairs so that they can play their due role. There is also a need to intensify public opinion and supervision by the masses. Some officials' crimes were discovered only because of reports from the masses, and thus the masses are also a significant supervisory force. We should attach importance to the role of supervision by the masses and formulate relevant laws to protect informants and ensure their personal safety.

5.3 Intensify the formulation of relevant laws and regulations

First of all, a sound property declaration system should be established to clarify the scope of official property declaration. Next, although provincial and ministerial officials have been escorted to the inspection authorities or have been sentenced for their violations of law and discipline, the legal system is slightly backward compared with the complicated and diverse causes of official corruption. The charges for sentencing are relatively single and cannot fully summarize all the situations. Most of the charges are corruption. Hence, the existing relevant laws and regulations should be perfected to deal with new forms of corruption, and relevant laws should be formulated to clearly define the scope of what public officials can do, and to punish acts that exceed the norms. The effectiveness of laws should be brought into play so that they do not dare to corrupt.

5.4 Intensify the supervision of officials and their families

Corruption of officials is closely associated with family members because family members of the officials are often the shortcut for them to secure advantages through influence. Many bribe payers achieve their goals by giving money and gifts to officials' family members. Officials often use their families to launder money, transfer property, and corrupt as well. Hence, apart from strengthening the supervision of officials themselves, it is also essential to intensify the supervision of their families to prevent them from using their family members to achieve the purpose of corruption or prevent their families from absconding with illicit money.

5.5 Intensify personnel assessment

Before appointing local officials, one must first investigate their backgrounds. Through the analysis of the samples, it can be found that officials of the same place of birth, working in the same place or organization, will take corruption to a certain extent, because in the traditional Chinese concept, people of the same place of birth are all fellow-villagers, just like the saying goes, "tears swim in eyes when fellow-townsmen meet each other." After finding out that they are local people, they often feel close to each other, have closer contacts, and lead to a higher probability of corruption. Apart from the fellow-townsmen, it is also required to prevent relatives and close friends of officials from working together in the same area or obtaining official positions through bribery and other means. Therefore, in the process of recruitment, attention should be paid to the background investigation. Apart from that, the examination should be carried out in strict accordance with the rules and regulations to prevent and decrease the occurrence of the above phenomena.

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