Abstract Number: T06-07

Panel

T06 - Special Topic

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Title

Effect of Personal Characteristics on Corruption: Empirical Evidence from China

Abstract

Corruption is a universal phenomenon that has accompanied human societies for centuries. Nevertheless, many aspects of corruption are still in mystery due to its clandestine nature. While a huge literature has worked on social and institutional determinants of corruption in general, this paper asks a different question: how personal characteristics of government officials affect corruption? While it is true that one society can suffer from heavier corruption than others for differences in social, economic and institutional conditions, it is also a universal fact that not all government officials in a society are corrupt when facing the same institutions.

This paper investigates determinants of corruption at the micro level to see what personal characteristics among government officials impact their corrupt activities. Using a novel dataset based on convictions of corruption-related crimes committed in China for the period 1978-2014, it explores the effect of five individual characteristics on corruption: age, gender, education, official rank and designated power. It is found that corruption exhibits a U-formed pattern across career stages in the government hierarchy: the youngest and eldest officials are more corrupt than the prime-aged. Education, official rank and power authorized to specific positions have robust positive relations with corruption magnitude. Public servants occupying positions with economic powers are more corrupt than with political powers. Law enforcement and ethnic heterogeneity are robust deterrents of corruption. Urbanization in the process of economic development increases corruption. These findings have strategic implications for anticorruption policies.
Reference


**Keyword**

Corruption, Personal characteristics, China