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# Understanding corruption through social norms

– A field study about corrupt behaviour in local institutions in Lusaka

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## Abstract

Research shows that conventional policy interventions aiming to reduce corruption have yielded little success. Shifting the focus from macro level aspects of corruption to focus on micro-level aspects, such as social norms and individual decision-making processes, has recently been suggested as a way to understand underlying reasons why corruption remains persistent in many societies. The thesis aims to uncover reasons for individual corrupt behaviour in Zambia by studying what social norms exist in relation to corruption in local government institutions in Lusaka. It furthermore investigates how social norms can explain the persisting corruption within these local institutions. By conducting in-depth interviews with citizens and stakeholders the study reveals social norms that are conducive to corruption and that are affecting citizens behaviour when interacting with local government institutions. A conflict in the relation between descriptive norms and injunctive norms is discovered and explained by the logic of prisoner's dilemma. The study concludes that social norms could be seen a part of explaining why corruption remains persistent in Lusaka government institutions, and that both injunctive norms and descriptive norms are affecting individual corrupt behaviour. It shows that descriptive norms can explain how individuals justify corrupt behaviour that they in theory think is wrong. It suggests that Lusaka's local government could benefit from including a social norms perspective when designing anti-corruption interventions in order to achieve better results.

Keywords: corruption, social norms, local governments, Lusaka, Zambia

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## Table of Contents

1. Introduction .....	6
1.1 Research problem.....	6
1.2 Purpose .....	7
1.3 Research questions .....	8
1.3.1 Operationalization of concepts .....	8
1.4 Delimitations .....	8
1.5 Disposition.....	9
2. Theory and Previous Research .....	9
2.1 Corruption .....	9
2.2 Social norms.....	10
2.3 Previous research on corruption and social norms.....	13
2.4 Theoretical framework .....	15
2.4.1 Prisoner's dilemma .....	15
2.5 Background .....	16
2.5.1 Macro-level context of Zambia .....	16
2.5.2 Local government of Lusaka.....	18
2.5.3 Corruption in Zambia.....	19
3. Methodology .....	21
3.1 Scientific premises .....	21
3.2 Choice of method.....	21
3.2.1 Qualitative interviews .....	21
3.2.1.1 Interview guide .....	22
3.2.2 Sampling method.....	24
3.3 Analytical tools .....	25
3.4 Coding .....	27
3.5 Critical review of method .....	28
3.5.1 Research Ethics .....	29
4. Material .....	30

5. Results.....	36
6. Discussion.....	40
7. Conclusions.....	45
8. References.....	49
9. Attachments.....	53
9.1 Attachment 1 – Interview guide .....	53
9.2 Attachment 2 – Checklist prior to interview .....	55

# 1. Introduction

“You’re studying corruption? Oh, you have come to the right place.” This is the most common reaction I get when telling Zambians about the research topic for my master’s project. I would argue that this is a good indication of how widespread people perceive the corruption issue in Zambia to be. Upon my arrival in Zambia, settling in as an intern at the political section of the Embassy of Sweden, it took me a while to actually grasp the immense impact corruption has on all levels of the political system and the society. Every Zambian has their own story and own experience of corruption. After being in the country and following the news for six months several big corruption scandals had already shook the government and I had already observed several instances where petty corruption acts seem to be the normal way to act among people. Observing the consequences of this led me to want to explore why people still engage in corruption, despite the harmful effects.

## 1.1 Research problem

Increasing evidence suggests that institutional reform as a response to poor governance often does not work. Many governments remain dysfunctional, despite various policy reforms (Andrews 2013: xi). In fact, when it comes to attempting to reduce corruption studies show an overestimated belief in control institutions, ombudsmen and laws (Kubbe and Engelbert 2018: 2). Still, there is a gap in academic research when it comes to explaining why institutional reforms often do not lead to better governance (Andrews 2013: xi).

Many African countries have extensive anti-corruption laws and institutions in place, and African leaders declared 2018 as ‘the African year of Anti-Corruption’ and stated that corruption is “one of the greatest evils of our time” (African Union Press Release 2018). Despite this, the African Sub-Saharan region is defined by bad performances when it comes to combatting corruption (Transparency International - A Redefining moment for Africa). This is apparent in Zambia, that has introduced several initiatives to work against corruption. Nevertheless, despite these efforts, corruption in Zambia remains widespread and has been increasing in the last years. The government actions against corruption are recognized to lack implementation (GAN Business Anti-Corruption Portal 2017). Only in 2018 several corruption scandals involving the government have been revealed, and several foreign donors have stopped development cooperation with Zambia due to suspected severe corruption and embezzlement of money (News Diggers; Al Jazeera; Zambia Watchdog; Lusaka Times 2018). Corruption is reported on all levels – from

corrupt public procurement procedures to individual bribes (Transparency International Zambia 2018). Zambia keeps declining in Transparency International's corruption perception index and ranks 105 out of 180 countries in 2018 (Transparency International – Corruption Perception Index 2018).

Local authorities top the list of the most corrupt institutions in Zambia according to the 2017 Zambia Bribe Payers Index Report (Daily Nation 2018). According to the survey there is a 37 % likelihood of paying a bribe when seeking a service from a local authority (council). This signifies a 20.2 percentage point increase in the chance of one paying a bribe when seeking a service in 2017, since the last survey in 2014 (Anti-Corruption Commission & Transparency International Zambia 2018: 10).

Considering this negative trend, it is relevant to ask why the issue of corruption does not seem to improve, despite the various legal efforts from the Zambian government's side? Extensive research attempting to explain corruption has been carried out on macro-level. However, the micro-level dynamics of why people engage in corrupt behaviour is a perspective that has not been widely explored by academics until now (Köbis et al. 2015: 1). Increasing evidence shows that many conventional anti-corruption interventions on a legal level lack in result and suggests that one should look at the role of social norms when studying corruption instead. Social norms can tell us about how social practises are maintained and transmitted in communities. This will contribute to a better understanding of the underlying reasons why people engage in corrupt behaviour (Camargo and Passas, 2017). Suggestions are that social norms could act as an explanation for patterns of corrupt behaviour and furthermore explain the resilience of corrupt systems (CDA Scharbatke-Church and Hathaway 2017). This has to my knowledge not previously been explored in a Zambian context, and hence this is identified as an important perspective to study at this moment when corruption is rampant.

## 1.2 Purpose

The purpose of the study is to contribute to an improved understanding of the role of social norms in the persistence of corruption in the local government in Lusaka, Zambia. Furthermore, the study aims to contribute to a better understanding to the underlying mechanisms behind engaging in corrupt activities and how social norms are shaping behaviour in relation to corruption in Lusaka.

### 1.3 Research questions

The thesis will answer the following research questions:

"What social norms exist in relation to corrupt behaviour among citizens interacting within local government institutions in Lusaka?"

"How can social norms explain the persisting corruption within local government institutions?"

#### 1.3.1 Operationalization of concepts

When referring to *social norms* the definition of Ostrom (2000) and Fehr and Fishbacher (2004) will be used. This is further presented in chapter 2.2.

When defining local government institutions, the study takes on a broad approach. Local government institutions will include the providers of those dealing with the tasks that the local governments are responsible for, including law and order, water and drainage, citizen registration, health and education. This is further presented in chapter 2.5.2

To be able to answer whether social norms are explaining the persistence of corruption in local government, it is necessary to assume a relationship between social norms and corruption, and if social norms that are favorable to corrupt behavior exist, the study will also argue that they are part of the explanation why corruption levels in local government remain high. This assumption can be made on the basis on previous research and theory, and is further presented in chapter 2.

### 1.4 Delimitations

Corruption is widespread at all levels of Zambian society. It includes everything from high level corruption such as embezzlement of money, to everyday acts of petty corruption in the form of bribery. Due to the size of this research project it will limit the focus to individual-level corruption within local government institutions. This is of relevance because local authorities are the most corrupt institutions in the country according to recent reports (Daily Nation 2018).

The research scope is also limited to the area of Lusaka. This geographical limitation is considered necessary considering the time frame for this project. The area of Lusaka is seen as a well suited setting because of my previous experience and knowledge about the context, and because of better

possibilities to get in touch with key participants, who would not be available in rural areas of the country.

## 1.5 Disposition

The thesis will start by presenting relevant theoretical framework in relation to corruption and social norms, as well as presenting previous research that has been done in this area. It will thereafter present a contextual background to Zambian society and politics that affects how social norms are expressed. This is followed by presenting brief background related to the corruption issue in the country. Next, the research methodology is presented, including collection and coding of material and analytical tools. In this chapter research ethics will also be described. Thereafter, the material is systematically presented by the help of categorization and codes. The thesis then moves on to presenting the results and discussion. The thesis ends by summarizing the conclusions.

## 2. Theory and Previous Research

### 2.1 Corruption

There are several ways to define corruption but the most well-known might be Nye's definition from 1967: "Corruption is behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private-regarding (close family, personal, private clique) pecuniary or status gains; or violates against the exercise of certain types of private-regarding influencing" (Nye 1967: 417).

A widely used version of this is Transparency international's definition: "Corruption is abuse of entrusted power for private gain" (Transparency International – What is corruption?).

Traditionally research distinguishes between grand corruption and petty corruption (Heimann and Peith 2018: 36). Grand corruption occurs on the highest levels of political systems and governments to gain financial and political profits. It can include manipulation or modification of government institutions and legal and political systems to obtain power, material or financial benefits. Petty corruption occurs at societal level and usually involves bribery and favours between the public and the bureaucratic system. Petty corruption is sometimes referred to as 'survival corruption' where individuals feel required to pay bribes to civil servants to avoid excessive government regulations or bypass bureaucratic procedures (Zakaria 2018: 71-72).

A variety of perspectives on how to reduce corruption have been presented in research. The legal perspective usually recommends legal frameworks, processes and anti-corruption laws as a response to corruption. Contrasting, economists generally focus on incentives that lead to corrupt behaviour. Anthropologists have taken a different perspective by being suspicious towards generalized theories about corruption and focus instead on context specific explanatory models for understanding corrupt behaviour (Hough 2017: 4-5). When it comes to how corruption is seen in broader terms the debate is generally less divided. The general view is that corruption is morally and ethically bad. In the view of this however, one has to deal with the question on how to agree on what right moral and ethical behaviour is – an undertaking that will not reach any consensus. However, the fact still remains that these subjective understandings of what is right or wrong often directly or indirectly affect the process of developing anti-corruption laws and policies (Hough 2017: 27). Understanding what is considered ethically acceptable in a specific social context is hence relevant when aiming to reduce corruption.

This study will take on a broad definition of corruption, arguing that it is “abuse of entrusted power for private gain”, and will focus on individual experiences of petty corruption.

## 2.2 Social norms

Social norms have been widely studied as an academic topic in psychology and sociology, but it is only recently that research on social norms in relation to corruption has been emerging. In a simplified way, social norms can be understood as “cultural products, including values, customs and traditions, but also formal institutions, that shape an individual’s basic knowledge of what other’s do and what others think they should do” (Kubbe and Engelbert 2018: 2). Several definitions of the concept have been suggested in previous research. Ostrom (2000: 143-144) define social norms as “shared understandings about actions that are obligatory, permitted or forbidden within a society”. A more specific definitions could be by Fehr and Fischbacher (2004: 185) when they define social norms as “standards of behaviour that are based on widely shared beliefs of how individual group members ought to behave in a given situation”.

According to research “social norms are central to our understanding of how communities maintain and transmit dominant social practices” (Ensminger and Knight, 1997: 2). In relation to corruption previous studies argue that “social norms dictate the extent to which individuals engage and expect others to engage in corruption” (Kubbe and Engelbert 2018: 2). It is hence highly

relevant to investigate these context specific social norms when attempting to understand why people engage in corrupt behaviour and why it has become a recurrent practice in some societies. Haller and Shore (2005: 17) suggest that one should “explore the way people classify behaviour as appropriate/inappropriate, moral/immoral and legal/illegal in the specific culture we study and analyse these in the context of local standards and practices” in order to understand different underlying perspectives to corrupt behaviour.

Behavioural ethics research is attempting to explain the fact that some people within the same societal context abuse power for their personal gains, and some people do not. According to this, social norms and justification matter a great deal when it comes to deciding whether to engage in a corrupt activity or not (Köbis et al. 2018: 31). In fact, studies show that people frequently engage in corrupt behaviour because they perceive that others are frequently doing it (Ibid: 37).

To further understand how social norms relate to corruption one can make use of a common distinction between two types of social norms stemming from sociology and philosophy. This separates injunctive norms from descriptive norms (Köbis et al. 2018 p.32). *Injunctive norms* refer to whether an act or behaviour is considered moral and/or appropriate in a given social context. All people are equipped with a “moral compass” that guides how one should act in a certain setting and in short, injunctive norms are describing what one “ought to do, or not to do” according to this “compass” (Ibid: 32), irrespective of the perception of how others act. *Descriptive norms*, on the other hand, are referring to the perception of frequency or likelihood of others to adhere to a certain behaviour. It addresses how most people are believed to act in a certain situation, and thus indicates the probability of others to follow the same behaviour (Köbis et. al 2018: 32; Köbis et. al 2015: 2). There is an expectation that the majority of people in a society follow the dominating norms in a certain situation. The expectations can be grounded in past experiences and observations of conformity, on indirect knowledge or projection when we think own behaviour is representative of what most other people would do in a given situation (Bicchieri and Xiao 2009: 192).

It can be debated whether descriptive norms can be labelled social norms since normative and descriptive claims are commonly contradicting each other. However, by referring to previous research about social norms related to corruption, I will stipulate that there exists a type of descriptive social norm. Important to note in this discussion is that descriptive norms are not mere descriptions of reality, like in this case, they are not simply describing the frequency of people

engaged in corruption. Essentially, they are addressing *perceived* frequency of other people engaging in corruption, and how this perception can shape an understanding of what one ought to do, and that can justify corrupt behaviour to one self. In contrast to injunctive norms, descriptive norms justify behaviour without assigning judgment. The difference between the two types of social norms can be clarified and illustrated by where the shared beliefs of behaviour are derived from. In a situation where an individual is faced with a dilemma, injunctive norms tells what one ought to do by referring to moral standpoints, that can be based in fundamental beliefs about right or wrong, for example by religion or traditional cultural values. Contrasting, descriptive norms tell what one ought to do by seeking justification in others behavior, and perceived frequency of a certain behavior among others. This might not be a normative view, but this descriptive knowledge of others' behavior will shape norms that justify how one ought to behave. In this way, descriptive norms might provide a base for injunctive norms, since they can shape understandings of what is moral and immoral. It is however interesting to distinct the two types of norms to illustrate the difference between norms that are independent of how other people act, and on the other hand, norms that are shaped by others' acts.

To demonstrate the two types of social norms I will use an example of bribery. If a person is aware that it is very common to bribe a traffic police to get out of a fine, this person is more likely to pay a bribe in a similar scenario since bribing behaviour is perceived as the normal behaviour. Other peoples' behaviour hence shapes a norm that justify one's own behaviour, and this is what is labelled descriptive norms. This differs from norms that are based in moral and ethical standpoints, the injunctive norms, that looks to one's own values about corruption when faced with such situation, and does not take other's behaviour in consideration.

While injunctive norms about corruption are usually persistent in arguing that corrupt activities are wrong and unethical, descriptive norms about corruption are more likely to transform. In fact, it is suggested that changing descriptive norms is one of the most promising ways to combat corruption (Köbis et al. 2015: 2). Perception of descriptive norms plays a role in peoples (corrupt) behaviour. Some research indicates that the higher the perceived descriptive norms of corruption are, the more people see corruption as justified. However, the relation between corruption and norms is more complex than that, since some studies show that people in countries where corruption is widely prevalent still condemn it (Köbis et. al 2018: 37). Sometimes, injunctive norms and descriptive norms are aligned, and sometimes not. Often corruption is condemned on an abstract principal level, while minor cases of everyday petty corruption or bribery is viewed as less serious

by the public (Ibid: 37). When a norm that is largely followed is violated this causes an inconsistency between the injunctive and descriptive norms. This is often the case when it comes to corruption. Despite legal and social condemning of corruption, people still engage in it. The fact that people still frequently get involved in bribery and other forms of corruption can then persuade people to form expectations that “most people are corrupt” and then generate the descriptive norm that will uphold corrupt behaviour (Bicchieri and Xiao 2009: 193).

The social psychological intuition behind corruption is that if you consider a certain behaviour to be normal, you are likely to do it as well. If corruption is “the normal things to do”, it is justified both to one self and to others (Köbis et al. 2018: 31-32). People look for others to find guidance how to behave in certain situations, especially when a situation is characterized by ambiguity. This means that people use social comparison to evaluate their own beliefs (Lapinski and Rimal 2005: 131). The prevalence of corruption is thus self-reinforcing. Once corruption has become systemic the institutions set up to punish corruption themselves fall prey to the high level of corruption. In that way descriptive norms overshadow codified laws. The existing levels of corruption reflect the descriptive norms in a country (Köbis et al. 2018: 34). As a response to this, also the likelihood that individuals are detected and punished for corruption decreases when corruption reach this systemic level (Ibid: 34).

This study will understand social norms as informal rules that guide human behaviour (Köbis et al. 2018: 32). It is using the definition from Fehr and Fischbacher (2004: 185) claiming that social norms are “standards of behaviour that are based on widely shared beliefs of how individual group members ought to behave in a given situation”. Just as Ostrom (2000: 143-144) argues this creates “shared understandings about actions that are obligatory, permitted or forbidden within a society” – and this is what constitutes social norms. Injunctive norms and descriptive norms are used as two types of social norms and are considered to fit within the larger definition of the concept.

## 2.3 Previous research on corruption and social norms

Research on corruption has during a long time focused on state-centred macro-level factors. However, looking at corruption from an individual perspective has recently gained more interest.

Köbis et al. (2015) study the impact of descriptive norms on corruption. Descriptive norms vary across, and even within, societies. These norms are dependent on the frequency, and maybe even

more important – the *perceived* frequency of corruption within a given context or situation. Through experimental testing they investigated whether perceived descriptive norms of corruption correlate with corrupt behaviour (Ibid: 2-3). Results show that the perceived frequency of corrupt acts significantly influences the decision to engage in a corrupt act (Ibid: 7). The authors suggest that descriptive norms can explain inter-personal and inter-cultural variation in corrupt behaviour in the real world, and changing these is suggested as one of the most promising ways to fight corruption. This is because of the fact that the descriptive norms are more malleable than injunctive norms. There is generally a strong consensus that corruption is ethically wrong, often because of the fact that it is legally wrong. Descriptive norms can however change when perception of the frequency of corruption changes (Ibid: 1-2).

Similarly, Urinboyev and Svensson (2018) have studied how corruption and social norms are affecting everyday life in Uzbekistan. They argue that it is crucial to define local traditions, moral codes and social norms when studying corruption, since even the idea of what constitutes a corrupt act might differ across cultures. Haller and Shore (2005: 189) similarly suggest that one should “explore the way people classify behaviour as appropriate/inappropriate, moral/immoral and legal/illegal in the specific culture we study, and analyse these in the context of local standards and practices” in line with anthropological perspectives.

Hoffmann and Patel (2017) have studied collective action and corruption in Nigeria from a social norms approach. Their report aims to explain why legal and governance-based measures introduced to tackle corruption in Nigeria have yielded little success. They are arguing that the initiated anti-corruption efforts must be complemented by an understanding of why people engage in corrupt behaviour, or refrain from it, and consider the societal factors that are normalizing corruption (Hoffmann & Patel 2017: 3). By exploring corruption in Nigeria as a collective practice they get to explore social beliefs and expectations that sustain individual behaviour related to corrupt acts. Understanding the underlying social drivers of corruption in Nigeria is argued to help to identify what forms of corruption is driven by social norms, and local practices that are driven by conventions, customs and circumstances. This in turn could act as important information to design targeted anti-corruption interventions to transform these practices (Ibid: 3). Some of their key findings are that social norms of corruption are limited to specific sectors and contexts in Nigeria, and that behaviour can change if the contextual environment or options change. A majority of the study participants know that corruption is illegal and consider it wrong, and believe that others know this too. However, individuals are claimed to still justify their engagement in

corrupt practices because they observe others doing it, or as a rational response to a situation. However, even though many people consider corruption wrong, the “true costs” and consequences of corruption are not addressed in normal interactions of daily life (Ibid: vi). As a response to the findings the authors suggest a number of specific interventions to improve the fight against corruption, including highlighting possible “trendsetters” that can drive behavioural change and targeting sectors and communities with information on the costs of corruption (Ibid: viii).

## 2.4 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework presents a model for how collective action and individual decision making can be analyzed. This is based on previous research within this area, indicating that this could be of relevance in corruption research.

### 2.4.1 Prisoner’s dilemma

Prisoner’s dilemma is a commonly used model in game theory to illustrate why people do not cooperate, despite it may be in the best interests for both to do so. The thought experiment consists of a story of two persons, suspected of committing a crime together. They face the option of remaining silent, which if both do would give them equal time in prison, or confessing, which would give less time in prison for the defecting person but sentence the other for a longer penalty. Both suspects are questioned simultaneously and separately, they therefore have no possibilities of coming to a mutual agreement or deciding to cooperate. Since confessing, and betraying the partner, offers a greater individual reward, it is claimed that a rational individual would choose this option. However, the optimal outcome that would result in the least time in prison in total would be for the suspects to both keep quiet. It is thus a thought game of human trust (Moghaddam ed. 2017: 656-657).

In the context of corruption this can be used to explain the social dilemma of why people keep on engaging in corrupt activities, even though it is widely known that eliminating corruption would ultimately be in everyone’s interests. For example, when competing to procure a government contract, the opposing parties might be gaining chances of winning the contract by bribing the responsible official. However, if both parties decide to pay a bribe, their chances of winning the contract are still equal. Hence, the parties would have gained by mutually deciding to refrain from bribing and saved their money instead, and still compete on equal terms. Engaging in corrupt

activities is usually in immediate self-interest, despite that it does not result in an optimal outcome (achieving a society free from corruption). The persistence of corruption might then according to this logic partly be explained by a lack of trust – if one individual decides not to engage in corrupt activities might mean a loss, if other people are not following the same standards. The lack of trust hence creates a vicious circle that sustains corruption.

## 2.5 Background

### 2.5.1 Macro-level context of Zambia

On macro-level multiple factors relating to widespread corruption have been recognised in previous research – colonial history, extractive institutions and lack of transparency among some (Köbis et al. 2015: 2). Some societal factors that can influence the normalization of corruption will briefly be presented in a Zambian context here. This will also add a macro-level background that can give a setting to the participants' everyday life and are argued to shape traditions, moral codes and values that in turn affect social norms in society.

In order to explore the way people value certain behaviour as appropriate/inappropriate, moral/immoral and legal/illegal one needs to be aware of the specific culture that is being studied. This brief background of factors that influence the Zambian context is hence relevant to approach the prevailing traditions, moral codes and values.

Zambia is a country that is facing extensive challenges in terms of human development. The country ranks 144 on the Human Development Index (UNDP 2018) The number of people living in poverty has increased and according to the last population census 2015, 54,4 % of Zambia's population live in poverty, of whom 40.8% live in extreme poverty (Central Statistical Office 2018: 31). The majority of the population living in poverty is however in the rural areas (76%). In Lusaka the poverty rate is 20.20% (Ibid: 31).

Zambia is experiencing a steep increase in population. The population is growing rapidly at 2.8 % per year, which makes the country one of the youngest countries globally by median age (World Bank Report 2018: 3). In 2017 the population is over 17 million, compared to the 3 million people at its independence in 1960 (World Bank – Zambia). The fertility rates in the country are among the highest in the world with an expected 5.5 children per woman in 2017 (Central Statistical Office

2018: 10). The big population growth is creating urgent demands for jobs, education, health and other services – something that the government and economy is not able to provide at present (World Bank Report 2018: 4).

Another factor relevant to the Zambian societal context is the political history and function of institutions. Zambia became independent from British rule in 1964. The nation's first president Kenneth Kaunda and his government controlled the economy and was dependent on a vast public service – already here corruption became common. Under next president Frederick Chiluba's rule, from 1991, corruption reached new levels and became an integral part of public life with corruption scandals among political leaders and public officials. It is claimed that it was during Chiluba's rule that bribery became widespread and a way to get things done by ministers and government officials. After his two mandates corruption is said to have been institutionalised and all of the Zambian society was affected by it – from the judiciary to civil service to local authorities, private sector and political leaders (Momba 2009: 115-116). Despite the following president Levy Mwanawasa claiming to take a stronger stand against corruption it continues to be prevalent, especially at lower levels of government. This is reflected in surveys conducted during this time – Zambians did believe that corruption was increasing and that political leaders and law enforcement agencies neither had will nor capacity to fight it. A survey from 2004 reports 383 suspected cases of corruption and local authorities were rated as the most corrupt institutions in the country (Ibid: 116). This further correlates with the widespread distrust in political leaders, and shrinking respect for political institutions (Ibid: 122). Additional factors that are suggested to have contributed to the persisting high levels of corruption in Zambia are the historically poor economic governance, lack of effective corruption reporting system, absence of independent judiciary and shortage of effective media bodies (Mbao 2011: 261). In fact, up to today Zambians are reported to rely more on informal institutions than formal ones, and especially in the rural areas where the role of traditional leaders is competing with formal institutions (World Bank Report 2018: 13).

On the economic front Zambia is heading into what is feared to be a severe debt crisis. Before the currently ruling party, the Patriotic Front, came to power in 2011 the country was mostly debt-free, due to previous debt reliefs. However, Zambia's external debt (external and private) has risen sharply since 2011 according to IMF, and this indicates that Zambia is at risk of high budget distress (IMF Zambia 2017). The bad economy is affecting the population in many ways. For example the official unemployment rate is 12.6% (Central Statistical Office: 43), but a lot of the employment is in the unorganized sector and is believed to be larger than official numbers is indicating.

In regard to traditions and values that shape the social context in Zambia, many claims to adhere to strong morals and traditions. Christianity in Zambia dates back to the nineteenth-century's missionary movement. Zambia is officially declared 'a Christian nation' and 90% of the Zambian population is Christian. Christian values are deeply embedded in culture and Christianity has had a significant influence in national social and political matters, both under British rule and after independence (Sakupapa 2016). Many Zambians refer to Christian values when faced with questions of moral and ethics, however voices question if these are followed in reality (Zambia Daily Mail 2018).

The typical Zambian lives under financial pressure not only from the immediate family but also extended family and relatives, kinship and clan. Because of the lack of an efficient welfare system in Zambia, many people live under pressure with small financial margins. Brown C.K Kapika (2016) hence describes corruption as a group act that is legitimized not only by politicians but also family members, friends and traditional institutions.

Zambia's national motto is 'One Zambia One Nation'. Yet, this united Zambia is not necessarily reflecting reality, considering that more than 70 tribes with its own language, culture and leader exists within the nation. The fact remains that many people are loyal to their traditional leaders, chiefs, rather than the national leadership (Anti-Corruption Commission 2015).

### 2.5.2 Local government of Lusaka

Lusaka was established as settlement in 1913. Zambia is undergoing rapid urbanization and the annual population growth of the capital is over twice the average for Sub-Saharan Africa (World Bank Report 2018: 4). Official statistics from 2017 indicates that there are now about 3 million inhabitants in Lusaka (Central Statistical Office 2018). The fast growth of the city has led to increased pressure on basic services and infrastructures which in turn has resulted in expansion of informal settlements and falling living standards (World Bank Report 2018: 11).

In Zambia today there are 4 City Councils, 14 Municipal Councils and 54 Local Authorities (Districts). Lusaka is governed by Lusaka City Council (LCC). The local authorities are regulated by national legal framework and their overall functions include:

- Maintain law and order and effective administration of Local Authorities to ensure national security
  - Control the manufacture, storage, sale and use of petroleum, fireworks gas and other combustible or dangerous substance
  - Provide and maintain supplies of clean water and establish water works and water mains;
  - Construct and maintain public roads, streets, sanitary lanes, bridges and water courses and remove all obstacles thereof
  - Control persons and premises engaged in manufacturing, preparations, storage handling, sale or distribution of food or drink including intoxicating substances
  - Prepare and administer schemes for community participation in development;
  - Provide for the registration of births, marriage, deaths, clubs and enumeration of persons or property connected with the administration of Council areas
  - Establish and maintain hospitals, clinics, health centres and environmental and health services
- (Lusaka City Council)

The political wing of the Lusaka City Council is headed by the Mayor and the administrative wing headed by the Town Clerk and eight subject specific departments. LCC is a representative local government with elected local leaders that represent the community forming the Council. When LCC presents their current challenges, it includes illegal land allocation, lack of land spaces, politicization of public spaces, cash flow problems and lack of transport and equipment (Ibid Lusaka City Council).

### 2.5.3 Corruption in Zambia

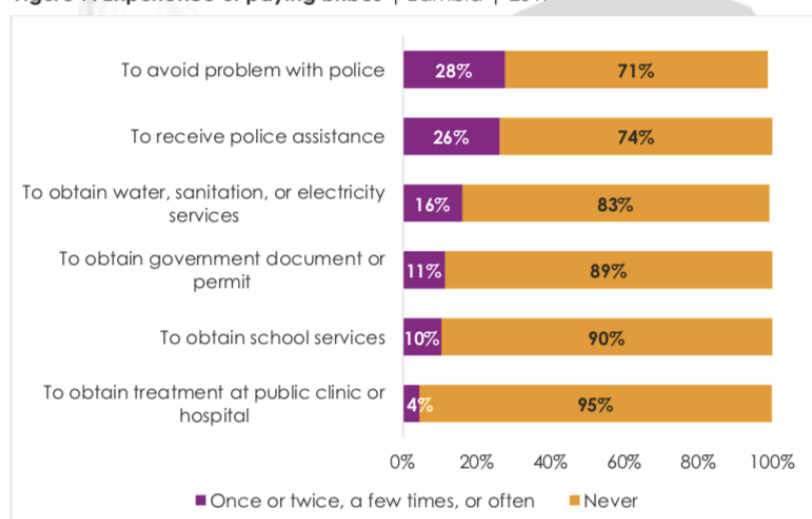
During the last years Zambia has taken several legal steps aiming to fight corruption. There is an Anti-Corruption Act that aims to prohibit corruption, bribes and abuse of offices established since 2012 (National Assembly 2012). The government furthermore enhanced this official mission to work against corruption in their 7th National Development Plan 2017-2021 (7th National Development Plan: 29).

Transparency International Zambia concludes that despite government and president Edgar Lungu giving promises to “remain clean and allow law enforcement agencies to do their work without interference”, this has not been the case, and corruption has become rampant (Transparency International Zambia 2018). The last report from the Auditor General shows a sharp increase in

unaccounted for funds, that has risen from 386, 000 kwacha in 2016 to 31 million kwacha in 2017 and misappropriations of funds rising from 3 million kwacha in 2016 to 5 million kwacha in 2017 (Office of the Auditor General 2017).

Also corruption on individual level appears to be increasing. The 2017 Zambia Bribe Payers Index Survey Report (ZBPI) shows considerable increases in the chance of an individual paying a bribe when seeking a service from Local Authorities, Ministries for Education (General and Higher), and Zambia Police. For example, in 2014 the chance of paying a bribe to an officer in a Local Authority was 16.8%. This increased to 37.0% in 2017, denoting a 20.2 percentage point increase (Anti-corruption Commission, Transparency International Zambia 2017: 1). A survey from Afrobarometer conducted in 2018 similarly shows that a growing number of Zambians are observing rising levels of corruption, and insufficient government response. The survey is reporting that many Zambians say that the overall levels of corruption have increased “somewhat” or “a lot” between 2014 and 2017 (Afrobarometer Dispatch No.213 p.2). The survey also shows a big shift in how Zambians consider that the government handles the fight against corruption. Since 2013 the number of people considering the government handling corruption “Fairly bad” or “bad” has risen steeply from 42% to 71% (Ibid: 3-4). The survey asked Zambians whether they had been in contact with public service providers and if they had to pay a bribe, give a gift or do a favour to obtain services they needed. Results show that the most frequent experience of having to pay a bribe is to avoid a problem with the police, as indicated in chart below. (Afrobarometer Dispatch No.213: 6)

**Figure 7: Experience of paying bribes | Zambia | 2017**



### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Scientific premises

The study adopts a qualitative approach. This approach aims at identifying individual perspectives and interpretations to gain a deep understanding of meaning assigned to events, behaviour or objects and underlying reasons, beliefs and motives (Hennik et al. 2011: 9-16). This approach is ideal for this study since it aims to understanding underlying mechanisms of corrupt behaviour. Qualitative researchers acknowledge the importance of contextual influences of their study object and study things in their natural settings (Ibid: 9). This is also important for this study since it can provide an in-depth understanding of specific behaviour and opinions and is useful for identification of social and cultural norms (Ibid: 10).

Often the underlying ontological assumption within a qualitative approach is based on an interpretive paradigm, and so also in this study. This assumes that reality is subjective and socially constructed - made up of meanings, perceptions and beliefs (Hennik et al. 2011: 10-15). The epistemological perspectives of a qualitative approach similarly mean that facts are subjective and aims to “understand subjective meaningful experiences” and “meaning of social actions within the context in which people live” (Ibid: 14). Since this study aims to understand human behaviour in a Zambian context this approach is well suited.

The study will take on a deductive approach where the research starts with previous theoretical knowledge that drive the collection of data (Bryman 2012: 24). The theoretical concepts that are guiding the collection of material and analysis are based in previous research about corruption and social norms.

#### 3.2 Choice of method

##### 3.2.1 Qualitative interviews

An in-depth interview is a one-to-one method of data collection that involves a profound dialogue on a specific topic (Hennik et al. 2011: 109). The aim for the researcher is to use the method of semi-structured conversation to gain insight into certain issues (Ibid: 109). In-depth interviews are

ideal to conduct when the aim is to identify people's motivations for certain behaviour and in-depth information on sensitive issues (Ibid: 110). Therefore this is considered an ideal method in this study.

In an interview setting it is crucial to acknowledge both personal and interpersonal researcher reflexivity. Personal reflexivity addresses the fact that a researcher's own background and assumptions will influence the research process and data. In an interview setting the researcher's way of formulating a question, or expressing a statement, or even the way he/she is dressed might affect the respondent. It is hence important to be aware of the possible ways that this might affect the answers. Interpersonal reflexivity recognizes that the interview setting and interpersonal dynamic between researcher and respondent can influence the material. It is hence important to take this in consideration when processing and analysing the responses (Hennik et al. 2011: 20). Reflexivity also involves being aware of the "wider social context" of where the research is taking place, which might include both political, cultural and social settings (Ibid: 21). It is here an advantage that I have spent six months in Zambia prior to the interview process, and hence have a good idea about the social setting. For reason of transparency I will also consistently take field notes, to define the setting in which the data is collected. These will include the observations regarding setting of the interview, elements that might be affected by my own research identity and relation towards the participant. Prior to each interview I have also paid attention to personal reflexivity as well as interpersonal reflexivity and these reflections are noted in the field notes. The field notes of each interview present the settings that have been chosen by the participants themselves, in order to make sure that it is in a setting where they feel comfortable to openly talk about the issue of corruption, that is still quite sensitive, since it often includes criminal acts. Since I had a previously established relation with many of the respondents the dynamic between researcher and participants was often favourable for an honest interview. The sample and participants are further presented in chapter 3.2.2.

### 3.2.1.1 Interview guide

The semi-structured in-depth interviews follow an interview guide, created by the advice of Hennik et al. (2011: 114). It is vital to have an interview guide prepared in advance to give structure to the interview and make sure to capture what is intended. The semi-structured design however allows for insights during the interviews and to come up with new questions and themes along the conversation. The guide that has been used in the interviews of this study should therefore be seen

as a tool to guide the interview, but it has not been followed step by step. This is because of the importance of finding a flow in the interview that has been prioritized, rather than following all the questions in the pre-established order. However, the guide has been a good support to make sure that all relevant themes of the purpose is included.

The design of the questions is important to consider. The research question and relevant theoretical framework have been considered when developing the interview guide. Also, the questions are designed in a way as to suit the Zambian context, based on knowledge from previously interacting with Zambian citizens and living in the country. How can then social norms be operationalised into comprehensive questions? Hoffmanns and Patels previous study on corruption and social norms in Nigeria was used as inspiration when developing the interview guide to capture the social norms. They use five components to measure in regard to social norms:

- Behaviour – What did you do?
- Prudential reason – What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of the behaviour?
- Empirical expectations – What do you think other people do?
- Personal normative belief – What do you think about the practice?
- Normative expectation – What do you think other people think should be done?

(Hoffmann and Patel 2017: 7)

Each of these components resulted in several questions that would capture the theme of each of them. It is relevant to initially talk about behaviour to spark conversations about corrupt activities and further to make the participants reflect of their own and others behaviour. These components might be descriptive in their nature, but they are used as a tool to be able to discover normative beliefs and expectations around corrupt behaviour that can be used to identify the social norms. (See attachment 1 for interview guide)

The interview guide was tested in two pilot interviews and modified thereafter. This was done to make sure that the order of the questions was appropriate and that the questions and themes are well constructed. For the sake of transparency, it is marked in the transcribed interviews what version of the guide was used.

Moreover, the interview guide includes an introductory checklist, comprising information about myself, the purpose of my research, what kind of data I am collecting and how it will be used, as well as the necessary ethical considerations (further presented under 3.5.1. Research Ethics). (See attachment 2)

### 3.2.2 Sampling method

The purpose of a qualitative study is to acquire “in-depth” information about certain issues. The focus is hence less on attempting to find a representative sample, and for the sample size to be big, which is the case with quantitative studies. However, a researcher should always be aware of the sample and the possible ways it might affect the study results (Hennik et al. 2011: 17).

Participants in this study have been selected by convenience sampling and snowball-sampling. Because of the observed difficulty to get people to talk openly and honestly about corruption in Zambia some participants have been selected by convenience sampling. This means that they are selected on the basis of easy access for the researcher. One has to be aware that the sample will hence be influenced by the researcher’s context and what kind of people that are accessible – which will affect the representativeness of the sample (Ritchie and Lewis eds. 2003: 81-82). This method was however considered necessary because of the limited time and resources of this study. Snowball-sampling involves asking people that have been interviewed if they know anybody else that would consider participating in the research. This method involves the risk of the diversity of the sample being compromised, but since this study does not aim to generalize over a whole population, this sampling method is still considered being suitable (Ibid: 94). Furthermore it is appropriate because of the sensitive character of the issue that is being studied. Based on previous experiences of the Zambian context it is considered to be too sensitive to approach “any kind of people” and have them to open up about their own experiences. By snowball-sampling there will be a person of reference and hence higher likelihood that participants agree to be interviewed and are being honest about their experiences.

The sample frame will target Zambians that have been seeking services from, or in any other have been in interacting with, local government authorities during the last two years. It is worth noting that the very majority of citizens in Lusaka fits into this category in one way or another, as the local authorities are responsible for necessities such as water, electricity and law enforcement – elements present in citizens everyday life. People that are relevant to the corruption issue in Zambia, based on information from previous interviews, will also be considered relevant to interview. For example if many participants mention that the police force is the most corrupt government authority, this is considered of relevance for the study. The sample frame will also include participants that have empirical knowledge and insight into the issue of corruption in Zambia. These will be selected by

relevance to the research topic. For example Transparency International Zambia and the Anti-Corruption Commission are considered being leading in corruption research in the country, and hence relevant to include in the study.

The material consists of 9 in-depth interviews conducted between February and April in Lusaka. The sample is quite small which affects the opportunity to draw larger conclusions. It would have been desirable to have a larger sample size in order to further saturate the findings but due to difficulties of finding participants to the study and the time constraints this sample is considered acceptable. Key issues and concepts were reoccurring among the participants. For the sake of transparency basic data about the interviews are presented below, and include gender and location, as these factors might affect the answers (see chapter 3.3.1.1 on researcher reflexivity). The fact that the sample is consisting of male participants is not considered biasing the results, because the social norms around corruption are affecting everyone in a society. However, there is a possibility that different genders are affected differently by the occurring social norms in a society, but this study will not have the resources to investigate this issue. Since the results of this study are not aimed to be generalizable over a larger group, the lack representability in the sample group is not considered harmful. Furthermore, the fact that most of the participants come from the same social background, being part of a young Zambian middle class, is affecting the answers and is considered when analysing the material. The sample does not include any people in high positions of power or politicians, which as presented before are more commonly involved in grand corruption. Since this study is delimited to individual petty corruption the sample is then considered appropriate.

Table 1. Interview overview

Interview nr	Date	Gender	Location
1	2019-02-18	Male	BongoHive
2	2019-02-22	Male	Health Club
3	2019-02-26	Male	BongoHive
4	2019-03-13	NA	Transparency International Zambia Office
5	2019-03-14	NA	Anti-Corruption Commission Office
6	2019-03-15	Male	BongoHive
7	2019-03-19	Male	Local office
8	2019-04-05	Male	Local café
9	2019-04-16	Male	BongoHive

### 3.3 Analytical tools

Analysis of qualitative data allows for the researcher to immerse in the data to find and interpret themes and perspectives (Hennik et al. 2011: 205). Analysis of qualitative data is of interpretive

nature, which means that “researchers need to understand, explain and interpret human experience” (Ibid: 205). This involves making sense of people’s individual experiences and uncovering social and cultural meanings that underlie people’s behaviour (Ibid: 205). This aspect goes well in hand with the aim to identify underlying norms related to corrupt behaviour.

Qualitative research is cyclical in its nature. This allows for the researcher to identify key issues in each point of data collection and refine and follow up on this in the next point of data collection. By this the researcher is open for inductive insights and can go deeper into the issues of each data collection point. This process will continue until saturation is reached – when no more new information is emerging (Hennik et al. 2011: 111).

Material gathered by interviews often represents a large amount of unstructured text. In order to more clearly interpret, identify and map out the social norms in the material a concept scheme will be used in the process of analysis. This is useful when one knows in advance what arguments and approaches that one wants to study. The concept scheme used in this study is based on main characteristics of the two types of social norms, as previously presented in chapter 2.2.

Table 2. Concept Scheme

	Key concept	Key words
Injunctive norms	Specific courses of action approved by others in a given social context	wrong, immoral, illegal, forbidden, bad, accepted, permitted
Descriptive norms	How many other people in the same situation would act in this specific way, Is this behaviour common	everyone, frequent, common, everywhere, no one

The aim of the concepts is to facilitate the identification of appearance of social norms in the material. The concepts have been complemented with key concepts and words as they have been appearing during the process of going through the material. Both the concepts as a whole and the words are used as a guide when interpreting the material.

### 3.4 Coding

The interviews are recorded and transcribed into word-to-word replica of what was spoken during the interview. The focus is on the informational content and meanings attached to it, hence the transcription does not have to include details about sounds, accents, pauses or similar. Since it aims to capture personal experiences and underlying norms it will however note aspects that can help interpret these underlying layers, by marking speech fillers and specific verbal gestures, as advised by Hennik et al. (2011: 211).

The transcription of the interviews was done directly after each of them. There are several advantages by transcribing directly after one interview is completed. Firstly, it allows for reflection and identification of possible modifications or subjects that should be brought up in the next interview, as the cyclical nature of qualitative research suggests. Secondly, it is advantageous to reflect on the main themes that appeared in the interview to start identifying possible patterns in the material.

By transcribing and coding the interview material certain themes and categories become visible. These are identified in relation to the theoretical frameworks of social norms as well as background information on Zambia and what was apparent as being reoccurring in the material. The coding method aims to pinpoint the social norms related to corruption in the material. The process of coding involves carefully reading the material and assessing its content and deciding what code is appropriate (Hennik et al. 2011: 227). The codes intend to break down the data into preconceived standardized codes (Bryman 2012: 568). A code is “an issue, topic, idea, concept or process that is evident in the data”. Simply it can be seen as topics that are discussed by participants and developed by reading the data (Hennik et al. 2011: 230). In this case the codes are deductively grounded in the main concepts related to social norms in the concept scheme. (See chapter 3.3) The aim is to label and organize the data to have a better view of the parts that are of theoretical significance. The five categories to measure social norms, as presented previously in chapter 3.2.1.1, was used as coding categories to be applied to the transcribed interviews. When systematically going through the material the codes were used to identify and distinguish certain quotations and episodes that express the social norms. In order to get a clear overview of the material each code will be attributed a colour. When an expression of each code appears in the material this was marked with respective colour.

Orange	Behaviour – What did you do?
Red	Prudential reason – What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of the behaviour?

Green	Empirical expectations – What do you think other people do?
Blue	Personal normative belief – What do you think about the practice?
Purple	Normative expectation – What do you think other people think should be done?

Furthermore, to recognize the Zambian context and traditions relating to corruption and that build the norms, categories have been distinguished in the material during the same round of first coding. It is helpful to define underlying kinds of motives for behaviour and note that several motives can be present at the same time (Hoffmann and Patel 2017: 7). The categories hence serve the purpose to identify and structure the motives to why people do or do not engage in corruption in certain situation. This is relevant to answer in order to be able to understand whether this is influenced by social norms. The codes function to highlight specific issues in the data, and the categorization serves to group broader conceptual data that will be a tool to build conceptual frameworks that can explain the theory (Hennik et al. 2011: 246). The categories are the following:

- Examples of situations involving corruption
- Reasons to engage in corruption
- Reasons not to engage in corruption
- How others behaviour and decisions affect oneself
- Normalization of corruption

Quotes and expressions for each of these themes are gathered under each headline to simplify comparison between participant's answers and to identify reoccurring answers. This is part of the categorization process that involves identifying codes with characteristics that can be grouped into broad categories (Hennik et al. 2011: 245). A first draft of categories was created before the coding process started, grounded in the theoretical framework, and later complemented with categories that were frequently appearing in the material.

### 3.5 Critical review of method

Interpretivism is often contrasted with positivism, and sometimes criticized for being “less scientific” than the latter. Since interpretive research is based on subjective interpretations of meanings, perceptions and beliefs, it cannot be ‘proven’ or falsified, in the same way as quantitative data. Because of this, researcher reflexivity is crucial when using qualitative approaches (Hennik et al. 2011: 19). Since the material and data acquired through qualitative methods will be affected by the researcher's own perspectives, background, position and beliefs, reflexivity will let the researchers consciously reflect on how their own assumptions and positioning might influence the

research process and results (Ibid: 19). In this study reflexivity will be an integral part of the whole process by me taking stock of my role and actions as researcher and being explicitly aware of my own self-identity and beliefs, as suggested by Hennik et al. (2011: 19). This is especially important since I am studying a Zambian context as an “outsider”. The issue with personal and interpersonal reflexivity was mitigated through self-reflection and awareness throughout the whole process, as well as well-chosen settings for interviews and pilot-interviews to ensure the most favourable conditions for the respondent. To ensure that reflexivity is existing during the research process it was recorded in field notes and memos during the entire process.

Another common critique of qualitative research is the fact that results are non-generalizable to larger groups. In this study, it is an active choice to focus on acquiring deep knowledge in the subject of study, instead of attempting a representative sample of large size. The fact that the results will not be generalizable to a larger population is hence considered being mitigated by the fact that the results will be of another deeper character. This is also justifying the fact the sample is not representative and does not reflect the characteristics of the different group of people in Lusaka.

A similar disadvantage with an interview study is that it is time-consuming and often prevents the researcher from studying a larger population. Other methods, as for example a survey study, could have reached a larger population and produced results that could be considered more generalizable in the area of study. However, since the aim of this study is to acquire deeper knowledge about social norms and behaviour, interviews were considered the most suitable because of its possibility to establish trustful conversations with the participants.

A possible drawback in using a deductive approach is that a researcher might lose out on insights and theoretical perspectives that might arise during data collection and analysis when only focusing on a pre-set hypothesis. However, since this study is aiming to connect two theoretical concepts – social norms and corruption, and to test the relationship between them, a deductive approach was considered most useful. This will help to understand whether previous research on social norms and corruption also is valid in a Zambian context.

### 3.5.1 Research Ethics

A crucial part of research ethics concerns the participants of a study, how they can be treated and protected. Protection of the individual means that research participants “should be protected of

harms and wrongs” (Swedish Research Council 2017: 12-13). This has hence been a priority when designing the study and during the interview process. A fundamental issue in research ethics is the balance between risk and benefit (Ibid: 20). In order to mitigate the risks for individuals involved in this research, a consciousness of possible risks will be present during the entire research process. For example, since corruption involves illegal activities, it is a risk talking openly about personal experiences of this. Hence this risk is considered when handling the material. All participants will be informed of the preconditions of their participation and state their consent through a checklist prior to their interview. (See appendix) In the check-list all the participants will be guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity. The interviewee will also be asked for permission to audio-record and receive information about how the recording will be handled. The recordings are transcribed word by word and in the transcription of the interviews any information that could in any way identify the participant has been removed. The participants are informed of this process prior to the interview and before giving their oral consent to participate in the study. This is considered necessary due to the sensitive nature of the research topic. These insurances are also important for the establishment of a valid relationship and informed consent from the research participants (Hennik et al. 2011: 112).

#### 4. Material

Through coding and categorization some factors that constitute social norms in relation to corrupt behaviour in Zambia have become visible. The main material will in this chapter be summarized and presented by help of categories and the concept scheme.

Apparent in the material is that every participant has their own experience of corruption, be it themselves engaging in corrupt behaviour, or frequently witnessing corruption in their life. The first category “examples of situations involving corruption” goes hand in hand with the code relating to social norms “behaviour”, describing what someone did in a certain situation. Instances where participants have experienced corruption include getting access to services, for example involving electricity, certificates, schooling. Very common is also bribing local police officers in order to get out of fines, or in order to get access to their services. That these kind of corrupt acts are common have been established by previous surveys in Zambia, and this study confirms this.

Participants present several reasons to why they believe corruption has become a common feature in Zambian society. This is interesting to understand because of the need to recognize local

practises that constitute social norms. Firstly, there is an extensive inefficiency in the service delivery system that leads to many feeling forced to go into bribery in order to get access to what they need. As an example, a participant describes the local civic centre as constantly having long ques which in increases the likelihood of bribing:

“..if you go at civic centre you find ques, ques and ques. You know. I remember the time I was doing my permit to register at the civic centre, if you want to get married, there was a que. You know. Now you find out maybe you want to get married on Saturday, and it’s a Friday. But you need, cause you need to have a marriage certificate, so it’s there corruption comes in. Cause we can’t do the wedding, these are examples that I’m giving. There’s a que and time is moving, you know. So it’s there corruption comes in. If I’m there at lunch time, they will just follow the person that’s in charge who is going to have lunch, they’ll talk, the person that was number 8 and I was number 3 and the person that was number 8 comes out with certificate, how has it happened? So it means that person was given money.” – Interview 2

All participants’ perception of service delivery is that it is overall poor and the confidence in the “system” and institutions is low. Bribes are often seen as necessary in order to be able to get by in society.

“Here things get done really slow. So if you want something that first is not possible, you pay something and you get it.” - Interview 6

“When the system is broken people wanna pay to get services faster because if you just follow the normal service it’s like, you get it, you won’t get it done fast.” – Interview 1

The poor service system are exemplified by the participants in regard to many different services that the local government is responsible for, for example maintaining water and electricity, construction of roads, community administration, registration of births and deaths, and health services.

It is widely recognized that the Zambian service delivery system is malfunctioning at large. Many civil servants have very small economical margins and feel pressured to try to use any situation possible to increase their income. For example, many civil servants have a low income and thus feel pressure a to demand bribes to make sure that they can live up to their economical duties. This is also noted by the participants:

“...I think like a lot of the civil servants, because they’re so lowly paid, they’re trying to do whatever they can to supplement their income. And any chance they get, like if they know by them being a barrier it is for you achieving something that you need, like whether it’s getting a deed to your house, whether it’s having the water company coming in to fix the water pipe, or you have a disconnection

issue, they, in my experience, try so hard to frustrate you, try so hard to make your life miserable that it seems so convenient to give them what they want.” – Interview 3

“So certain individuals would just do certain things to frustrate you, because you don’t want to pay them, and so to show you that if you had paid them, they would’ve gotten this done for you quickly”.  
– Interview 7

Because of this behavior among civil servants, trust in public institutions is very low. Since services do not work as they should people get frustrated up to the point that they don’t see any other option than engaging in corruption to get things done. There is a sort of desperation among many citizens and this is expressed among the majority of the participants.

“just, you chose which way you want to go for right, you either go for the frustrating part, which is, I think the whole system now is sort of designed to, it’s not designed, but it sort of resulted in a way that it’s very risky to go by the normal procedures.” – Interview 7

“they, (civil servants) in my experience, try so hard to frustrate you, try so hard to make your life miserable that it seems so convenient to give them what they want” – Interview 3

“When it comes to corruption, you can say that ‘no I don’t want to do corruption’, but maybe people find themselves in, they are squeezed, they are pushed against a wall and find that there’s nothing that they can do, they will just involved themselves in corruption.” – Interview 2

All of these scenarios have to be placed into the local social- and historical context to really understand the background of these behaviors. Some participants mention Zambia’s history as an explanation why certain mindsets and traditions that are favorable to corruption are engrained in society.

“I feel that this can go back to colonial times. You know, after the end of colonization it was very hard for people to have opportunities. It was people coming from literally being owned, to being free for the first time and having nothing. It’s not that colonization ended and there was a massive wealth distribution scheme that was handled well. So I believe like, you know we even call it a ‘colonial mindset’, I think to fight, like back in the days when nobody had anything. And that mindset has perpetuated you know.” - Interview 3

Equally the historical role of traditional leaders in society is suggested to play a role in corruption levels.

“At social level we identified who is major stakeholder of social norms in the fight against corruption, and traditional leaders were identified as one of the major stakeholders as people that are custodians of traditional customs that impact negatively, or may impact positively on corruption.” – Interview 5

“I think because of culture you have a situation where, in culture you can’t really speak up to your elders, you can’t speak up to someone who is above you. This could be a church leader, an elderly family member, your chiefs people like that, so you come from those environments so when you then get into, you know you move to the city and you’re working and stuff like that, but you still have those sort of structure towards certain positions of power and that behavior still comes into those environments and those people in those positions of power will radiate that power and will bring that power and they want that authority and they will speak in that way” – Interview 7

Noticeable within society is also the fact that many Zambians still live in poverty and lack information, and this is suggested to affect attitudes towards corruption, and hence also affect the social norms related to this.

“I feel that there’s a lot of desperation in Zambia given that you know, there’s so much unemployment, people are struggling to get by” – Interview 3

“it is basically about survival it’s about putting food on the table and that takes away that kind of power for them to make the right choices. So they risk making wrong choices because the only thing they’re interested in is having the next meal, so it has that element of disempowering people. So that’s the only thing I would say that contributes to that kind of situation, someone who is in that situation cannot manage to resist being given a bribe, even demanding for.” – Interview 4

Many participants have mentioned that this societal context could be beneficial for the spread of corrupt behavior. Furthermore, the fact that poverty remains visible to everyone in the country has created a mindset of greed and status that contributes even more to people wanting to gain money in any way possible, be it through legal or illegal methods, since the fear of falling down into poverty is constantly there.

“I think eh it (corruption) is about greediness. You want to have, you want to live that life. They admire the life, like in Europe and the States. Let’s give examples. But if the money you get is not enough, what happens? You involve yourself in corruption.” – Interview 2

“it has to do with selfishness and greed, you know, people wanting self-enrichment and self-aggrandizement you now and funds” – Interview 4

“You have, because you have that status factor in society, it makes those people that should actually be happy, should actually be content, makes them feel insecure and so that could push people to do things that they normally shouldn’t do. Desperation. I mean, desperation comes from all sorts of things but I think mainly in society status gets people to do things that they shouldn’t actually do.” – Interview 7

Participants agree that corruption is common or very common in Zambia. Most also agree that it is so common that it has become an engrained part of society and in some situations so normalized that people don’t reflect on it.

“Cause you know you want quick services, want things to be done there and then. So it has become like a normal, normal thing. The way I see it. It’s everywhere. Check with the cops, the traffic guys. It’s a normal thing. It’s like a normal thing. So it’s like, people, it’s a part of life, the way it is now.” – Interview 2

“So it’s not that I feel that people don’t have the information that this thing is wrong, and didn’t grow up with these values that this thing is wrong is just that it has become so socially accepted and it has become such a norm and a lot of people have learned to believe that it’s the only way to get things done” – Interview 3

It is described as people seeing corruption as “the normal way” to go about when interacting with civil servants. People are expected to “know what to do” when they are asked to pay a bribe to acquire a service and see it “as a way of doing business”.

He (civil servant) just said ‘you need to know what to do’. There’s a language. They won’t say ‘ok, give us’, no. There’s a language. So you know what to do. – Interview 2

“...it’s just like common knowledge where you can actually pay a bribe to get by and where you have to follow procedure, and people just know that” – Interview 5

To many participants it is in certain situations socially acceptable to be corrupt and people do not fear of repercussions:

”You find that the corrupt are the ones that are being glorified and, there’s basically nothing that happens that would deter someone from engaging in the bribes.” – Interview 4

“So you’re aware that the act is not right, right? But the fear of doing it is not there because the likelihood of say, facing those consequences, is very slim.” – Interview 7

It can be seen as a socially acceptable behavior because the lack of negative consequences of engaging in corruption. If the behavior was widely considered as bad there would be a more widespread fear of the consequences and judgements from others.

People see other people engaging in corruption and by this a normalization process of these actions starts. “Paying your way out” of a situation is described to have become the norm.

“Cause you know you want quick services, want things to be done there and then. So it has become like a normal, normal thing. The way I see it. It’s everywhere. Check with the cops, the traffic guys. It’s a normal thing. It’s like a normal thing. So it’s like, people, it’s a part of life, the way it is now.” – Interview 2

“So it’s not that I feel that people don’t have the information that this thing is wrong, and didn’t grow up with these values that this thing is wrong is just that it has become so socially accepted and it has become such a norm and a lot of people have learned to believe that it’s the only way to get things done” – Interview 3

“Everybody kind of knows, but too afraid to say anything about it. And you feel that well, these guys are in power and they’re doing everything they can to benefit themselves so why shouldn’t I?!” – Interview 3

However, worth noting is that there seems to be less acceptance towards certain types of corruption than others among the participants. Specifically, grand corruption that benefits the ones that are already rich is described to be socially frowned upon versus an “average citizen” bribing their way out of an everyday situation.

“I feel like there are various things like if you are paying bribes to cut in line for example, for a deal, we’ll never engage in such a thing. Or paying bribes to ZRA because you need to pay taxes so you pay less, that’s not right. Or embezzling funds for like, and corruption is not like, or obviously it’s in relation to government but just stealing funds from an organization, it’s just stuff like that like, you will get called out by like Zambians or social media. So you will get called out for such things, whereas if you pay a bribe to the cops it’ll be like ‘no worries it’s just a cop’.” – Interview 9

“we have situations where like it’s just totally unacceptable, whether it’s like paying for a contract to win business or paying in school, those things are shunned upon and like different in a sense” – Interview 9

There are hence some situations when it does not seem to be widely accepted to engage in corruption. “Common knowledge” tells people when and where bribing is understood as permitted or not. For example, “everybody knows that you can’t give bribe to a RTSA (Road Transport & Safety Agency) person” (interview 1), while giving bribes to traffic police on the other hand is widely accepted. Other reasons that refrain people from engaging in corruption are moral reasons, some seems to refer to very strong moral standpoint that do not allow them to be corrupt. In the material, these standpoints are in some instances connected to religious values (interview 2, 3, 7) or upbringing (interview 3).

In general others’ behavior seems to influence individual’s corrupt behavior. Many examples among the participants claim that one looks to other’s behavior when facing a certain situation. If they are faced with a situation where they believe that others would engage in corruption this is claimed to increase the likelihood of themselves doing the same. This is especially in regard to interaction with the police force. The high frequency of bribery then makes the act normalized and people feel less hesitant to engage in it.

“there are certain things where you don’t necessarily need the law if it’s socially frowned upon, where people do not accept it, it is looked as unacceptable behavior, then it makes a very big difference.” – Interview 4

Furthermore, many lift the example of people in leadership positions in society setting an example of behavior. Since people are looking to others when faced with a decision, seeing people in top

positions and their decision to engage in corruption, seems to affect how people in society view the actions.

“why should I pay my taxes or why should I be compliant, you know when these people are cheating the system and are becoming massively wealthy.” – Interview 3

“If the people up there are dirty, other people tend to be dirty.” – Interview 6

The material has presented the different categories that were identified during the coding process, that is: examples of situations involving corruption, reasons to/not to engage in corruption, how others behaviour and decisions affect oneself and the normalization of corruption. In the next chapter it will be identified how the material relates to social norms around corruption.

## 5. Results

How can then the categories that have been identified in the material help to define which social norms exist in relation to corruption? The results will map out the social norms that relate to corruption that can be made visible in the participants' answers. Since social norms are about certain shared beliefs and behaviour of a certain group these results will not attempt to claim that these are social norms that guide all *Zambian* citizens' behaviour. It will rather be a suggestion as to why the participants in the study engage in corruption. Consequently, this chapter will present the social norms that can be recognized in the participants' interviews and furthermore how this can help explaining the persisting corruption within local government institutions.

Many explanations that the participants are giving to why they perceive corruption being so common in their country also indicate how the social norms related to this have been developing and shaped. To map these out more clearly the five components to measure in regard to social norms as presented by Hofmann and Patel (see chapter 3.3.1.1) will act as a guide. What is looked for in the material is then behaviour, prudential reasons, empirical reasons, personal normative beliefs and normative expectations.

In the material many situations involving corrupt behaviour have been apparent. Both situations that have been experienced by the participants themselves and situations that they have heard of. Common among the participants is that all the situations involving corruption that they have experienced were cases of petty corruption in everyday situations, either in work settings or as citizens. Since the sample of participants did not include any high level decision makers or similar

it is of no surprise that the situations of corruption did not include high cases of corruption. However, participants have heard of these cases. The type of corruption that is described as normal in everyday life situation is bribing traffic police, applying for different types of permits and documents from local authorities and seeking services to get access to electricity or water. In almost all services provided by local government institutions there have been examples among the participants of having to engage in corruption when seeking a service. This is either because they see it as necessary to pay a bribe to get access to services, or because they want a faster service. This concerns everything from the task of maintaining law and order to registration and permits of persons and properties to health services. (See chapter 2.5.2 Local government of Lusaka)

Prudential reasons address what advantages or disadvantages the participants see in corrupt behaviour. In every situation involving corruption that has been depicted by participants they have been able to see both advantages and disadvantages with the behaviour. The most immediate advantage of corrupt behaviour is getting the service that you want or get out of an unwanted situation. It is often expressed that a minor bribe can “solve a situation” that has been a problem. Some describe it as refraining from paying a bribe in a situation might unnecessarily delay a service or block access completely. Also trying to go by an issue in the “right way” can be very time consuming with long bureaucratic procedures – corruption can often shorten the procedures and result in a quicker solution. The disadvantage that everyone agrees with is that no matter how normalized petty corrupt acts has become in Zambia, it is after all illegal and despite many seeing it as highly unlikely to get caught and face legal consequences when engaging in corruption, it still entails a risk to commit a crime. Especially when it comes to corruption within the professional life, corruption is seen as riskier as it might damage your own or your company’s professional reputation. Another disadvantage is that corruption many times goes against a person’s moral standpoints. This then means that a corrupt act comes with some feelings of guilt and anxiety for many of the participants. Furthermore, having to pay a bribe to get a service that should be provided for free comes with the obvious disadvantage that you will be losing money, which many describe as frustrating. In the long term many also seem aware that their individual engagement in corruption contributes to upholding a corrupt system that is harmful for society in the long run.

Empirical expectations address what one thinks other people do, in terms of corrupt behaviour. There is a wide agreement that many engage in corruption and that most of the people when faced with a situation involving petty corruption in an everyday setting would not refrain from committing the corrupt act. Some believe that certain people would never engage in corruption

because of their moral standing or because of religious reasons. However, many agree that when facing a situation where pressure and frustration grow big enough, many would be prepared to oversee those values. It is considered “common knowledge” within society to know in what kind of situations corruption would be accepted and how to engage in it. For example many know how to go about to bribe a service provider with as low risk as possible and how much would be required to offer. This can be seen as an indicator of how common this behaviour is, and that people look to others in their surroundings to seek guidance on how to behave in a situation. Since people know how to act in a corrupt situation this means that they must have learned to deal with these situations and it is highly likely that they have acquired the knowledge of how to deal with corrupt situations by observing others. For example, many participants describe situations involving bribes to traffic police as guilt free because of their perception that “everyone else” is also engaging in bribing in similar situations. The most common belief is that people that have the opportunity and means to bribe a civil servant to get what they want would do so. Also the fact that there are different situations when it is “common knowledge” that bribing is acceptable or not, can be a sign that people adhere to others expectations. If they know that no one else is paying bribes to RDA (Road Development Agency), but paying bribes to the local traffic police is very common, this will affect their decision on whether to engage in bribery themselves. The perception of what others are doing has hence shaped a norm that is making a certain behaviour widely accepted and justified.

Personal normative beliefs describe what people think about a corrupt practice. In terms of this there is a strong consensus among the participants that corruption generally is wrong. Situations involving corruption are described as anxious and painful because they feel forced to go against their moral standpoints. However, there are certain situations and types of corruptions that are seen as more wrong than others. Corruption on high level where it's perceived as the richer are getting richer is seen as more immoral, as compared petty corruption like handing over a small bribe to a traffic police. Furthermore, despite people considering corruption immoral it is considered less serious to engage in corruption in order to access a service that you are entitled to but that is delaying. Then the blame is moved away from the corrupt individual to the broken system.

Normative expectations address what an individual think other people think should be done in a given situation. This is a complex issue since most people consider corruption wrong and in theory they don't think that anyone should engage in corruption. Nevertheless, even if people think that giving a bribe to the traffic police is not what *should* be done, it is more or less the expected

behaviour and hence not socially shunned upon. In general, people would think that what *should* be done is to go by the legal procedures, but when this does not work out, minor corruption acts could be seen as acceptable. Yet, important to note is that even if minor corruption might be common and accepted in some ways, it is still not something that people are open with and it is not what is regarded as the ultimate way to get by in situations, but rather a solution to solve a frustrating or problematic situation. However, the more common corrupt behaviour becomes, the more it will also be regarded as the way one should act, and even become perceived as the right way to act – it becomes a social norm.

As previously defined, social norms relate to actions that are widely understood as “obligatory, permitted or forbidden within a society” and how members of society “ought to behave in a certain situation”. To sum up, the results of this study suggest that the actions related to corruption that could be seen as “widely permitted” within the Zambian society are the everyday types of petty corruption, like bribing a traffic police officer or a civil servant to get faster access to a permit or document. Despite this not necessarily being considered the way people “ought to behave” from one’s original moral standpoint, the normalization of the behaviour still indicates that this is how one is expected to behave. A “normal behaviour”, how most people act, could be seen as being guided by widely shared beliefs of how one ought to behave and this hence constitutes a social norm within a society. However, there are equally actions related to corruption that are widely considered as “forbidden”. These are mainly corruption on higher level, involving larger sums of money, and that are involving people in powerful positions or at a superior societal level. Similarly, these social norms might not dictate how an individual *ought* to act in a situation involving corruption in terms of it being right according to one’s own “moral compass”, but might still dictate what behaviour is considered permitted or forbidden within a society based on other reasons of justification. As Kubbe and Engelbert (2018: 2) suggest, “social norms can dictate the extent to which individuals engage and expect others to engage in corruption”, which seems relevant in the Zambian case. Although engaging in corruption is not seen as the way one ought to behave, it is still a fact that people do it and expect others to do so as well. This paradox between what people think is the morally *right* behaviour, and the fact that they still don’t live by it will be discussed in the next chapter in order to attempt to illuminate how social norms can explain the persisting corruption in local government institutions.

## 6. Discussion

To further understand how social norms relate to corruption the distinction between two types of social norms - injunctive norms and descriptive norms will be used. By help of the concept scheme presented earlier these have been identified in the material.

	Key concepts	Key words
Injunctive norms	Specific courses of action approved by others in a given social context	Right, wrong, immoral, illegal, forbidden, permitted, good, bad
Descriptive norms	How many other people in the same situation would act in this specific way, Is this behaviour common	everyone, frequent, common, everywhere

The injunctive norms that can be distinguished in the material are related to personal normative beliefs and normative expectations. Courses of action that are approved by others in the Zambian social context are what is previously described as “petty corrupt acts” in relation to everyday situations such as bribing traffic police or accessing services. Notable is that even though these actions can be seen as approved by others in certain situations, they are not described as good or morally right. However, they can still be seen as approved by society given to the fact that people committing these acts do not fear any social stigma, nor do they fear talking about their experiences of engaging in these acts.

One way to distinguish what is approved in a given social setting is to observe possible disapproval by other within the community if failing to adhere to expectations. Among the participants some describe situations where they believe that social stigma would be directed against oneself if calling out or reporting corruption rather than the one actually committing the corrupt act. An example is illustrated by interview participant 1.

“If I took a case, if I took a normal police officer to, like for corruption and stuff like that, first of all, people are gonna look at me like a bad person first of all. People, I’m gonna, like I’m maybe possible gonna get a guy fired and in a Zambian environment if you are in a civil service it’s like a stable job and getting somebody over corruption people will think like, he’s overreacting or something”

Public shaming when failing to adhere to community expectations is often observed to describe how powerful social norms are in affecting behaviour and has been acknowledged in previous research on social norms and corruption in Nigeria (Hoffmann and Patel 2017: v). For example, participants have experienced punishments when refusing to engage in bribery, by being rejected a service or similar. There seems to be a consensus among many civil servants that they can ask for a bribe and if they are not given it, they can try to frustrate the customer in order to increase their chances of successfully receiving the bribe. Of course, this cannot be generalized to all civil servants, however, situations like this one do appear in the stories of several of the participants (interview 1, 6, 7).

The descriptive are based in perceived frequency of corrupt behaviour in a given context. These are important to address since the emergence of a norm not only depends on individual choices (to accept or not to accept corruption), but also anticipation of the choices of others (whether it is acceptable to others or not) (Haykal 2017: 222). If one anticipates that others would engage in corruption in a certain situation, this would increase the likelihood of oneself justifying behaving in a similar manner. This study in Zambia shows that corruption is perceived as very common in certain situations, and participants often describe corrupt behaviour as a thing that “everyone” is, or has been, engaged in. According to Köbis et al. (2018: 34) the existing levels of corruption reflect in the descriptive norms in a country. The proven high levels of corruption in Zambia, reflect the descriptive norms that people also perceive these corrupt acts as being common and accepted. “Where bribery is part of routine interactions, those who engage in it will not be stigmatized” (Hoffmann and Patel 2017: 12). The descriptive norms are then a way of justifying individual corrupt behaviour and this is observed in this Zambian study where the majority participants express this lack of stigma around corruption. This study hence appears to be in line with what previous research on social norms and corruption in other countries has shown; that “the higher the perceived descriptive norms of corruption are, the more people see corruption as justified.” (See chapter 2.2) Note however, as previously discussed, that the corruption that is perceived as common is everyday petty corruption, normally in forms of bribes to police and civil servants. It is this form of corruption most of citizens observe and engage in themselves and that is seen as socially permitted. The fact that petty corruption has reached a stage of normalization in society illustrate how frequent it is. Grand corruption is however frowned upon among the participants in general.

As indicated in previous chapter, it is widely perceived that corrupt behaviour is common and the descriptive norms in relation to corruption are strong in Zambia, and this also illustrates the way many of the participants justify their corrupt behaviour. As Hoffman and Patel (2017: 12) claims: “descriptive norms and group dynamics play a decisive role in the degree of tolerance of corruption in local institutions”. This seems to be the case in many local government institutions of Lusaka. Corrupt behaviour is tolerated where it is common, and the corrupt behaviour that is less tolerated is the rarer bigger corruption scandals involving politicians embezzling large amounts of money. Some participants describe bribing a police officer as a decision they do not reflect much upon, due to the fact that it has become so normal. They do believe that it is wrong on a principal level, but it is seen as tolerated and justifies because of the high frequency of other’s decision to act in the same way. How this process of justification towards corrupt behaviour is evolving is illustrated by one of the participants:

“It almost like right now I’ve even become numb to it [corruption, authors comment] because like it’s almost like it’s what people are supposed to do. Whereas like, you’re not supposed to feel like that. But like again, most of it is like, oh traffic, people don’t even talk about traffic because it’s not a big deal. People can go through the day paying bribes, and not even talk about like paying bribes like it’s a big thing.” – Interview 9

Overall this study in Zambia goes in line with the hypothesis that that people in countries where corruption is widely prevalent still condemn it (Chapter 2.2). Observable is then a tension between the injunctive and descriptive norms. A behaviour that is widely considered as morally bad and wrong looks to also be a behaviour that in given situations is common and socially accepted. This is an interesting paradox that would have to be discussed in order to answer how social norms can explain persistent corruption. If social norms actually are part of an explanation to enduring corruption, one would have to argue how the contradicting types of social norms still favour corrupt behaviour in the end.

In line with the injunctive norms many consider corrupt behaviour morally wrong and resentful. However, the descriptive norms show that corrupt behaviour still is very common. One possibility is that this result could be because claiming that corruption is wrong is the “right thing to say” in an interview situation and that people in an actual corrupt situation don’t consider the moral standpoint important. However, if that is the case they would not then admit to being involved in corrupt behaviour, nor admitting it was common. So, one can hence assume that the participants actually consider corruption being wrong, but nevertheless commit corrupt act. Does this then mean that social norms cannot explain why corruption remains widespread within government

institutions? Not necessarily. The fact is that injunctive and descriptive norms seem to be working in parallel.

Assuming that social norms are in fact dictating how people make decisions and behave, both the injunctive norms and descriptive norms are taken into consideration when faced with a situation that could possibly involve corruption. This means that two values are weighed against each other. As described in previous chapter, these are to do what is perceived as “morally right thing”, which is refraining from engaging in corruption and possibly losing time and money, against to do what “everyone else does” and therefore see it as justified, which is engaging in petty corruption. It appears like many do decide to engage in corruption after all. Despite the obvious reasons why, as also described in the preceding result chapter – desperation, no social stigma, efficiency and immediate gains, many are also aware that this might not be the most beneficial choice in the long run. There is an understanding that corruption is harmful for the society in large and that a society free of corruption would be an ultimately better outcome. Why people still seem to choose in a way that does not result in the ultimate result can be understood through the logic of prisoner’s dilemma. This has in some previous research been suggested to demonstrate why people do not cooperate despite it being in their best interest to do so. It is after all clear that most of the situations where the participants have engaged in corruption relates to frustration, where they describe it as not wanting to pay a bribe for example, but since they are expected to by a civil servant, they see no other option but to do it. If not adhering to this expectation they would lose out. However, if no one did adhere to the expectation of paying a bribe, such requests from civil servants would not exist, since they knew that no one would pay it. Hence, the ultimate gain for everyone would be to refrain from bribing and get their services according to procedure.

The underlying logic of the prisoner’s dilemma is that cooperation is beneficial if all parties cooperate. In this case it means that if one person decides to stop paying bribes to get access to services, but other people still do it, it would probably result in benefitting the people doing it with faster service, and the one that decided not to do it will have to wait, or maybe not even get access to the service at all. To collectively decide to refrain corruption, which would be the ultimate gain for everyone, is hence based on trust in others. Trust is crucial but difficult to establish since corruption is usually taking place away from the public eye. To combat corruption, one must trust that no one else decides to go for the immediate benefit that corruption might give, that one self is refusing. Putting this trust in others seems risky to many, especially considering the descriptive norms that are prevailing. So, can one then claim that people engage in bribery because they believe

that they would lose out against others if they wouldn't? Yes partly. This is seen among the participants who describe that they would lose so much time if they tried to avoid bribing for example the police, and people would question why they just did not take "the easy way out", which is giving a bribe. Since "everyone else" is engaging in bribery in this kind of situation, people that do not do it would not be competitive against others if they spend large amounts of time on sorting out police fines, when others just give a bribe and then can continue with more productive tasks. Since corruption is engrained in the system, people feel like they have to pay bribes to get by. People act in their own self-interest, even though they know it does not result in an optimal outcome. This is also shown in the results of the interviews, where participants describe corruption as their best option to rationally deal with a situation. Many say that they know that it is not good in the long run but still do it because of the difficulty and desperation of a situation that they are facing. The general and shared perception of petty corrupt act is that they are very common, thus creates a vicious circle where no one believes that others would refrain from corruption, and then do not see the reason to do that themselves. This idea shapes beliefs that justify corruption and make it a behaviour that is guiding how people ought to behave in a given situation. It has hence become a descriptive norm. This can then be seen as part of an explanation to why corruption sustains within local government institutions. Furthermore, it can also explain why people go against their original moral standards that injunctive norms have established and develop contradicting descriptive norms.

The societal context of Zambia also has to be considered when arguing that social norms can contribute to explain the persisting corruption within local government institutions. The contextual background has allowed certain norms that are favourable for corrupt behaviour to develop and flourish. As previously presented several factors are suggested by the participants to why corruption has become embedded in society. Contributing to this is the broken system in terms of service delivery, inefficient public institutions and a society where status is very highly regarded and greed is widespread. Additionally, the lack of transparency in Zambian institutions have created conditions for certain social norms to become embedded. Being exposed to an environment like this can result in normalization of corrupt practises where they are allowed to flourish. These factors have led to strengthening social norms in Zambia that are favourable to corrupt behaviour has made them persistent to change. The contextual background can also then illustrate why certain social norms are adhered to, in this case the descriptive norms, and why the injunctive norms are disregarded. For example, the fact that the service delivery is so poor make people desperate to the point that they are willing to go against the injunctive norms that consider corrupt behaviour

wrong. Similarly, in a society where status for many is the ultimate goal, it will make people prone to disregard injunctive norms related to corruption, and instead do everything in their power to obtain more money and power to reach a higher societal status. Over time this has resulted in descriptive norms constituting that corruption is perceived as very common and that everyone is engaged in it. Consequently, the stigma around corruption is lost and people are prone to easier engage in this kind of behaviour since it will be seen as socially accepted.

If claiming that social norms partly can explain the persisting corruption within local government institution one also has to address the direction of causality in this relationship. The study can claim that there exists a relationship between the presented social norms and high corruption levels. However, is it the occurrence of the described social norms that explain that corruption is persisting in local government institutions? Or, are the high levels of corruption caused by other factors, and the social norms have just been formed following that? Obviously, several factors have contributed to the fact that corruption levels in Zambia are high, social norms are not suggested to be one single explanatory factor to this fact. The complexity of the corruption issue is shown in the contextual background of the Zambian environment. However, there have been many national initiatives on policy levels that have been introduced in attempts to combat corruption. Why this has not yielded results could be because of the difficulties to achieve behavioural change. Since social norms are proven to guide behaviour and attitudes, it is also appropriate to argue that the social norms that relate to corruption in Zambia, that have been identified in this study, also are part of explaining why corruption remains so widespread. Important to note then is that this study is not attempting to point out any direction of causality in this relationship, but it simply suggests that social norms seems to be one thing that can explain why policy reforms against corruption have failed and why people still engage in corrupt activities.

## 7. Conclusions

The social norms that exist in relation to corrupt behaviour among citizen that are interacting with local government institutions have in this study been identified by dividing the concept of social norms into five components. These have shown that all of the participants have experiences of corrupt behaviour, or have been engaged in corruption themselves, when interacting with local government institutions in Lusaka. Petty corruption is most common and involves behaviour of bribing civil servants in order to get access to services or police to get out of situations. The participants see advantages in corrupt behaviour as it often results in a short-term gain of avoiding

long bureaucratic procedures or gives them access to something that previously has been denied to them. However, at the same time all of the participants can also observe disadvantages in their behaviour in terms of the risks illegal action might entail and engaging in a behaviour that they consider morally wrong. Nevertheless, the participants believe that in the situations that involve corruption that they have been engaged in, most other people would act the same. This can be because the corrupt situations that are described often involve frustration and a feeling of being forced to engage in corruption. They therefore they believe that others would react the same when faced with similar dilemmas since the frustration of the situation is forcing corrupt behaviour. However, there is also a second aspect to the notion that other people would act the same in corrupt situations, and that is that there is a general notion that corruption is common on all levels of society and that “everyone” has been involved in it at some point. The normalization of some types of corrupt behaviour makes it easier for people to decide to engage in it and give them a feeling that it is socially acceptable. Despite this fact though, all of the participants believe that corruption fundamentally is morally wrong and believe that others agree with this. What others then think should be done in corrupt situations is based in these moral values, that corruption is wrong, and one should refrain from it. However, since there is also a widespread belief that “everyone” knows how common corruption is, it is not really expected to resist from engaging in corruption, at least in the most common corruption situations. It hence seems like two different types of social norms, descriptive norms and injunctive norms, can affect corrupt behaviour in different way. Social norms are saying that corruption is widely considered wrong but social norms are also saying that it is widely perceived as an accepted behaviour.

Obviously, an issue is never as easy as saying that one factor, in this case social norms, can by itself explain one phenomenon. However, this study does argue that social norms are a part of explaining that corruption remains common among the participants when interacting with local government institutions. At first glance, it might not be obvious that social norms might be a factor that interplays in the high corruption levels, since one type of social norms in fact say that corruption is morally wrong. By arguing that the descriptive norms related to corruption are strong, and that the logic of prisoners dilemma can explain why people doesn't always act according to the optimal outcome, one can still illuminate why the injunctive norms are undermined one can see how social norms contribute to upholding a strong practise of corrupt behaviour.

Noteworthy is that this discussion is somewhat simplified for the sake of illustrating a theoretical reasoning. As discussed, one should also consider that there are different kinds of corruption, and

these also have different understandings of whether they are considered permitted or forbidden in a society. This study has focused on petty corruption among citizens and this will hence affect the social norms that are formed around this kind of corruption. If having another perspective, on for example civil servants or politicians that are often mentioned as being one of the most corrupt people in society, also other types of corrupt behaviour would have been normalized within their group. Social norms are standards of behaviour that are based on widely shared beliefs of how individual group members ought to behave in a given situation. This “members of a group” do play a role in concluding how the social norms in relation to corruption looks like in this study. Since the participants are considering themselves as not belonging to the “group” of people that are corrupt (widely seen as civil servants, politicians, and people of power) they hence do not normalize that kind of grand corruption. The fact that the social norms identified in this study are not shared by everyone in Zambia can be valuable to express when reflecting around the conclusions.

It is fair to conclude that local government institutions in Lusaka are facing problems with corruption. Both with civil servants that are corrupt, and citizens interacting with these institutions that are seeing it as socially accepted to engage in corruption when dealing with them. Local government institutions in Lusaka are struggling with efficiency in their service delivery and this hence provides a favourable environment for corruption to flourish. But as this study can show, it is not only the way the system is functioning that plays a role in why corruption levels are high, also the social norms in regard to corruption does matter. If people have a shared understanding that corruption in the local government institutions is socially permitted, these practices will also be maintained. Even if the system was modified and legal improvements were made, this will not necessarily affect the shared standards of behaviour that have been dominant in situations involving local government interactions and that are allowing corrupt behaviour. It is hence suggested that the local government of Lusaka, the Lusaka City Council, also should look at these behavioural aspects when designing anti-corruption policies. Considering the behavioural logic of the prisoner’s dilemma could also be beneficial in anti-corruption policies, as this is suggested to explain why social norms that allow corrupt behaviour dominates over norms that considers corruption being wrong. If the local government could work on establishing confidence between citizens so that they can trust that no one else gain the benefits of corruption that they would miss out if they refrain from corruption, they would have a better chance of tackling it. This could for example be done by introducing more transparency in their service delivery process and make civil servants and citizens more accountable for their actions. They should also work on transparency in

corruption statistics, as social norms are affected by their perception of the frequency of corruption. If people are well informed about the actual levels and frequency of corruption it is easier to guide these perceptions which could help to reduce justification of corrupt behaviour.

Social norms are difficult to change. It is well known that achieving behaviour- and attitudinal change is challenging. Considering the social norms in this study that contribute to a conducive environment for corruption to thrive, it is no surprise that corruption is as widespread as it is in Zambia. The study shows that role of social norms contributes to a sense among the participants that common corrupt behaviour is socially allowed and comes with low or no risks. Assuming that people are guided by social norms in their choices and actions one could then argue that the norms identified here are one part of explaining why corruption is persistent. The study has by this identified underlying reasons to why people engage in corrupt behaviour and clarified social norms that are relating to corruption. It has been shown that social norms can in fact guide decisions related to corruption, despite some social norms appearing contradictory.

The study has in large contributed to a deepened understating of corruption by exploring a perspective that previously has not been a known focus of corruption studies in Zambia. Furthermore, the study could also add to the understating of why conventional anti-corruption interventions that have been introduced in Zambia has not yielded any major results. The study confirms that social norms are of high relevance when investigating corrupt patters within a society. Moreover, it gives new insights into the Zambian context of societal traditions and norms that might provide a basis for similar studies that can be done on a larger scale, in order to be able to draw more generalizable conclusions on the underlying reasons for corrupt behaviour in Zambia.

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## 9. Attachments

### 9.1 Attachment 1 – Interview guide

#### Interview guide

Motivation	Questions
PART 1 – Opening	
Opening questions – background, ice breakers, introduction to subject	<p>What is your age?</p> <p>Tell me about your background.</p> <p>How do you interact with the local government institutions in your everyday life? Example: apply for permits, seeking services for electricity/drainage/maintenance, safety etc?</p> <p>How common do you think it is that people engage in corrupt activities when engaging with local authorities? Give examples</p>
PART 2 – Understanding corruption in Zambia	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Corruption in Zambian context</li> </ul>	<p>Why do you think people engage in corrupt behaviour?</p> <p>How often do you observe, or hear about, people engaging in corrupt activities? Specify examples (in what context and what situation)</p> <p>Can you give an example of a situation where you would be expected to engage in a corrupt act?</p> <p>If you went to a local government institution to seek a service, and were asked to pay a “contribution” to the government official in order for a faster service. How would you be expected to act? (i.e expected to give the contribution?) How would you act?</p> <p>Where does these expectations come from? Social pressure?</p> <p>How frequent is it that people adhere to these expectations?</p>

	<p>By contrast, are there any situations where it would be considered unacceptable to pay a bribe?</p> <p>Is corruption required to gain access necessary services in Lusaka, or could you do it “the right way”?</p> <p>Why do you think corruption is common in Zambia?</p> <p>Would you say that there is a certain culture or norm in Zambia that contributes to the widespread corruption in local authorities?</p>
PART 3 – Identifying social norms	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Behaviour – What did you do?</li> </ul>	<p>Have you ever paid a bribe, given a gift, or done a favour to obtain something for your personal gain? Give examples.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prudential reason – What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of the behaviour?</li> </ul>	<p>What were the advantages and disadvantages of committing a corrupt act?</p> <p>Have you ever feared the legal/social consequences of engaging in corruption?</p> <p>What would the outcome have been if you had/had not engaged in the corrupt behaviour?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empirical expectations – What do you think other people do?</li> </ul>	<p>How do you think other people would act in the same situation? Would the majority choose to engage in corruption?</p> <p>Is your decision to engage, or not to engage, in corrupt activities of any kind influenced of what people would think of you? Example if it is following a “social code” or not</p> <p>If you knew that few people were engaging in corruption activities, would that prevent you from doing so also? Example traffic police</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal normative belief – What do you think about the practice?</li> </ul>	<p>Why did you/did not commit a corrupt act?</p> <p>How did you feel after?</p> <p>Would you do the same again?</p> <p>Do you consider corruption morally wrong? Why / Why not?</p>

	<p>Is there any kind of corruption that could be appropriate in any occasion? Example to gain access to necessary services, like electricity, safety or health.</p> <p>What would be considered “morally wrong” in a Zambian context?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Normative expectation – What do you think other people think should be done?</li> </ul>	<p>Would you consider engaging in corruption “socially accepted” in the Zambian society at large, or is it more considered as uncomfortable and criminal?</p> <p>Do you think expectations (what other people do) would affect the decision for you to engage or not to engage in corrupt activities of any kind?</p> <p>Do you think other people would judge you if you engage in corruption?</p> <p>Is there a certain mindset that makes people prone to engage in corruption? Example fear of poverty that leads to people thinking about themselves</p>
PART 4 – Closing	
Closing questions – general regarding corruption	<p>How do you think corruption can be combatted?</p> <p>How can the corruption norm be changed?</p> <p>Do you have anything that you would like to add, that I haven’t thought to ask you?</p>

## 9.2 Attachment 2 – Checklist prior to interview

Checklist prior to interview:

- Introduce myself and my studies
- My thesis subject and the purpose (The thesis aims to improve understanding of the role of social norms in the resilience of corruption in the local government in Lusaka, Zambia. The purpose of the study is to better understand the mechanisms behind engaging in corrupt activities.)
- Present the layout of the interview (semi-structured, conversation, approximately 45 minutes)

- Material will be used in thesis and published online in a scientific archive. All material will be treated with necessary confidentiality, and participants will be anonymous (when transcribing I will anonymize any information that could identify participants identities)
- Consent to record. Interview will later on be transcribed word by word
- Ask for possible questions