



# **The Extent of the Phenomenon of Wasta and Favoritism in the Jordanian Public Sector**

**Queen Rania Center for Jordanian Studies and  
Community Service**

**Yarmouk University**

**Prepared by**

<b>Prof. Mohammad Rawabdeh</b>	<b>Prof. Raed Ababneh</b>	<b>Dr. Shaker Aladwan</b>	<b>Dr. Sahem Nawafleh</b>	<b>Prof. Ali Aladayla</b>
Team leader	North Coordinator	Central Coordinator	Central Coordinator	South Coordinator
Senior Researcher	Senior Researcher	Senior Researcher	Senior Researcher	Senior Researcher

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## Table of contents

Topics	Page
Abstract.....	6
<b>Chapter 1 :General background</b>	
Introduction.....	8
Objectives of the study.....	9
<b>Chapter 2: Literature review</b>	
Introduction.....	11
Concepts of Wasta and favoritism.....	12
Impacts and implications of Wasta and favoritism.....	14
Strategies for fighting against Wasta and favoritism.....	17
International experience in fighting corruption.....	20
Singapore.....	21
India.....	22
Bulgaria.....	23
Mexico.....	24
<b>Chapter 3: Research methodology</b>	
Introduction.....	6
The sources of data primary data.....	26
Initial development of the questionnaire.....	27
The components of the questionnaire.....	28
Secondary data.....	29
Survey sample.....	29
Training of research assistants.....	30
Quantitative data analysis.....	31
Focus groups.....	33
Data privacy .....	34
<b>Chapter 4: survey data analysis</b>	
Introduction.....	36
Characteristics of the study sample.....	36
Descriptive analysis of the main dimensions of the study.....	43
Analysis of open questions.....	57
<b>Chapter 5: Qualitative data analysis</b>	
Introduction.....	62
The concept of Wasta and favoritism.....	62
Wasta and favoritism practices in the Jordanian public sector.....	65
The causes of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector.....	67
The difficulties that prevent the control of the Wasta and favoritism phenomena in the Jordanian public sector.....	72
Do you agree that Wasta and favoritism are among the phenomena prevalent in the Jordanian public sector?.....	73
Can you suggest mechanisms and policies to reduce the phenomenon of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector?.....	74
<b>Chapter 6: Conclusions and recommendations</b>	
Preface.....	76
Conclusions of the quantitative analysis.....	76
Conclusions of the qualitative analysis.....	77
Recommendations.....	78
References.....	80

## Tables

No	Title	Page
1	Sample distribution by governorate.....	30
2	Distribution of public employees by province and governorate (2017)....	30
3	Distribution of team members to complete the field survey.....	31
4	Distribution of the study sample according to gender.....	37
5	Distribution of the sample according to the years of experience.....	37
6	Distribution of the sample according to their age.....	38
7	Distribution of the sample according to the job title.....	39
8	Distribution of the sample according to the educational qualification.....	39
9	Distribution of the sample according to the nature of work.....	40
10	Distribution of the sample according to the place of residence.....	41
11	Distribution of the sample according to employee classification.....	41
12	Distribution of the sample according to monthly salary.....	42
13	Distribution of the sample according to the working place.....	42
14	Sample responses regarding the practicing of Wasta and favoritism.....	44
15	Sample response to causes and motives of practicing Wasta and favoritism	45
16	Sample response regarding suggestions and solutions to cope with Wasta and favoritism.....	48
17	Statistical differences towards dimensions of the study according to the personal and occupational variables of the respondents.....	51
18	Analysis of the first open question of the reasons and motives of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector.....	58
19	Analysis of the second open question of solutions and proposals to reduce Wasta and favoritism .....	59
20	Practical suggestions to reduce the phenomenon of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector.....	75
21	Note taking and classification form.....	100

## Figures

No	Title	Page
1	Primary data sources.....	26
2	Procedural steps for questionnaire development.....	28
3	Meanings of negative Wasta.....	64
4	Meanings of positive Wasta.....	65
5	The reasons for Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector.....	72

## Appendices

No	Title	Page
1	Study questionnaire.....	84
2	Procedural guide for implementing focus groups.....	93
3	Focus group Form.....	101

## **Abstract**

This study aimed to identify to what extent there is Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector and to identify their causes and motives and estimate their effects on the bodies of public administration before providing practical suggestions to limit Wasta and favoritism. In order to achieve the study objectives and to collect the data, two main sources were used. Firstly, a survey (questionnaire) was designed which included three parts: 1) Demographics and functional data; 2) 47 items to measure the causes of Wasta and favoritism and their practicing motives and practical suggestions to overcome Wasta and favoritism; 3) Two open questions related to the study dimensions. 2500 questionnaires were distributed to cover all public sector bodies in all regions in Jordan. 2230 questionnaires were returned, 2085 questionnaires were valid for statistical analysis with a very high response rate (93%). To analyze quantitative data, several techniques were used, namely, descriptive analysis methods including mean, frequencies, percentages. Then, a reliability test and one-Way ANOVA were used.

In light of the data analysis, the study discovered a number of findings including: there is a moderate level of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector (61%). The most popular causes and motives for practicing Wasta and favoritism are: absence of justice in society, declining trust in government of the citizens. In terms of practical solutions that can be adopted to limit the spread of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector, the participants provide several suggestions including: the strengthening of religious faith among employees and managers, the activation of e-government and its systems in order to provide for achievement of the government transactions and services and, finally, the activation of the E-link to accomplish the E-services between government departments. There are several reasons and motives that lead to Wasta and favoritism practices

including absence of justice or fairness in society, and declining public trust in government. Finally, in light of the findings, many recommendations were provided, namely: 1) increasing penalties for those who commit the crime of Wasta and favoritism. 2) Activating the application of e-government and digital transformation for government procedures, processes and services; 3) Activation of the E-linking between ministries, institutions and their branches to avoid the human interference that is leading to the occurrence of Wasta and favoritism; 4) Reducing the phenomena of poverty and unemployment by creating new job opportunities, encouraging investment and providing incentives benefits to the Jordanian business, in addition to attracting foreign investments by providing an appropriate environment for investment; 5) Enhancing the concepts and practices of integrity and justice and consolidating ethical values through school curricula and introducing curricula for a national integrity system or extracurricular activities in public and private Jordanian universities; 6) Activating the role of civil society institutions in raising awareness of the dangers of Wasta and favoritism such as places of worship, cultural, social and sports clubs, the Ministry of Youth and other relevant ministries; 7) Creating a government leadership generation by selecting government officials and decision makers based on values of competence and integrity, and building role models for leadership and showing their success stories; 8) Activating oversight (control) especially in the branches of ministries, departments and public institutions, in general, and in remote areas outside in Amman, in particular.

**Keywords:** Wasta, favoritism, national integrity system, Integrity and Ant-corruption Commission, public sector, Jordan.

# **Chapter 1**

## **General background**

### **Introduction**

Wasta is a phenomenon that exists in all human societies, but it varies in scope between developed and developing societies. Generally, Wasta means obtaining something at the expense of others (Al-Sheikhly, 2004; Al-Adwan, 2014). Wasta and favoritism are among the components of the Arab social-value system; it was one of the tools that Arabs societies used in a positive way in order to solve conflicts between individuals and groups. With the development of societies and the concept of government, different forms of Wasta have evolved with it going from a positive phenomenon, based on the realization rights, to a negative phenomenon that constitutes an infringement on the rights of others as well as the rights of society. Examples of that, due to high access to governmental services, include exemption from tax, a reduction in governmental fees, and appointment and promotion of employees in the public sector (Akhoersheda and Aladwan, 2017).

Surely, all of these practices have negative impacts on governmental performance and on the integrity and institutional systems of governance. In addition to that, it impacts upon integrity generally, transparency, the circumvention of the implementation of laws, efficiency and effectiveness, sustainability, and the values of social and organizational justice; all of these impacts lead to a decline in the quality of government services. Wasta is considered an administrative disease meaning that it influences some behavioral, administrative and organizational practices that affect institutional efficiency and quality which, in turn, lead the administrative system to a negative trend characterized by the circumvention of the spirit of laws, complexity, the avoidance of responsibility, favoritism, and the absence of justice. Accordingly, Wasta and favoritism, as a result of social and political



pressure, enhance exploitation of power and the prevalence of personal interests instead of organizational objectives (Akhoershedda and Aladwan, 2017).

The report issued by the Jordanian Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission for the year 2016 showed that no Wasta or favoritism cases have been recorded in the Jordanian public sector. This may be a valid reason for the commission to think of examining the prevalence of Wasta and favoritism phenomena in the Jordanian public sector. Accordingly, the current study aims to identify the level of Wasta and favoritism practice through surveying a sample of employees working in various ministries, governmental departments and agencies by conducting a field survey of a sample of 2085 public employees in Jordan. To achieve the study objectives, three focus groups were also conducted with each one having 7-10 participants from each region.

### **Objectives of the study**

According to the tender agreement prepared by the Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission, the study aims to achieve three main objectives:

**First:** Diagnosing and evaluating the level of prevalence of Wasta and favoritism phenomena in the Jordanian public sector.

**Second:** Educating the public sector employee about the consequences of Wasta and favoritism phenomena at all levels (individual and groups) and the national level.

**Third:** Identifying the statistical differences at the level ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) in the practice level of the Wasta and favoritism phenomena, the reasons and motives for practicing the phenomena, and suggestions and solutions to limit the practice of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector according to the personal and occupational variables of the respondents (gender,

number of years of service, age, job title, nature of work, place of residence, employee classification, monthly salary, place of work, and governorate).

**Fourth:** Reaching some findings and conclusions related to the prevalence of Wasta and favoritism phenomena in the Jordanian public sector and providing some recommendations and policies to limit the practice of the phenomena.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature review**

#### **Introduction**

The dominant culture that governs the community in which an organization functions has been considered as a crucial obstacle facing managers in order to achieve goals efficiently and effectively. Family, tribe and kinship identity remains of paramount importance for the life of Jordanian citizens. All these relationships are established, in some cases even institutionalized, at the roots of several political, administrative, and social practices such as Wasta and favoritism.

In general, researchers and practitioners argue that reasons for corruption can be summed up in terms of social, political, and administrative reasons. All these kinds of reason help to spread a corrupt environment and culture that lacks adherence to job ethics and leads to controlling relationships based on Wasta and favoritism. Social reasons refer to the penetration of the root of social ties, where the family and the tribe constitute the most important reference. Accordingly, the individual prioritizes his belonging to family and the tribe over his belonging to society as a whole or the state. The administrative reasons refer to failure to comply with the policies set for appointment; for example, it can involve the placing of the wrong person in the wrong place and weak oversight leading to the spreading of favoritism and exaggeration of the concentration of power. The political reasons include, but are not limited to, weaknesses in will and sincere intention of the political leadership to combat patronage, due to its involvement in it itself or involvement with some of the parties to corruption, the lack of enforcement of penalties for those who violate the regulations and, indeed, lack of regulations as requirements to protect the public interest. It may also involve

the hiring of unqualified persons based on their party affiliations at the expense of the public interest.

### **The concept of Wasta and favoritism**

In most cases, Wasta and favoritism have been used as exchangeable terms. Wasta is a very broad complex and multidimensional construct with confusing perceptions that make it very difficult to be defined precisely. 'Wasta' and Wasta have several meanings and implications as a result of the cultural differences all over the world. Mohamed and Hamdy (2008) state that Wasta is different from 'Wasta' where Wasta is when you do a favor for or hire family or friends, whilst Wasta, on the other hand, does not have these restrictions and is more open to all actions and behaviors. Hence, Wasta is only one part of Wasta. Jones (2016) defines Wasta as the practice of using networks of connections and influences in order to accomplish an almost unlimited variety of tasks that are necessary in daily life. He argues that Wasta involves favoritism, tribalism, patronage, influence, Wasta, corruption, and similar social issues. In the same vein, Al-Enzi et. al. (2018) argue that Wasta is a custom rooted in tribal society that has become adapted for business, where the practice has greater potential for misuse and maltreatment.

Wasta and favoritism are a cornerstone of the culture of Arab countries but, recently, many practitioners and academics have recognized it as a social dilemma that must be eradicated (Long, 2005). Arab people often use Wasta in any number of interactions by an intermediate, from getting a job to cutting through bureaucratic red tape and complicated long administrative procedures. The intermediate is typically from the same tribe or family but could also be a friend, a business contact or an acquaintance of the candidate or his/her family (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993). Moreover, Brandstaetter et al. (2016) argue that Wasta, in its many forms, is an omnipresent

phenomenon in modern Jordan and an aspect of daily life of many Jordanians, either in interacting with government authorities, in business relations or in cases where disputes need to be settled. Taking care of one's own tribe or friendship is a tenet of Arab culture and, therefore, the patron believes they exercise a sense of duty when he/she successfully provides a client with a job or other benefits (Jones, 2016). The fear of being disadvantaged or in some cases not getting your rights by the lack of a proper connection motivates people to seek and practice Wasta (Mohamed and Hamdy, 2008).

Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993) distinguished between two main types of Wasta: mediation and intercessory. The former refers to the traditional functions of Wasta and arbitration, while the latter is a process in which a broker uses structural power as a gatekeeper to provide access to resources unattainable to the other party. Intercessory Wasta is considered a harmful phenomenon in the discourse, whereas Wasta is seen as the beneficial or acceptable behavior to facilitate the resolution of interpersonal conflict (Brandstaetter et al., 2016). The current study aims to examine the practice of intercessory Wasta in the Jordanian public sector. Intercessory Wasta can be found at many levels of Jordanian society. In particular, interaction between individuals and the public administration experiences utilization of intercessory Wasta. Wasta relations can be used to speed-up administrative procedures like the issuing of a new passport or license plates for a car, or to get a job to which the applicant would otherwise have no access. Kinship relations play a significant role in this constellation of favors and social obligations (Loewe et al., 2007).

## **Impacts and implications of Wasta and favoritism**

Wasta and favoritism have several implications and reflections to citizens, politicians, and bureaucrats. Indeed, Wasta has been blamed for poor economic performance and brain drain of the Arab world (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993). In addition, the widespread nature of Wasta is one of the main obstacles to good governance and economic development in the MENA countries, including Jordan (Loewe et al., 2007). The academic-related literature does admit Wasta can be a form of corruption, although there is a good deal of debate and discussion around this topic. It has been argued that, to those who exercise Wasta, it serves as a legitimate way of getting things done, whereas those who do not have Wasta resent it as a corrupt and unacceptable practice. Barnett et al. (2013) consider Wasta a normal aspect of Arab culture, seeing it as embedded in the social fabric of Middle Eastern society and is practiced openly without apparent shame, remorse or guilt. On the opposite side, Al-Ramahi (2008) reported that 87% of the surveyed Jordanians referred to Wasta as corruption. Similarly, the World Bank agrees that Wasta is a form of corruption and has a negative impact on Jordanian society (Brixi et al., 2015). It is important to note here that although the use of Wasta is firmly planted in Arab culture, it is inconsistent with Muslim teachings regarding hiring practices (Mohamed and Hamdy, 2008).

According to Loewe et al. (2007), the public perception of Wasta in Jordan is ambiguous. Many Jordanians disapprove of Wasta on the grounds that it is unethical and unfair to those who do not have good connections. Others, however, approve of it because it can help people to enforce their rights and legitimacy of public benefits. While some Jordanians consider Wasta a form of corruption, others believe that it is not since it is not linked to money. A third group claims that Wasta is a form of corruption when it

serves to circumvent the law but that it is not if it is used merely to speed-up procedures and eliminate bureaucracy.

Moreover, Jones (2016) stated that Wasta has a negative impact on citizen attitudes and trust toward politics and governance in three main areas: belief in political agency, assessment of political leaders and institutions, and opinions on the likelihood of meaningful political reform. Fawzi and Almarshed (2013) argue that the prevalence of Wasta and favoritism in a country such as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) may deprive organizations of the ability to hire the competencies and talents of employees needed; to overcome Wasta and favoritism in recruitment; the participants of their study recommend the use of coordination with universities to hire the best graduates.

The study of Loewe et al. (2007) showed that the widespread use of Wasta adversely affects the business climate in Jordan by making state-business relations inefficient and unfair. Also, 39 % of the respondents stated that decisions made by civil servants depend very much on how well the applicants are connected with influential people in public administration. Another study done by Barnett et al. (2013) found that Wasta has affected the business environment in Jordan by making the administrative procedures exhausting and thus creating injustice in administrative decision-making. The findings of Ali et al. (2015) also confirm that the practice of Wasta in Jordan grants individuals' unfair access to services or employment that is beyond their qualifications, skills, knowledge and/or abilities. A study conducted by Kilani and Sakija (2002) in Jordan showed that 90% of the respondents believed that they would use Wasta in the future. A study conducted by Whiteoak et al. (2006) showed that young UAE citizens believed that Wasta is more useful than do their older citizens. In addition, it was concluded that

Wasta is thought to be a crucial strategy and plays a critical role in significant and vital decisions in Arab businesses.

In the KSA, employees reported that there is a need to reduce the intervention of Wasta and favoritism in employment issues, which can be considered an incentive for Saudi society to eradicate some cultural beliefs that discourage development (Fawzi and Almarshed, 2013). In his study, Alreshoodi (2016) found that the practice of Wasta in the Saudi Ministry of Education negatively impacted upon the commitment and job satisfaction of employees. In a study of different sectors in Kuwait, Al-Enzi et al. (2018) revealed that Wasta negatively impacted upon knowledge sharing in the sense that those who are within the Wasta circle can access, circulate and provide new information that was once unavailable to them which, in turn, impacts upon the employees and organizational performance negatively.

Al-Nageeb (2010) argues that the absence of a controlling and integrity system, gaps and imprecise legislation articles are major causes of the practice of unethical behaviors of Wasta and favoritism in Arab countries. Moreover, Alhijan (1997) argues that the main causes of forms of corruption are weak administrative oversight, lack of clarity of instructions, unclear and unfair distribution of tasks and responsibilities, absence of clear performance standards, inefficiency of administrative leaders and their impartiality and failure to act honestly and faithfully for the public interest. Another study conducted in Egypt showed that the presence of Wasta impacted negatively upon how Wasta beneficiaries were perceived. In other words, the results indicate that Wasta causes a stigma problem and harms the image of its beneficiaries (Mohamed and Hamdy, 2008).



## **Strategies for fighting against Wasta**

Several recommendations have been proposed in order to combat or alleviate the practice of Wasta. For example, suggestions for eliminating Wasta have focused on structural procedures such as administrative reform and the strengthening of the control function (Cunningham and Sarayrah, 1993). Another possible means of reducing the spread of Wasta is to reduce its attractiveness by exposing its harmful impact on those who seek it. If Wasta seekers understand that their use of Wasta can harm the perceptions of their supervisors and colleagues of their competency, then they may think to avoid using it (Mohamed and Hamdy, 2008).

In addition, the Jordanian government has issued a code of conduct for civil servants, which includes a clear ban on any kind of preferential treatment that has the aim of reducing the practice of Wasta in the public sector (Loewe et al., 2007). Also, some NGOs in Jordan have organized, with some support from the government, public awareness campaigns on the negative effects of the use of Wasta. Others have conducted research and disseminated studies on the topic. Moreover, Alhamash (2007) pointed out that self-accountability and control and improving the financial position of public employees are important strategies to combat forms of corruption.

Loewe et al. (2007) suggested that the parliament and government of Jordan should make the fight against favoritism / Wasta a top priority on their agenda by paying attention to the following:

1. They should make people aware of the negative consequences of the use of Wasta and show them alternative ways of getting their business done. In addition, they should strengthen identification of people with the public interest, since 43% of the businesspeople interviewed in

their study stated that a change in mentality was crucial for curtailing the use of Wasta.

2. The government should punish people more severely for providing or asking for preferential treatment in state-business interactions.
3. The government should take steps for better monitoring of administrative procedures and decisions made by civil servants.
4. Positive incentives should be implemented for rewarding Jordanians who refrain from the use of Wasta. Prizes might be awarded, for example, to the fairest and most service-oriented government departments or employees.
5. An even more effective approach, however, would be to make the use of Wasta completely useless. When citizens realize that administrative procedures have become so easy, cheap and quick that using Wasta is superfluous, they will change their behaviour.
6. Likewise, measures are required for fostering transparency and accountability in public administration. The division of responsibilities should be made more clear-cut and transparent for citizens. Public sector employees should be made accountable for the consequences of their decisions.
7. Modern information and communication technologies should be employed. For example, in many countries, e-procurement and e-tendering have helped to bring down government spending while accelerating administrative procedures and making them more transparent and predictable and reducing the practice of Wasta. The findings of the study of Fidler et al. (2011) showed that Wasta hinders the implementation of e-government for Jordan. Al-Nageeb (2010) stated that e-government plays a crucial role in dealing with administrative and financial corruption by eliminating unnecessary procedures, ambiguity and unfairness in the provision of public

services, abuse of authority, bribes and the unethical behaviours practiced by public employees. In addition, Al-Hetey (2009) reported that the Jordanian government started the embedding of e-government as a mechanism against corruption and to also enhance transparency and administrative reform. The participants indicated that e-government will reduce corruption practices among public sector employees. Furthermore, Al-Nageeb (2010) suggested several strategies to deal with forms of corruption and unethical behaviours, including Wasta and favoritism, as follows:

- 1- A code of ethics for public employees;
- 2- Development of related courses in the study plans of universities;
- 3- Training courses for employees;
- 4- Compliance with religious teachings and rules to deal with forms of corruption and to preserve public money;
- 5- Activation of the role of the media to combat all manifestations of corruption and unethical behaviours related to public money.

In addition, Alhijan (1997) suggested the following actions to combat forms of corruption:

- 1- Applying a system of merit in recruiting employees instead of Wasta;
- 2- Adjusting the salary structure of employees according to the economic conditions;
- 3- Re-examining organisational structure to increase participation and involvement in decision making processes;
- 4- Applying employee job rotation policy;
- 5- Transparent and fair performance appraisal systems;
- 6- Activating the role of supervisory units in the public sector;

- 7- Awareness campaigns (educational, media, etc) to inform of the harmful and negative consequences of corruption;
- 8- Promotion and facilitation of the spread of whistle blowing culture with protection for whistle-blowers, and promotion and facilitation of the use and follow-up of complaint mechanisms.

### **International experience in fighting corruption**

In general, many countries work to combat corruption in its various forms, including its Wasta, Wasta and favoritism in a comprehensive and institutional way. The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) ranks 180 countries by their perceived levels of public sector corruption, according to experts and businesspeople. According to the index, 100 is very clean and 0 is highly corrupt. Recently, the International Transparency Organization (2020) study confirmed that the war on bribery and corruption is not a success in most countries of the world; the study reported that the fight against corruption has even declined in four of the seven major industrial countries, namely Canada, France, Britain and United States, while it has not improved in Germany and Japan and, in fact, has only improved in Italy.

In addition, the study places Arab countries at the bottom of the world rankings in terms of CPI value, while Gulf countries are prominent amongst Arab countries. It was found there has been no significant improvement in the field of fighting corruption in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC); this is despite the classification of the United Arab Emirates and Qatar in the ranks of 71 and 62, respectively, though the two countries have not seen significant efforts in combating corruption. The UAE got 71 points in the corruption index, which makes it ranked among the top twenty countries in the world and top for Arab countries in the list of the International Transparency Index. As for Jordan, it has got 60 points out of

100 on the CPI. In the following sections below, some experiences and examples from different countries are presented (see: [www. Transparency.org](http://www.Transparency.org)).

## **Singapore**

The Singapore experience is considered one of the most successful international experiences in the fight against corruption. This success is due to several factors including:

1. Political desire to eliminate corruption;
2. Establishment of serious strategies and mechanisms to fight corruption;
3. Civil society rejected corruption as a means of subsistence;
4. Establishment of the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau (CPIB).

The CPIB manager reports directly to the prime minister. The following are the main responsibilities of the CPIB:

1. Adoption of anti-corruption policies in the governmental administrative system;
2. Investigation of abuse of power by officials;
3. Development of reports to the authorities that are accused of corruption;
4. Review and re-engineering of work systems in the various government agencies to eliminate corruption practices;
5. Presentation of anti-corruption proposals in the various authorities;
6. Meetings with officials, especially those dealing with the public, to emphasize principles of honour and integrity;
7. Investigation of complaints received by the office regarding corruption practices in any party;
8. Investigation of corruption practices by government officials.

## India

India launched the Reform and Anti-Corruption Initiative in 1999. India has suffered a lot from corruption in both the political and economic spheres, where the standard of living is low as approximately 25% of the Indian population lives below the poverty line. About 62% of the Indian people find that corruption is a real and invasive phenomenon in the country, and that they are forced to pay bribes to get the services they want from government organizations. India launched an anti-corruption initiative in response to a number of internal and external factors, including: the people's desire to eliminate corruption, the positive active participation of citizens, the political desire to eliminate bureaucracy and the causes of corruption, and because of civil society becoming more eager to obtain information for the purposes of transparency, responsibility and accountability. In collaboration with the International Transparency Organization, the Indian government and civil society agencies worked together to combat corruption through:

1. Reducing poverty levels in the country;
2. Achieving the principle of transparency in the commercial sector;
3. Achieving sustainable development;
4. Applying principles of democracy;
5. Achieving national security.

In addition, India has signed the Anti-Corruption Treaty (ADB-OECD Anti-Corruption Initiative for Asia-Pacific), wherein an action plan was developed to combat corruption to include mechanisms used to combat corruption, to achieve civil society reform and reduction in the spread of bribery. India has also cooperated with the European Union in fighting corruption through:

1. Supporting civil society in its fight against corruption;
2. Political reform;

3. Creation of an anti-corruption body'
4. Creation of a national plan to fight corruption.

## **Bulgaria**

Bulgaria has been working at fighting corruption since 1997 as corruption has become the hottest issue of interest to both the government and the people. The incursion of corruption into the country and its impact on political, economic and social aspects was obvious with several negative effects upon the country. All these conditions forced both civil society and the government to adopt a national anti-corruption plan, especially in light of the political and economic convention adopted by Bulgaria.

The anti-corruption initiative came from civil society organizations, NGOs and businesses that have created non-governmental bodies to monitor corruption and follow-up corrective actions in the country. A survey finding revealed that 75% of the Bulgarian people believe that corruption affects them and their families negatively. It was also revealed that three out of four people believe that corruption affects their economic life directly to a significant degree.

The foundations of the Bulgarian National Anti-Corruption Plan include:

1. Change and reform of government along with political will to eliminate corruption;
2. The Ministry of Interior has the mandate to fight corruption and punish perpetrators of corrupt practices;
3. Bulgaria has updated many laws regulating public service and administrative reform. In addition, the laws governing trade to fight corruption have been updated;

4. Active participation of civil society in eliminating corruption, which has resulted in the Corruption Monitoring System (CMS).

## **Mexico**

Mexico has developed a serious action plan to reduce corruption and achieve good governance after the economic crisis in 1994. The belief of the Mexican authorities is that there is a strong link between eliminating corruption and achieving economic development. In order to achieve reform, Mexico cooperates with international bodies and organizations, especially the World Bank and USAID, for the purposes of speeding up the development process by both supporting education and raising the standard of living, and activating the principles of good governance, transparency and responsibility in the country. At the national level, the Mexican government has taken a number of steps to combat corruption including:

1. The establishment of the Combating Corruption Unit in the Ministry of Public Administration;
2. The establishment of the Federal Information Access Authority, which is an independent body that works to give citizens access to government information and data;
3. The combatting of bribes in international economic transactions by the signing of an agreement to fight bribery that resulted in the establishment of the Penal Federal Code to monitor international economic transactions.

In addition, the Mexican government has adopted two national anti-corruption projects:



1. A project to assess the extent of applying transparency in localities with the aim of providing an efficient and effective administrative system that applies transparency and involvement of citizens;
2. Values and Ethics Management Project for Public Service Employees with the aim of guiding employees in how to practice the principles of integrity and honour in government organisations.

## **Chapter 3**

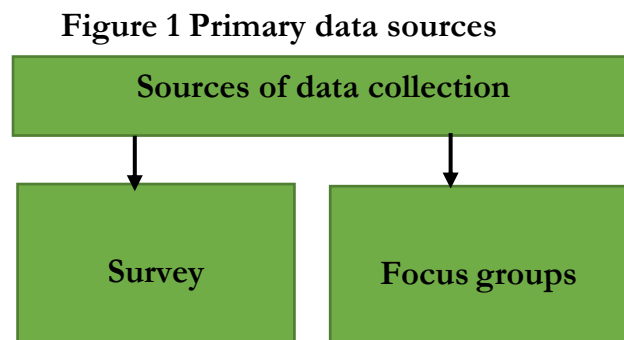
### **Research methodology**

#### **Introduction**

This study has relied upon a mixed methodology to achieve the research objectives and to collect the primary data, wherein the significance of this method comes in its bridging of the deficiencies in using single methodologies that are based on a single source of data. Thus, two main sources of data were used which were obtained from a survey (questionnaire) and focus groups to enhance the understanding of Wasta and favoritism in Jordanian public sector organizations. The following is a brief explanation of each research method and the procedures that were adopted in this research.

#### **The sources of primary data**

As mentioned earlier, the research will depend on a mixed methodology (quantitative and qualitative) through the use of two main sources of data as illustrated in Figure 1.

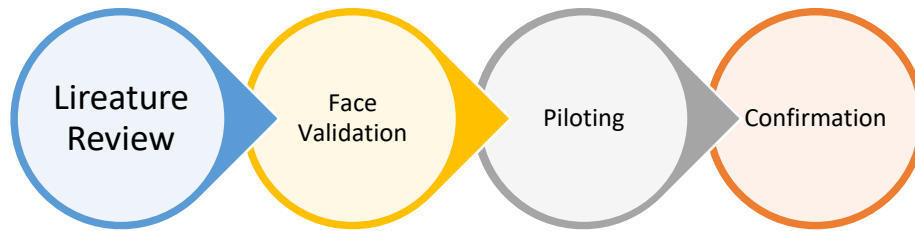


## **Initial development of the questionnaire**

The research team developed the current questionnaire in order to measure the extent of Wasta and favoritism in Jordanian public sector organizations from the viewpoints of employees in all regions (center, north and south). To develop the questionnaire, the research team followed specific steps that included the review of related literature and previous studies and then review of such previous studies into Wasta and favoritism in the public sector context; see, for example, Olemat, 2014; Alnajeeb (2010); Alheti (2009); Alhegan (1997); Alhmash (2007); Lowe et al. (2007) and Cunningham and Sarayrah (1993).

Once the initial questionnaire had been designed, it was reviewed by ten academics and practitioners in Yarmouk University-Public Administration Department and the Anti-Corruption Commission with sound knowledge and track records of experience of conducting research in this current field. After revision, the final version of the questionnaire was tested in a pilot study with 30 employees (out of the target sample) who are working in different organizations in the Jordanian public sector in order to confirm that the questionnaire was clear, understandable and reflected the measures appropriately. In the same vein, the piloting was used to estimate the appropriate time to fill out each questionnaire, which took on average approximately 7 minutes. Finally, after completing the pilot study, very slight modifications were made and approval was issued by the Anti-Corruption Commission. Figure 2 shows the procedural steps that the questionnaire development process went through.

**Figure 2 Procedural steps for questionnaire development**



### **The components of the questionnaire**

The final version of questionnaire was divided into key parts as follows:

Initial section: Demographic and functional data

- Gender
- Years of experience
- Age
- Job title
- Educational level
- Nature of job
- Urban affiliation
- Employee class
- Monthly salary
- Work place/location

### **Main questionnaire sections:**

- Items to measure the level of Wasta and favoritism in Jordanian public sector organizations (11 items).
- Items to measure the causes and motives of Wasta and favoritism in Jordanian public sector organizations (15 items).

- Items to measure the solutions and practical suggestions to overcome the Wasta and favoritism in Jordanian public sector organisations (21 items).
- Two open questions to explore the causes of Wasta and favoritism from the points of view of respondents. The second open question aimed to collect solutions and suggestions to overcome the Wasta and favoritism in Jordanian public sector organisations.

## **Secondary data sources**

To build the theoretical framework and for the development of the survey questionnaire (see appendix 1), the research team reviewed relevant previous studies, books, regulations and international reports in governance, transparency and anti-corruption. In addition to that, the research team paid attention to studies published in reputable and refereed journals that concentrated on articles related to Wasta and favoritism in Arab and Jordanian contexts in general and in public sector contexts in particular.

## **Survey sample**

To meet the tender requirements stated by the Integrity and Anti-corruption Commission, the relative random sample was selected to cover all of the government bodies in all regions and their twelve governorates with a minimum of 2000 questionnaires valid for statistical analysis. In practice, the sample was drawn as follows: 50% from the central province, 30% from the northern province and 20% from the southern Province according to the Civil Service Bureau. Table 2 shows the distribution of public employees according to governorates.

**Table 1. Sample distribution by governorate**

Province	Sample size	Percentage
Central	1250	50%
North	750	30%
South	500	20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2500</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 2. Distribution of public employees by province and governorate (2017)**

Province	Governorate	Number of employees	Percentage
<b>Central</b>	Amman	55423	25.1%
	Balqa	18767	8.64%
	Zarqa	21116	9.72%
	Madaba	8875	4.09%
	<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>104181</b>	<b>47.96%</b>
<b>North</b>	Irbid	41107	18.92%
	Mafraq	15929	7.33%
	Jarash	8152	3.75%
	Ajloun	7219	3.32%
	<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>72407</b>	<b>33.33%</b>
<b>South</b>	Karak	17725	8.16%
	Tafelah	6735	3.10%
	Maa'n	9691	4.46%
	Aqaba	6500	2.99%
	<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>40651</b>	<b>18.71%</b>
<b>Total</b>		<b>217239</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Civil Service Bureau, Year Report (2017).

## **Training research assistants to administer the questionnaire**

Once the questionnaire was completed and approved by the Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission, a training course for the research assistants was implemented. To manage the questionnaire effectively and to achieve the research objectives, a team of qualified research assistants was elected according to the following conditions:

1. They had to have at least three years of experience in distributing questionnaires and conducting research surveys;

2. Have familiarity with the subject of the study;
3. They have to have good conduct/behaviour and be of good moral character;
4. They had to maintain the confidentiality of data within a form prepared for that purpose.

**Table 3. Distribution of team members to complete the field survey**

Province	Governorate	Supervisors	No. research assistants
Central	Amman	Dr. Shaker Aladwan	4
	Balqa		
	Zarqa	Dr. Sahem Nawafleh	4
	Madaba		
North	Irbid	Dr. Mohammad Rawabdeh	9
	Mafrq		
	Jarash	Dr. Raed Ababneh	3
	Ajloun		
South	Karak	Dr. Ali Aladaylah	2
	Tafelah		1
	Maa'n		1
	Aqaba		1
Total			25

## Quantitative data analysis (questionnaire)

To analyze the quantitative data, the descriptive statistics measures that were used included mean, standard deviation (SD) and frequencies. Moreover, a reliability test was adopted to measure internal consistency in the questionnaire. In addition to that, One Way ANOVA was used to find out if there are statistical differences in the dimensions of the study according to the demographic and job variables such as gender, education and so on. Finally, a Scheffe test was used in the analyzing of variance. More specifically, the process of analyzing data followed the following procedural steps:

1. **Data Screening:** This step is summarised in the reviewing of all the returned questionnaires and exclusion of any questionnaires that are not valid for statistical analysis. Then, all collected data were for

checking before entering on the computer and excel spreadsheet and SPSS.

2. **Data Coding:** This consisted of giving a specific number for each answer/questionnaire item.
3. **Raw Data Entry:** The entering of the raw data on SPSS, then analysis of the data and extraction of the primary results.
4. **Results Display:** Within this step, the results of the survey are presented in illustrated tables for each study variable, then comments are made on the results.

The Likert Five-Point scale was used to measure the degree of practice of Wasta and favoritism, the reasons and motives for the practice of Wasta and favoritism, and solutions and proposals for limiting the practice of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector. The scale was divided into five categories including strongly agree (5 points), agree (4 points), moderately agree (3 points), disagree (2 points) and, finally, strongly disagree (1 point). To decide the level of Wasta and favoritism, the arithmetic mean was divided into three levels including high degree, medium degree and low degree based on the following equation:

- Category length = Range / Number of categories
- Range = High class - Low category / 3
- Category length =  $(5-1) / 3 = 1.33$

Accordingly, the following scale was used to judge arithmetic averages, and the levels were classified as follows:

- Less than or equal to 2.33 is low
- From 2.34 to 3.67 is average
- 3.68 to 5.00 is high



## **Focus groups**

Usually, the focus group consisted of a group of individuals whose number ranged from 5 to 10. In this study, the participants were chosen and grouped to discuss the Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector depending on the exchange of personal experiences and the offering of their opinions and trends related to this phenomenon for a period of time ranging between 1 to 2 hours. To collect sufficient qualitative data or responses and to validate the questionnaire results, three focus groups were conducted in three regions (including central, north and south). There were a number of participants representing the public sector organizations in different regions in order to explore their personal experience about the Wasta and favoritism in Jordanian public sector organizations, with their number ranging from 7-10 participants in each focus group. In order to conduct the focus groups in a good manner, the procedural guide was developed to include:

- Identification of target group (s);
- The topic of discussion;
- Instructions for sampling;
- The time taken.

To ensure the success of the focus groups, the research team took a number of steps as follows:

### **1. Choosing of the appropriate composition of the group/number**

In this stage, it was vital to find a homogeneous group. Thus, public sector employees were represented who shared several characteristics. More specifically, several previous studies revealed that the employees who have common denominators such as gender, education and social class will help the interconnectivity within the focus group itself with good contributions for

diagnosis of the phenomenon's of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector organizations. For this purpose, one or more employees can be chosen from each government body that encompasses the ministry level, central department, public institution and municipality.

## **2. Choosing a neutral place/venue**

To empower each member of the focus group to freely express his/her opinion, an appropriate place was chosen that provided for neutrality and objectivity so that clear and transparent results can be achieved.

## **3. Appointment of a facilitator for the discussion session**

The main task for the facilitator was managing the discussion sessions within the focus group effectively. Thus, the facilitators were chosen according to specific conditions as follows:

- Good past experience in management of discussions and focus groups;
- Sound knowledge of the study topic;
- Good skills of communication and time management;
- Accuracy, honesty and reliability.

## **Data privacy**

The team was fully committed to the privacy and confidentiality instructions and ethics and guidelines for scientific research with regard to the conducting of this study. In particular, the instructions included:

### **Consideration for participant anonymity.**

To achieve this goal, the research team followed instruction:

1. To request that the name of the participant is not mentioned in the questionnaire and focus groups;
2. To code the questionnaire and focus groups and give reference numbers for each tool;

3. The ensure that raw data will be deleted from the computers.
  4. To transfer data by a secure tool from the field under the direct supervision of the region coordinator.
- The setting of a data risk management plan that includes taking backup copies on a regular basis, storing data in a secure place and giving a secret number for each data entry on the device (computer).
  - Officially delivering the questionnaires or any related documents to the Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Survey data analysis**

#### **Introduction**

This study aimed to identify the phenomena of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector, in terms of the level of practice, the reasons and motives and the possible solutions to reduce the phenomena. This chapter includes a descriptive analysis of the three dimensions of the study, presentation of the characteristics of the study sample and identification of the differences in respondent opinion according to their personal and functional variables. Below is a detailed explanation of the variables.

#### **Characteristics of the study sample**

The study questionnaire was distributed to 2500 public employees in various ministries, central departments, public institutions, independent agencies and municipalities in all governorates of the kingdom. A total of 2230 questionnaires were retrieved, of which 145 questionnaires were excluded because they were incomplete and not valid for statistical analysis. Thus, 2085 questionnaires were valid for analysis, which represents 93% percent; this is considered a high percentage in administrative and social studies (Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). The following below is an overview of the characteristics of the study sample, according to personal and employment variables, which include gender, years of experience, age, job title, nature of work, place of residence, employee classification, monthly salary, workplace and governorate.

## Gender

**Table 4 Distribution of the study sample according to gender**

Gender	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Male	1211	58.1%	1
Female	824	39.5%	2
No answer	50	2.4%	3
Total	2085	100%	

Table 4 above shows that the percentage of males is more than females, as the number of males has reached 1211 which represents 58.1% of the sample, while female numbers were 824 equals to 39.5% of the sample. This result shows that the sample was generally close to the natural distribution of employee representation in the Jordanian public sector that was indicated in the latest available version annual report of 2017 of the Jordanian civil service bureau, which indicated that 54% of the employees were males and 46% were females. The above result shows that women are encouraged to work, which is in harmony with the changing view of society towards the work of women, in addition to the rising level of education among females which has enabled them to enter the labor market and the public sector in particular.

## Years of Experience

**Table 5. Distribution of the sample according to the years of experience in the public sector**

Years of experience	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Less than 5 years	368	17.6%	4
6-10 years	406	19.5%	3
11-15 years	511	24.5%	2
More than 15 years	731	35.1%	1
No answer	69	3.3%	5
Total	2085	100%	

The results of Table 5 indicate that the sample has high levels of experience, with 35.1% having experience of more than 15 years, followed by 24.5% having experience ranging between 11 to 15 years, and a 19.5% having more than 6 years to 10 years of experience, and 17.6% having the least experience

of less than 5 years. These results indicate that the sample employees include all categories of employees in terms of experience, whilst at the same time it showed the continuity of attracting new employees in the public sector and, thus, the entry of new blood into the public sector whilst preserving the competent ones.

## Age

**Table 6. Distribution of the sample according to their age**

<b>Age group</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Less than 30 years	244	11.7%	3
30-40 years	891	42.7%	1
41-50 years	709	34%	2
More than 50 years	191	9.2%	4
No answer	50	2.4%	5
Total	2085	100%	

The results shown in Table 6 indicate the distribution of the sample in terms of age. As it turned out, about 76% of the respondents are between 30-50 years of age. This indicates that the respondents have a high degree of knowledge and experience in government and this corresponds to what was previously discussed in the Table 5 where the service for more than 15 years came first; they are mostly employees with medium to long service in the government sector. It may be inferred from the low percentage of respondents with low experience (11.7%) that there is limited employment in the public sector in recent years through the civil service bureau.

## Job title

**Table 7 Distribution of the sample according to the job title**

Job title	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Manager	122	5.9	3
Deputy\Assistant Director	109	5.2	4
Section Head\Division	434	20.8	2
Employee	1369	65.7	1
No answer	51	2.4	5
Total	2085	100%	

Table 7 indicates that the majority of the respondents are employees 1369 which is equal to 65.7% which is approximately two thirds of the sample, followed by department heads and divisions, with 434 employees representing 20.8% of the sample. Finally, there is a convergence in the representation of the numbers of managers with their deputies and assistants, with a percentage of 11.1%. This result reflects the nature of hierarchy in the public sector institutions, where the number of employees increases as we go to the rank and file level of the organizational hierarchy and this percentage decreases as we rise towards the top of the organizational hierarchy.

## Educational qualifications

**Table 8 Distribution of the sample according to the educational qualification**

Educational qualification	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
High school and below	328	15.7%	3
Intermediate diploma	466	22.4%	2
Bachelor's	958	45.9%	1
Master's	225	10.8%	4
Ph. D.	53	2.5%	6
No answer	55	2.6%	5
Total	2085	100%	

Table 8 shows that the sample of the study has high levels of education, as nearly half of the sample (45.9%) holds a first university degree (Bachelor's), whereas approximately 13.3% of them hold master's and PhD degrees. On

the other hand, we note that approximately 15.7% of the sample have high school or lower educational qualifications. The high level of education of the sample can be explained by the fact that a bachelor's degree is a pre-requisite for the majority of public jobs according to the civil service system, especially for the upper level positions such as the first category or class, even though some low level jobs at the operational level require a lower level of education, regardless of the job being academic or professional.

## Nature of work

**Table 9. Distribution of the sample according to the nature of work**

Nature of work	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Administrative	1094	52.5%	1
Technical	783	37.5%	2
Law	82	3.9%	4
No answer	126	6%	3
<b>Total</b>	2085	100%	

Table No. (9) shows that half of the sample work in administrative jobs at a percentage of 52.5%, and in contrast, the percentage of technical jobs was 37.5%, which included, for example (engineer, accountant, financial analyst, pharmacist, doctor, etc.). While the percentage of those holding legal jobs reached 3.9%, and it should be noted that 126 individuals, or 6%, did not answer this question. This result reflects the actual reality of the distribution of the study sample, in addition to the distribution and diversity of jobs in the Jordanian public sector.



## Place of residence

**Table 10 Distribution of the sample according to the place of residence**

Place of residence	Frequency	Percent	Rank
City	1265	60.7%	1
Countryside\ village	679	32.6%	2
Badia	63	3%	4
Camp	14	.7%	5
No answer	64	3.1%	3
Total	2085	100%	

Analysis of Table 10 shows that the majority of the sample belonged to or lived in cities, with 60.7%, followed by those who lived in rural areas or who had rural or village affiliation with 32.6%. These results have many implications, such as the concentration of government jobs and departments in cities and governorates, the changing nature of living and the migration from the countryside to cities. As the public employees generally reside near their workplace to reduce the cost of transportation and the time taken to get to work, this is reflected in the percentage of people living in the badia from the sample, which did not exceed 3%.

## Employee classification

**Table 11 Distribution of the sample according to employee classification**

Employee classification	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Permanent employee	1663	79.8%	1
Contract employee	326	15.6%	2
Others	38	1.8%	4
No answer	58	2.8%	3
Total	2085	100%	

Table 11 indicates that the majority of the sample are permanent employees, which equals 79.8% of the respondents, while 15.6% of them are on contracts, and 1.8% are daily workers. These results have two conclusions; in the first place, it shows that government depends solely on its permanent staff, and secondly, it shows that government, at the same time, relies upon the purchase of some specialized services (outsourcing).

## Monthly salary

**Table 12 Distribution of the sample according to monthly salary**

Monthly Salary	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
300 or less JD	251	12%	3
301-500 JD	1045	50.1%	1
501-700 JD	490	23.5%	2
701-900 JD	184	8.8%	4
More than 900 JD	86	4.1%	5
No answer	29	2.8%	6
Total	2085	100%	

Table 12 shows that approximately half of the sample (50.1%) has a salary ranged within the Jordanian public employee salary with no supervisory position. The second largest percentage is for those who have salaries ranging from 501-700 dinar, which is more related to public institutions and independent agencies, who have more flexibility in granting incentives and bonuses compared to ministries and central departments. It was also found that about 12% receive less than 300 dinars monthly which coincides with Table 8 which indicated that about 15% of the respondents have educational qualification lower than high school certificate level.

## Workplace

**Table 13 Distribution of the sample according to the working place**

Workplace	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Ministry	662	31.8%	1
Central departments	570	27.3%	2
Public institution	517	24.8%	3
Independent agency	41	2%	5
Municipality	201	9.6%	4
Others	45	2.2%	7
No answer	49	2.4%	6
Total	2085	100%	

Table 13 indicates a convergence in the distribution of the sample to various ministries, central departments and public institutions; for instance, the numbers of respondents were 662, 570, 517 with 31.8%, 27.3% and 24.8%

respectively. In addition, 201 respondents were from municipalities (9.6%). The overall result reflects the actual distribution of employees according to the categorization of administrative units in Jordan, which indicates the comprehensiveness of the study and the correct representation of most public institutions and their forms in the Jordanian public sector.

## **Descriptive analysis of the main dimensions of the study**

This part includes a descriptive analysis of the questionnaire items below, where iterations and percentages for each of the items have been extracted.

### **1. The level of practice of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector**

It is noted from Table 14 that there is a medium level of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector as indicated in the overall mean of value 3.03 according to the scale adopted in the study methodology. However, it turns out that item number 1 came first with a mean of 3.76, which indicates that citizens resort to the practice of Wasta and favoritism to carry out their governmental transactions, where approximately 90.7% agreed with its content. At the same time, 81% of the respondents with 3.69 mean, as shown in Item number 5, emphasized that Wasta and favoritism are not acceptable; this result may reflect the level of awareness that Jordanian public employees have, and a recognition of the danger that Wasta and favoritism represent for the public administration and its institutions. This conclusion might be confirmed by item 4 where 75% of the respondents stated that they evade from the practice of Wasta and favoritism for their friends and acquaintances.

Item 6, which states that “I try to complete the transactions of relatives and acquaintances without paying the required fees” is noteworthy; even though it came last in ranking, with 14% of the sample with 1.78 mean, it indicated that they are seeking to exempt their relatives and acquaintances from their required transactions fees. The reason for its low ranking was due to the presence of computerized financial and accounting systems that are difficult to tamper with, or the presence of means of control that prevent such unacceptable behavior.

**Table 14 Sample responses regarding the practicing of Wasta and favoritism (N=2085)**

No	Items	Percentage of sample responses					Mean	Practice level
		Always	Almost	Some-times	Rarely	Never		
1	Citizens resort to practice Wasta and favoritism to carry out their governmental transactions	25.5	37.9	27.3	5.6	3.7	3.76	High
2	Employees refuse requests from their acquaintances and relatives to carry out violating transactions	14.3	21.0	31.2	21.2	12.3	3.04	Medium
3	You apologize for not responding to mediate a transaction with one of your acquaintances or friends	17.1	24.2	32.9	15.4	10.4	3.22	Medium
4	I avoid mediating for friends and acquaintances for any transaction	21.5	24.4	29.9	14.1	10.2	3.33	Medium
5	Wasta and favoritism are unacceptable	38.3	22.5	20.2	7.6	11.4	3.69	High
6	I try to complete the transactions of my relatives and acquaintances without paying the required fees	7.1	7.1	10.3	7.8	67.6	1.78	Low
7	I perform transactions of relatives and acquaintances, by passing the role of other clients	7.0	9.5	19.1	19.9	44.5	2.15	Low
8	I leave my office to mediate for relatives and acquaintances to complete their transactions	8.0	9.0	20.4	22.6	40.0	2.22	low
9	I feel embarrassed if I do not mediate for relatives and acquaintances to complete their transactions	13.2	18.0	31.5	15.1	22.3	2.85	Medium
10	I contact my colleagues to speed up the transactions of my relatives and acquaintances	11.2	17.9	28.5	22.5	19.9	2.78	Medium
11	I complete the transactions of my relatives and acquaintances without their presence	7.6	9.4	16.3	17.0	49.7	2.08	Low
<b>The practice of Wasta and favoritism as a whole in the Jordanian public sector</b>							3.03	Medium

## 2. Reasons and motives for the practice of Wasta and favoritism

**Table 15 Sample response to causes and motives of practicing Wasta and favoritism (N =2085)**

No	Items	Percentage of sample responses					Mean	Practice level
		v. impo	Impo	Ave.impo	Not imp	Not impo at all		
1	Employees practice Wasta and favoritism because of weak internal control in the organization	20.2	28.2	25.1	11.4	15.1	3.27	Medium
2	Employees practice Wasta because lack of transparency in the organization's procedures and operations	18.1	29.6	26.1	12.1	14.0	3.26	Medium
3	Employees mediate as a result of social pressure from relatives and acquaintances	25.0	33.1	25.7	9.3	6.9	3.6	Medium
4	Wasta and favoritism are practiced due to the weak religious motive among employees	22.1	27.1	25.0	12.9	12.9	3.32	Medium
5	Wasta and favoritism are practiced due to the weak implementation of disciplinary penalties	25.7	29.6	24.0	9.1	11.7	3.48	Medium
6	Wasta and favoritism increase due to weak accountability	30.4	30.6	20.9	8.1	10.0	3.63	Medium
7	Wasta and favoritism are practiced because managers overlook the punishment of the jurors	24.7	28.9	24.7	10.3	11.3	3.46	Medium
8	Failure to update anti-corruption and Wasta legislation help spread it	37.0	30.5	18.8	6.5	7.3	3.83	High
9	The absence of justice in society is one of the leading causes of the phenomenon of Wasta and favoritism	49.0	24.8	16.1	5.6	4.5	4.08	High
10	The spread of poverty and unemployment are among the causes of Wasta and favoritism	38.4	28.3	19.8	7.0	6.5	3.85	High
11	The decline in the work and production values of employees from causes of Wasta and favoritism	28.8	29.0	25.0	9.6	7.6	3.62	Medium
12	Failure to use e-government effectively to complete transactions increases Wasta and favoritism	34.3	30.6	21.8	7.3	6.0	3.80	High

13	People resort to Wasta and favoritism as a result of their lack of confidence in obtaining their rights through official means	41.9	30.2	18.8	5.0	4.10	4.01	High
14	People demand Wasta because of their desire to obtain benefits that are not theirs	21.3	27.5	30.6	12.5	8.1	3.41	Medium
15	Increasing demand for various governmental services is one of the reasons for Wasta	21.0	31.1	30.6	9.4	8.0	3.48	Medium
<b>Reasons and motives for practicing Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector</b>							3.61	Medium

Table 15 shows that there is a convergence in the reasons and motives for practicing Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector, where the mean ranged between 3.26 to 4.08, as well as medium to high degrees of importance according to the scale of the study. As for the most important motives, from the point of view of the sample, it was the absence of justice in society as mentioned in Item 9 with 4.08 mean; this meant that approximately 90% agreed on the reason and its active role in practicing Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector. At the same time, 90% of the sample, with 4.01 mean as indicated in Item 13, believes that lack of citizen's confidence in obtaining their rights in the public sector is one of the main reasons leading to the spread of Wasta and favoritism.

In addition, 87% of respondents, with an average of 3.55 as in Item 1, affirmed that poverty and unemployment are among the important factors leading to the practice of Wasta and favoritism. As for the least influential reasons for Wasta and favoritism from the point of view of respondents, as stated in Items 1 and 2, were weak internal control and the absence of transparency in the work place whether in ministries, central departments, agencies and municipalities, with an average of 3.26 and 3.27, respectively. Despite the fact that the two mentioned reasons were the lowest, 76% of the

sample, however, indicated its importance as a critical reason in the practice of Wasta and favoritism.

### **3. Practical suggestions and solutions to reduce the phenomenon of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector**

The result in Table 16 indicates that there is a high degree of agreement between the respondents on the suggestions and solutions submitted in this study to reduce the phenomena of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector; with 4.36 mean of all items, respondents believe that “accelerating the completion of transaction and respecting the role ‘first come first served’”, “strengthening religious motives among employees and managers alike”, “activating the application of e-government and its systems to complete governmental transactions and providing government services”, and “activating the electronic link to provide government services between various departments and related institutions” are, to a great extent, successful solutions to reduce the spread of the two phenomena under study, with 4.71, 4.53 and 4.5 respectively. Exerting efforts to implement all mentioned suggestions will strengthen government initiatives to adopt e-government applications, with the hope that applying e-government will limit and may curb inter Wasta and favoritism phenomena in Jordan. As for the religious motives expected to enhance the principle of self-censorship among employees and managers, by doing that it is expected and considered an effective solution to deal with the two phenomena, as respondents indicated.

**Table 16 Sample response regarding suggestions and solutions to cope with Wasta and favoritism**

No	Items	Percentage of sample responses					Mean	Practice level
		v. impo	impo	Average imp	Not imp	Not impo at all		
1	Speeding the completion of transactions and respecting the role	77.9	16.5	4.3	.8	.5	4.71	High
2	Activation and tightening penalties for those who practice Wasta and favoritism	61.3	26.4	9.4	1.9	1.0	4.45	High
3-	Activate the e-government implementation and systems to complete government transactions\ services	64.3	24.3	9.3	1.3	.8	4.50	High
4	Activating internal control requirements (tools and channels) on employees	56.6	29.9	10.3	2.4	.8	4.39	High
5	Holding awareness campaigns for employees about the negative effects of Wasta and favoritism	51.7	28.0	15.0	3.7	1.6	4.25	High
6	Holding specialized training courses for employees in combating Wasta and favoritism and to activate the integrity systems	49.4	30.0	15.3	3.6	1.6	4.22	High
7	Rewarding employees who report cases of Wasta and favoritism	46.8	24.7	16.8	7.5	4.1	4.03	High
8	Provide legal and employment protection for those who provide information on Wasta and favoritism cases	54.1	25.7	13.4	4.8	2.1	4.25	High
9	Educating clients / customers and society about the phenomenon of Wasta and favoritism	52.3	30.1	12.9	3.1	1.6	4.28	High
10	Improve the financial position of employees to avoid any practices that lead to exploitation of the job position	69.4	18.1	9.9	2.0	.7	4.53	High
11	Create an ethical covenant to enhance the role of employees in combatting all forms of Wasta and favoritism	55.0	28.9	12.4	2.6	1.1	4.34	High
12	Activating the principle of self-censorship among employees	56.2	28.7	11.0	2.7	1.4	4.36	High
13	Finding a good role model from colleagues and management to establish the values of integrity and citizenship	58.8	26.9	9.8	3.5	1.1	4.39	High



14	Cooperating with control agencies and the integrity and anti-corruption authority	54.5	29.2	11.7	2.8	1.9	4.32	High
15	Promote religious motives among employees and managers alike	65.1	22.6	8.3	2.6	1.3	4.48	High
16-	Denial of promotion and job privileges for practicing Wasta and favoritism	54.2	27.1	13.5	3.3	1.9	4.28	High
17	Withdrawing parts of the authority from employees practicing Wasta and favoritism	58.7	25.1	11.8	2.8	1.7	4.36	High
18	Incorporating anti-corruption topics and embedding integrity values into school and university curricula	52.9	29.6	13.4	2.7	1.4	4.30	High
19	Activating the role of media in revealing Wasta and favoritism	53.8	28.3	13.0	3.1	1.7	4.29	High
20	Activating the role of preachers and clerics in combatting Wasta and favoritism	56.1	26.4	12.5	3.2	1.8	4.32	High
21	Activate the electronic linkage to achieve government services between the departments and relevant institutions	65.2	23.5	8.8	1.3	1.2	4.50	High
<b>Practical solution and proposals to reduce the phenomena of Wasta and favoritism in the public sector as a whole</b>							4.36	High

#### **4. Analysis of the statistical differences in the respondents' answers to the study dimensions due to their personal and occupational variables**

This part includes an analysis of the participants' responses with regard to the level of Wasta and favoritism practice, the reasons and motives for Wasta and favoritism , and practical solutions and suggestions to reduce the phenomena of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector due to their personal and occupational variables (gender, age, years of service, job title, work location, place of residence, nature of work, ... etc). The following is a presentation of the results by conducting one-way ANOVA analysis using T-test and F-test to examine the statistical differences in the participants'

evaluation, at the level of significance ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ), toward the practice level of the study dimensions due to their personal and occupational variables. Scheffe's test was also used to examine the statistical variance of respondents in relation to the study dimensions. In the sections that follow, attention will be given to the findings that showed a statistical difference in the attitudes of the respondents.

#### **i) Statistical differences due to gender**

Table 17 shows there are statistical differences at the level of ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) in the attitudes of male and female respondents in regard to the practice of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector, where the value of T-test is 3.47. According to Scheffe's test, the findings showed that male respondents perceived a higher practice level of Wasta and favoritism compared to the female respondents in the Jordanian public sector; the mean values were 3.06 and 2.97, respectively, indicating a moderate level of practice based on the study scale for assessing the mean values. This finding might be attributed to the fact that the culture of Jordanian society is predominantly masculine, wherein males are bold and inclined to mediate for others more than women. In addition to that, males have stronger and more social relations compared to females that enhance the practice of Wasta and favoritism. The results did not show any statistically significant differences between males and females towards the reasons and motives of Wasta and favoritism, and the practical solutions and suggestions to limit their practice; this indicated a similarity in the participants' attitudes.

**Table 17 Statistical differences towards dimensions of the study according to the personal and occupational variables of the respondents (n= 2085)**

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Practice of Wasta and favoritism</b>	<b>Reasons and motives of Wasta and favoritism</b>	<b>Solutions and suggestions to limit Wasta and favoritism</b>
<b>Personal and occupational variables</b>			
Gender	3.47*	.286	.517*
Number of years of service	18.00*	6.48*	.488
Age	3.53*	2.43*	.703
Job title	4.62*	3.18*	.395
Education	3.18*	9.28*	.667
Nature of task	3.37*	4.72*	5.10*
Place of residence	12.13*	4.67*	.392*
Employee classification	7.69*	.915	.378
Monthly salary	1.13	1.34	1.66
Work location	3.59*	6.63*	1.51
Region	1.19	9.23*	4.51*

**\*T and F values are significant ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ )**

## **ii) Analysis of differences due to number of years of service**

The results of Table 17 showed statistical significant differences (at the level of  $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) in the practice level of Wasta and favoritism, and their reasons and motives in the Jordanian public sector due to the number of years of service of participants, with mean values of 3.21 and 3.77, respectively. These differences were in favor of participants of 6-10 years compared to other categories of years of service. It is generally observed that those who have fewer years of service perceive higher levels of practice of Wasta and favoritism compared to other participants. This result might be recognized due to the fact that the group of 6-10 years perceives the manifestations of Wasta and favoritism as a strange behavior that attracts their attention more due to their recent employment in the Jordanian public sector compared to older employees who might consider the practice of Wasta and favoritism as normal behavior. Moreover, this category is characterized by the ease of using modern technology such as e-government applications, which helps them to

confront the practice of Wasta and favoritism in completing governmental transactions.

### **iii) Analysis of differences due to age**

The results of the statistical analysis showed that employees within the age group of less than 30 years perceive the practice of Wasta and favoritism with a higher degree (3.08), at a statistically significant at the level of ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ), compared to respondents of other age groups. It is noticed that younger participants perceive higher levels of practice of Wasta and favoritism. This result is consistent with what has been explained in relation to the impact of the 'number of years of service' variable in perceiving the manifestations of Wasta and favoritism as strange behavior that attracts their attention more due to their recent employment in the Jordanian public sector. Analysis did not show any statistical differences in the respondents' attitudes towards the reasons and motives of Wasta and favoritism, and the practical solutions and suggestions to limit their practice in the Jordanian public sector.

### **iv) Analysis of differences due to job title**

Table 17 shows that there are statistically significant differences at the level ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) in the participant's responses toward the Wasta and favoritism practice and reasons and motives in the Jordanian public sector due to the job title. Statistical analysis using the Scheffe test showed that the variances were between the participants of job categories (employee) and (department head) and (assistant manager/deputy director), in favor of the category (assistant manager/deputy director) who perceive a higher practice of Wasta and favoritism (3.22) compared to other occupational groups of respondents. The group (assistant manager/deputy director) also reported a higher level of agreement of the listed reasons and motives in the practice of Wasta and favoritism (3.76). An explanation for this finding might be the fact that those

with higher job titles usually have more knowledge and comprehension of the completion of all transactions in government departments. In addition, the service recipient (citizen) often mediates to the decision makers in the department to complete their transactions in the case an employee refuses to do so. Accordingly, higher job title holders perceive a higher level of Wasta and favoritism that might increase their knowledge of the most important reasons and motives of practicing Wasta and favoritism by service recipients.

#### **v) Analysis of differences due to education**

Findings of the statistical analysis showed that there are statistically significant differences in the attitudes of the respondents towards the practice of Wasta and favoritism and the reasons and motives of practicing that in the Jordanian public sector due to their educational qualifications. The T-test values were 3.18 and 9.28 at the statistically significant level ( $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) for the two dimensions, respectively. According to the Scheffe test, it was found that respondents with higher levels of education perceive a higher level of Wasta and favoritism practice than their counterparts with lower levels of educational qualifications. This finding might be attributed to the fact that those with high qualifications are most likely to hold leadership and supervisory positions, which offers them an opportunity to know all the aspects of the practice of Wasta as well as more comprehension of the reasons and motives of that practice in their departments.

#### **vi) Analysis of differences due to nature of task**

The findings indicated that there are statistically significant differences in the answers of the participants about the practice of Wasta and favoritism, the reasons and motives, and the solutions and suggestions in the Jordanian public sector due to their nature of work. 'Legal' category participants (3.19) perceive higher level of practice of Wasta and favoritism compared to the rest of the other jobs. This may be explained by employees with legal specialties

having more knowledge and awareness of the legislation governing the work procedures in public organizations; this provides them with comprehension of the Wasta practice.

As for the reasons and motives of Wasta, the findings showed statistically significant differences attributable to the nature of the work and in favor of the 'financial' category (3.67) compared to other jobs category. The reason for this finding might be attributed to the fact that many of those who practice Wasta aim to obtain exemptions or financial discounts in completing their government transactions. Therefore, those who work in financial tasks recognize that the examined reasons and motives are crucial in practicing Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector. It was also found that 'administrative' job category participants (4.40) perceive a higher role for solutions and practical suggestions to reduce the phenomena of Wasta and favoritism to a statistical significance level. One explanation for this finding may be attributed to the fact that the administrative employee usually performs all the procedures and steps to complete any government transaction, which provides them with better awareness of the solutions and suggestions to speed up the completion of government transactions.

#### **vii) Analysis of differences due to place of residence**

As the values of F-test statistic indicate in Table 17, there are statistically significant differences (at  $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) for the responses of participants towards the practice of Wasta and favoritism and the reasons and motives for their practice in the Jordanian public sector due to the place of residence. Scheffe test showed that the Bedouin respondents perceive higher practice of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector (3.40) compared with participants who live in the city or countryside/village or camp. This may be attributed to the fact that Bedouin employees working in the public sector are more likely to be under pressure from their relatives to practice Wasta and

favoritism. Regarding the reasons and motives of practicing Wasta and favoritism, statistical differences were generally found in favor of those who live in camps and the desert (Bedouin) compared to those who live in the city and the countryside/village. An explanation to this finding might be due to the fact that those who live in those areas have strong social ties that may contribute to increasing pressure on them to practice Wasta and favoritism to complete government transactions.

#### **viii) Analysis of differences due to employee classification**

Statistical analysis of the values of T-test in Table 17 indicated the presence of statistically significant differences (at  $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) in the participant's attitudes towards the practice of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector according to employee classification in favor of employees with a contract category (3.10) compared with permanent employees (3.01). This may be attributed to employees with a contract category who are non-permanent employees who work for a certain period in the public sector. Therefore, they can observe any behaviors of Wasta and favoritism compared to permanent employees who have become accustomed to the practice of Wasta behavior since they are forced to do so; as such, it does not attract their attention as being strange behavior in their workplace.

#### **ix) Analysis of differences due to salary**

Results of the statistical analysis did not show any statistical differences (at  $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) in the respondents' attitudes towards the three dimensions of the study: practice, reasons and motives, and solutions and suggestions of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector. This indicates that the attitudes of respondents are similar to each other, regardless of the level of salary.

#### **x) Analysis of differences due to work location**

Findings of the statistical analysis indicated the presence of statistically significant differences (at  $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ) in the answers of the participants towards practicing Wasta and favoritism and the reasons and motives of their practice in the Jordanian public sector due to the variable of work location. It was found that employees who work in independent bodies generally perceive that there is a higher degree of practice of Wasta and favoritism (3.10) and reasons and motives for that (3.82) compared to the participants who work in other government agencies such as ministries and central departments. A reason for this finding might be attributed to the fact that those independent bodies enjoy general financial as well as administrative independence, special regulatory systems and legislation, and the lack of strict control from the central administration, as is the case in the central ministries. All these conditions might lead to the creation of a flexible and appropriate work environment for the practice of Wasta and favoritism and its motives in those independent bodies compared to the central ministries and departments.

#### **xi) Analysis of differences due to region (governorate)**

The results of the statistical analysis showed that there are statistical differences (at  $\alpha \leq 0.05$ ), where respondents from the southern region (3.73) perceive that the reasons and motives mentioned in the study have a very crucial role in the practice of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector compared to the respondents from the north and central regions. One explanation for this finding might be due to the fact that the participants from the south believe there is a low level of justice in the distribution of economic and social development projects and infrastructure and the presence of high levels of poverty and unemployment, and that they are two main reasons for the spread and justification of practicing Wasta and favoritism for the accomplishment of their governmental transactions.



Participants from the ‘middle’ region (4.40) perceive a higher role of the examined solutions and suggestions in fighting Wasta and favoritism compared to their counterparts from the north and south regions. The finding can be attributed to the fact that the government usually carries out experiments and development of public services in the centers of the ministries in the capital, before transferring the application to the rest of governorates. Examples of those applications that are used to fight Wasta and favoritism are e-government and the electronic link between the ministries and government agencies. Accordingly, participants of the ‘middle’ region believe those applications, for example, are reasonable solutions and suggestions to deal with Wasta and favoritism.

### **Analysis of open questions**

In order to give an opportunity to study participants to present any idea or to confirm it in their own language and self-expression and to enrich the study data, the questionnaire included two open questions. The first question is about the reasons and motives of Wasta and favoritism, whilst the second question is about solutions and suggestions to reduce the phenomena of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector. It should be noted that 349 participants answered the two questions from the total sample of this study (n=2085), with 17% of response. Analysis of these two questions is presented below with recognition that the answers are listed based upon their frequency as reported by the respondents.

## Open question 1: The reasons and motives of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector

**Table 18 Analysis of the first open question of the reasons and motives of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector**

Rank	Reasons and motives	Frequency	%
1	The prevalence of family and tribal loyalty and personal interests over the public interest	49	14
2	Lack of justice in providing government services to citizens	40	11
3	Slow completion of transactions, length of procedures, administrative slackness and low transparency	38	11
4	Poor performance of the public employee	24	7
5	Wasta is the main means of obtaining rights and the inability to obtain it by official means	23	7
6	Financial motives by employees	22	6
7	Weak accountability and internal institutional oversight	22	6
8	Holding leadership positions with low talented individuals and through Wasta	21	6
9	The culture of Wasta is rooted in society	21	6
10	Weak religious and moral insight	19	5
11	Weak citizen confidence in the integrity of procedures and management	11	3
12	The presence of legal loopholes and the lack of updating of legislation	11	3
13	Low level of employees' salaries	11	3
14	Individual decision-making and moods of the employee or official	10	3
15	Lack of automated government procedures	6	2
16	Weak penalties	6	2
17	Ignorance and lack of knowledge of the procedures by citizens	5	2
18	The employee's lack of awareness of the danger of Wasta and favoritism and its impact on society	4	1
19	The low effectiveness of the Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission and its limited powers	4	1
20	Lack of seriousness in fighting corruption	4	1
21	High government transaction fees	3	Less than 1
22	Weak employee loyalty to his organisation	3	
23	Poor self-control	3	
24	Clique at work	3	
25	Electoral motives by employees	2	
26	The employee's fear of reporting Wasta cases	1	

Table 18 shows that the reasons and motives presented by respondents in the open question are closely aligned with their answers to the earlier closed question related to the reasons and motives of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector; this indicates the credibility of the participants' answers. It was reported that most frequent reasons and motives relates to

‘the prevalence of family and tribal loyalty and personal interests over the public interest’. This reason was confirmed by 49 respondents with 14% of those who answered this question. The second most frequent reason was ‘lack of justice in providing government services to citizens’; this reason was confirmed by 40 respondents, with 11% of all the respondents who answered the question. This finding is confirmed by the results of the statistical analysis of the dimension of reasons and motives as 90% agreed on this reason and its crucial role in the practice of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector, with an average score of 4.08.

As for the third reason for Wasta and favoritism in terms of importance, respondents mentioned that ‘slow completion of transactions, length of procedures, administrative slackness and low transparency’ whereby 38 respondents emphasised the role of this reason, with approximately 11%. This finding is consistent with statistical analysis as 65% of the respondents agreed on its role in practicing Wasta and favoritism with a mean value of 3.27.

## **Open question 2: Practical solutions and proposals to reduce the phenomenon of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector**

**Table 19 Analysis of the second open question of solutions and proposals to reduce Wasta and favoritism**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Solution and suggestions</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
1	Applying e-government and electronic connectivity, activating the electronic payment process, automating work, and activating electronic monitoring tools	36	10
2	Selection of leaders who are competent, effective, honest and of good morals	30	9
3	Providing incentives, material and moral, to immunize employees in the public sector from falling into the practice of corruption of Wasta and favoritism	27	8
4	Providing training and awareness programs related to reducing Wasta and favoritism (media and preachers)	22	6
5	Promotion of religious beliefs, values and good morals	15	4
6	Competent employees	15	4
7	Do a list of the names of practitioners and the penalties taken against them and publishing that after proving this judicially (the role of the media).	11	3
8	Updating legislation and keeping pace with developments	10	3

9	The employee should not work in the same area in where he lives	7	2
10	Cooperating with regulatory agencies such as the Anti-Corruption Commission	6	2
11	Denial of promotion and job privileges	6	2
12	Rotate and transfer employees internally to ensure they do not monopolize certain tasks	6	2
13	Strengthening the role of the Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission in field oversight	6	2
14	Urging and motivating citizens to report cases of Wasta and favoritism while ensuring protection (using the electronic reporting method)	4	1
15	Ensuring legal protection for whistle-blowers	3	Less than 1
16	Disciplinary transfer	2	
17	Reducing transaction fees	2	
18	Activating complaints boxes	2	
19	Establishing the principles of national loyalty	1	
20	Participatory decision-making	1	
21	Providing rewards for whistleblower of Wasta cases	1	

Table 19 indicates that respondents believed that the most frequent solution and suggestion to reduce the Wasta and favoritism phenomena in the Jordanian public sector were applying e-government and electronic connectivity, activating the electronic payment process, automating work, and activating electronic monitoring tools; this suggestion was confirmed by almost 10% of those who answered this question. This suggestion is in line with the approach of the Jordanian government and its executive units by shifting towards e-government in order to reduce the human interference to limit the spread of Wasta and favoritism when providing government services.

The second most important suggestion to reduce the Wasta and favoritism as reported by participants was ‘to select leaders who are competent, effective, honest and of good morals’, with 9% of those who answered this open question. Inspirational and good example leaders, who are characterized with high levels of professionalism, just, honest and ethically competent are crucial in order to limit the practice of Wasta and favoritism in their organizations.

The third most important suggestion to fight Wasta and favoritism is about ‘providing incentives, material and moral, to immunize employees in the public sector from falling into the practice of corruption of Wasta and favoritism’. This suggestion has 8% of the frequencies reported by the respondents who answered this question.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Qualitative data analysis**

#### **Introduction**

In order to increase the assimilation of the quantitative results extracted from the questionnaire and increase their credibility, the research team implemented three focus groups in the three regions of Jordan, the center, the north and the south. The number of participants in each focus group ranged from 7 to 10 individuals, representing different government agencies. For the purposes of data analysis, content analysis was used after writing the answers with them treated according to the procedural guide (see Appendix No. 2). The responses of the participants, according to the sequence of questions of the focus groups, are considered in the sections that follow.

#### **A. The concept of Wasta and favoritism**

In analyzing the data, a set of definitions related to Wasta and favoritism were reached from the point of view of employees in a number of government agencies in the Jordanian public sector. Most definitions emphasize the negative meaning of Wasta and favoritism, and a few of them indicate that the Wasta has positive connotations if its goal is the realization of rights. For more details, we quote some of what respondents said. For example, favoritism and Wasta may be social synonyms, sometimes used in the same sense. We can conclude that Wasta means infringement on the rights of others as a result of interference by entities or individuals. Wasta and favoritism can be considered as one element of corruption in all of its forms and types. In addition, Wasta differs from favoritism. For example, Wasta can be negative or positive, but favoritism is often negative, so it is harmful to the public interest and the interests of others with it meaning a clear exploitation of the

public position, and sometimes carries with its mutual personal benefits. These benefits harm the public interest.

One respondent argued that Wasta is different from favoritism, where he says "The term of Wasta comes from the word nepotist, and was used in ancient times, and the meaning of Wasta could be positive and negative as well". Another respondent said "The Wasta is a kind of corruption which leads you to help your relative regardless of their efficiency." Another respondent mentioned that "Wasta and favoritism represent value and behavioral deviations that destroy justice and undermine the structure of society". Another respondent defines Wasta as uncivilized behavior that results in negative manifestations, and he said that Wasta is through a nepotist person and the Wasta may turn into major corruption when interspersed with a bribe". To clarify, he said:

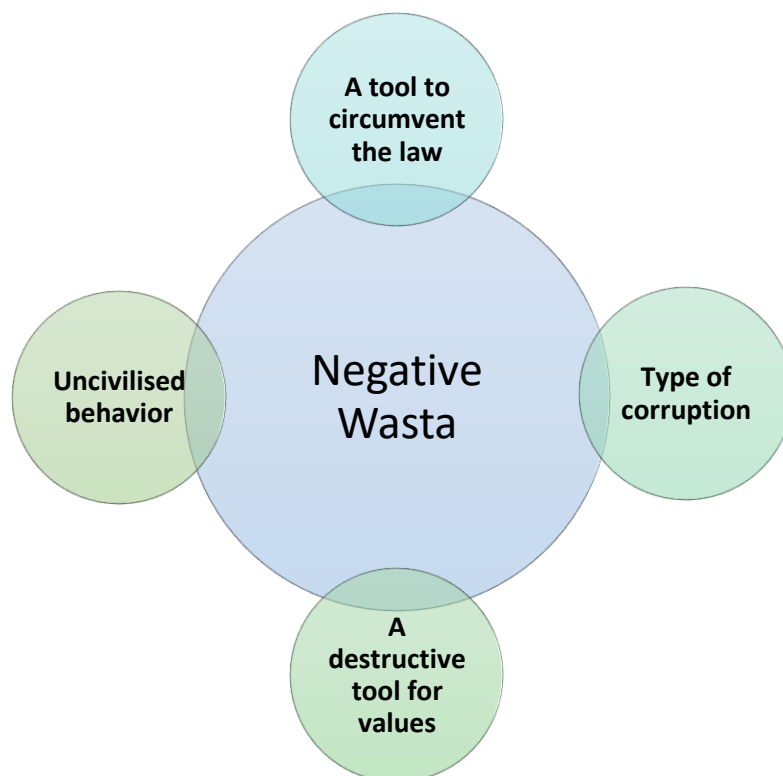
"Wasta is the past was acceptable for the relief of the weaklings, but now there are merchants for the Wasta!! A nepotist enters with an official who receives money for that, and the money is shared between the nepotist and the official, so it turns into a bribe because it has become involved with many parties".

Some said that Wasta and favoritism may be social synonyms, sometimes used in one sense. In the same context, some assert that favoritism and Wasta assault the rights of other people. On the other hand, some people see that searching for Wasta has become a norm for obtaining a right for you or a part of that right. In establishing the true meaning of Wasta, some see that Wasta is a means and not an end in itself to reach personal goals, and it may be positive if there is recognition for their families with their legitimate rights, but in the absence of oversight and justice it has become negative because the rights of others are robbed and this applies to more deadly favoritism . Some say that, in terms of language, Wasta differs as an administrative concept. To clarify, some quotes are cited below.

- Wasta and favoritism: Two tools for defrauding, breaching and circumventing laws and regulations.
- Wasta, in the positive sense, is a way to address bureaucratic procedures.

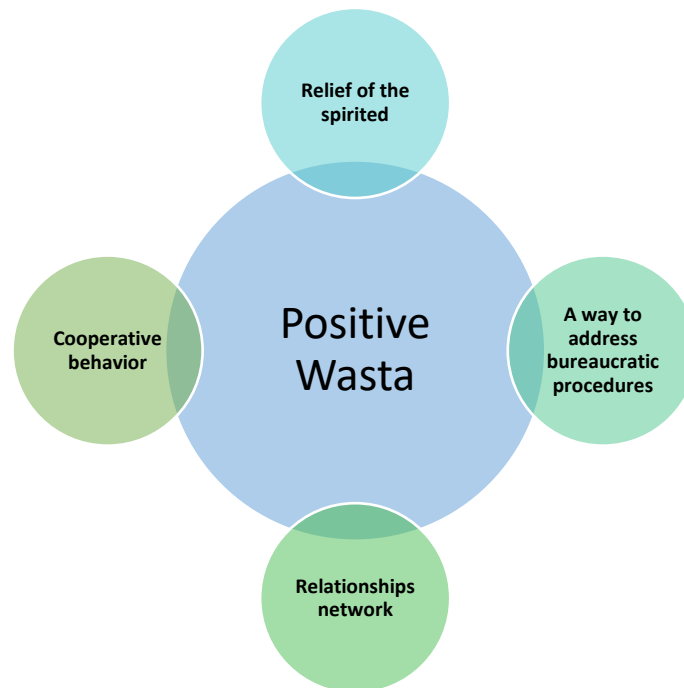
We can conclude that Wasta, through a network of informal relationships within government institutions, may contribute to shortening time and effort and improving the communication process and this is a positive employment of it; however, this case may be ideal and not consistent with the general and current concept of Wasta and favoritism in government departments.

**Figure 3. Meanings of negative Wasta**





**Figure 4. Meanings of positive Wasta**



## **B. Wasta and favoritism practices in the Jordanian public sector**

The responses to this question varied, and one of them said "I frequently do Wasta with my acquaintances in the courts and in the ministry in which I work, and the truth of the matter is that I am not convinced by Wasta, but he exerts social pressure on me, and sometimes it is (a loan and debt), where the mouthpiece of the director says that as long as I serve you, you should serve me". Another argued that the Wasta may be an alternative to paying positions. One of them said that "I am not satisfied with Wasta except in the case where it is right and if the person is wronged". Consequently, the respondent said "I accept it relatively if it is praiseworthy and reject it if it is oppressing other people". One interviewee tells a story: "One of the ministers employed nearly 200 employees of the people of his region, and there is no need for them, at the expense of those who are sure of the big losers and are the state and nation institutions". Someone said "Yes, I practiced Wasta in two directions, for

example, according to the nature of my work that interferes with many people, and sometimes because of social pressures, give in to that!!!”. He also said “I practiced this act, and I was not convinced of it and, in return, I requested Wasta to get my right, and without Wasta, I would not be in this place!!!”.

One respondent with a grievance said “I met the minister two days ago (through Wasta) and explained to him the reason for participating in China (being a climate change expert). And it is at my expense and at the expense of the inviting agency and did not entail any cost to the ministry. He also told me why do you write on Facebook? I told him that most of my publications are from famous novels such as Omar bin Al-Khattab, “may God be pleased with him (Fear God, O Commander of the Faithful)” Omar said, “may God be pleased with him. Let him say yes to what he said”, then Omar said, "There is no good in you if you do not say it, and there is no good in us if you do not accept it from you.” Then I upload my picture on Facebook, the ministry’s publications, and the prime minister’s publications in the comments. On Thursday, a transfer decree from Al Mazar to Ramtha”. The summary of this story may be that the government official is always around him, a group that moves him, whispers in his ear, and approaches and turns away according to their mood.

Regarding Wasta and favoritism practices, some say “There are about 3 thousand violations of the Civil Service Bureau. There is corruption in the Bureau. I have a bachelor’s and master’s degree, and I have Wasta, but I did not use it, but when I was employed in 2009 more than 250 people competed with me, we found cases transferred from the second category to the first without going back to the civil service and they are not older than me.. and they have multiple acquisitions, positions and one of them became the head of the department over me even though I am over them and a graduate older than them. There are cases turned to full time (veterinarians) and a group of employees who were employed without the need for them and there was an

intention not to employ them, but because of the Wasta from one of the representatives, and some members of the clan of officials”.

Another says “There is another corruption case that I addressed orally to the Minister, and I asked him how he violated the regulations that His Majesty signed? How is a manager appointed from his region despite not agreeing to the conditions?” He noted that the supervisory vacancy, in which he was appointed, was not circulated and then transferred and promoted in violation of the regulations and instructions. One of the managers says “I practice Wasta but positively to quicken the service of others”. He continues “sometimes playing the role of supporter for some of the vulnerable groups of residents from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Egypt, especially in speeding up their transactions to obtain work permits”. He adds “he comes in violation of Wasta and I do not process it !!”.

### **C. What are the causes of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector?**

In light of the responses of the participants in the focus groups, we conclude that there are a number of reasons that lead to Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector; these are considered below.

#### **1. Societal culture**

One respondent says that “people resort to the influencer or tribal sheikh or the family or pasha to meet their needs and over time it had become a culture and from our heritage, of course it has become a negative culture”. Another says: “Unfortunately, the power of customs and traditions has become more powerful than science and religion”. This indicates that the societal culture has become a pressure towards the acquiescence of government officials and employees to social pressures. One of them said that the Wasta has become widespread at the community level; that is, it has become a societal culture

and sometimes as a matter of flaunting. Some said it is not always the right of the government, but the citizen has contributed to increasing Wasta and favoritism. Here we quote one of the respondents who said “The approach the citizen takes contributed to this problem”. Some add “In Jordan, the Wasta became a kind of pride.” Others see that the Wasta is associated with negative values and positive values. For clarification, we quote the following participant who said “The Wasta requested from the official/representative, for me, a positive value because I am a beneficiary, but for those who have been deprived of his right, it is negative”. Others argued that distorting the education and socialization system is one of the reasons leading to the spread of the Wasta and favoritism phenomena in the Jordanian public sector. Someone says, commenting on that, “Always has been, always will be”. It means then that on that basis, nurturing was marred by a lot of deviation, especially in recent times, due to a number of social and economic factors.

## **2. Absence of oversight and accountability**

Most participants assert that the absence of oversight and accountability is one of the causes leading to the spread of the Wasta and favoritism phenomena in the Jordanian public sector. One participant says “unfortunately, some institutions, such as the Parliament, fail at fighting corruption in its various forms including Wasta and favoritism”. In fact, they may be active tools for promoting corruption rather than fighting it. Some say that the weakness of public administration agencies that oversee accountability is one of the strongest factors leading to Wasta and favoritism. One respondent elaborates on this insight by pointing out that “despite the existence of many agencies charged with oversight and accountability, their decisions are not enforced”.

### **3. Absence of justice**

A significant number of participants believe that lack of justice is one of the main causes of the sharp rise in Wasta and favoritism in governmental institutions. One participant asserts that “justice is the foundation. If there is justice, there is no need for oversight or accountability”. Another says that “we refer to justice in its broad and comprehensive sense as it appears in all aspects of life, and not only in the public sector, because the absence of social justice leads to failures in institutional justice, and so on”.

### **4. Poor citizen confidence in the public sector**

Although the level of public confidence in the government has improved, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, most participants believe that the lack of public confidence has pushed people to resort to Wasta. One respondent said that “many people contact me asking for help even when their applications are legal and working without my intervention. But they do so due to lack of confidence in governmental agencies”. Another participant added that “today, decision-makers fail at winning the public’s trust”. Others link poor public confidence in the government with injustice. “Injustice against an official employee weakens the state’s credibility as well as trust in its institutions and leads to a decline in political and economic confidence” one participant estimated.

### **5. Absence of ‘good example’**

A number of respondents consider the absence of good example in performance and career behavior as one of the reasons for the rising intensity of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector. To emphasize this insight, one participant quoted the saying that “God deters through the sultan what he doesn’t deter through the Qur’an.”

## **6. Poor objectivity or justice in the distribution of government services**

One participant said that poor distribution of government services leads to the practice of Wasta and favoritism. Another added that there are some officials and service providers who intentionally complicate procedures to incite others to ask for Wasta. That way, they can achieve personal gain. For example, one participant shared his personal experience in saying “My manager complicates some issues despite their simplicity so that others can ask him for Wasta. He focuses on high-profile issues so that high-profile officials ask for his Wasta and favoritism”.

## **7. Destabilization of values**

Some believe that change in values is one of the factors leading to the rise in Wasta and favoritism. For instance, we cite the following: “Overall, I do not defend the state, but the world is experiencing accelerated events. We cannot stay closed to these changes and, therefore, there may be influences on values from several sources such as the internet and satellite TV. I cannot live in isolation. For example, China used to be a communist and closed country. Today, China is making changes to its communist system to keep up with new developments related to the capitalist system, namely the four developments implemented on key sectors to keep pace with the capitalist system”. Some attribute the decline in values to the rise in favoritism and Wasta; as one participant said “values are regressing! Why do our values change when we visit another country? For example, I throw out waste in the appropriate bins when I visit another country because their laws are fully enforced”. Others believe that the breach of values stems from the top of the organizational pyramid in government institutions as “one cannot give what he doesn’t have” as there is a fall in political trust despite the presence of attempts to

restore it. One participant added that “values exist, but there is violation of values. So, decision-makers must return to values because they are the ones who violate them”.

## **8. Poor inputs**

This relates especially to unqualified human resources, in addition to the state’s failure in providing jobs. One person said that “unemployment is one of the causes for Wasta and favoritism. For example, most brokers of work permits suffer from unemployment as they influence weak employers to pass undeserving applications”. One manager confessed that he had “36 employees, only 6 of whom have been appointed by merit and within the lists of the Civil Service Office. The rest were appointed in twisted ways and then were set to stay in place by Wasta and favoritism from parliamentarians and ministers”. Most of these employees are not committed to work as they did not work hard to gain their jobs, not to mention that Wasta will support them for several years. It should be noted that most of the reasons leading to Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector mentioned by respondents in focus groups are very similar to the responses of the participants in the survey, which indicates the high credibility of the study.

**Figure 5. The reasons for Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector**



**What are the difficulties that prevent the control of the Wasta and favoritism phenomena in the Jordanian public sector?**

In the light of analysing the responses of the participants in the focus groups, we can conclude a number of challenges that prevent the control of the Wasta and favoritism phenomena in the Jordanian public sector, as described below.

▪ **The ineffectiveness of laws.** One of the participants said “If there was a fair implementation of the laws with the activation of deterrent methods, this behavior would not be repeated” in reference to the Wasta and favoritism practices in the Jordanian government agencies. In confirmation of this, one of the participants in the focus groups said “The absence of preventive sanctions added to the problem”. This indicates that the phenomenon of Wasta and favoritism are two problems that concern government departments and also Jordanian society in general.



▪ **Weakness of religious faith.** One of the reasons that prevent control over Wasta and favoritism is the weakness of the religious influence for individuals who seek Wasta or who accept this Wasta from government officials at all administrative levels. In this context, we emphasise that Wasta is an invisible phenomenon in the sense that work is hidden, and there is little clear evidence and data to criminalise it, hence the need for activation of religious influence, the principle of benevolence and self-censorship.

▪ **The composition of the Jordanian social system and social relations.** This is one of the challenges that consecrates Wasta and favoritism in society and in the bodies of the state in particular; in this regard, one of the directors said "The social system is difficult to change ... and many things are imposed on employing others because of this system ... Some of the positions of the senior leaders are appointed because of social, regional or clan representation".

▪ **Weak administrative leaderships in government agencies.** Some said that the unlawful access of a number of leaders to the highest posts in the state has been a broad, devoted concept and increased its impact in the long run; as one of them says "The Wasta is fed by the leaders and over many years, which means getting rid of them has become very difficult, and sometimes even impossible".

▪ **The absence of institutional work and the creation of new unjustified institutions.** This has weakened institutional work and exacerbated the intensity of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector.

**Do you agree that Wasta and favoritism are among the phenomena prevalent in the Jordanian public sector?**

In light of the qualitative analysis of focus group data, most participants/respondents affirmed that Wasta and favoritism have become common phenomena in Jordanian public sector institutions of different

forms and names. Some emphasize that those phenomena are more prevalent in institutions created in the last 10 years or independent public institutions and institutions and branches of ministries in faraway areas. Also, when the participants were asked whether Wasta and favoritism constituted a phenomenon, everyone answered “yes!!!”. In confirmation of this, someone said “Of course, it has a negative attitude, as it is a destroyer of rights and a destructive society”. Another respondent said “The word ‘pervasive’ is a simple word, and it is rampant in some government sectors”. Another said “Wasta is permeated in a number of activities and services and in employing, and it can be described as a phenomenon”.

Most of the participants emphasize that the Wasta is increasing and often turns into corruption because there is a digestion of rights, and here we quote the following “The means turned into corruption, like some officials take material or financial compensation to mediate? It may be in a direct or indirect way”. Another government official tells us that a broad process is not directly practiced by the senior official through his correspondent so that he does not find out. Some affirm that Wasta and favoritism have attained autonomous bodies, such as the judicial system, which is completely independent.

**Can you suggest mechanisms and policies to reduce the phenomenon of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector?**

Respondents suggested a number of practical proposals that would reduce the intensity of computing and Wasta in the Jordanian public sector. In light of the analysis of the qualitative data, we conclude with a number of suggestions within the following table.

**Table 20. Practical suggestions to reduce the phenomenon of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector**

No.	Practical suggestions to reduce the phenomenon of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector
1	Increasing the level of awareness through mosque preachers and civil society institutions in accordance with an educational policy or long-term strategy
2	Proper education and socialization through the family, school and university
3	Activating the system of moral values
4	Building a leadership generation armed with science, knowledge and good morals
5	Selecting officials and decision makers based on competence
6	Strengthening the religious intent and employees self-monitoring
7	Applying transparent management concepts based on disclosure and clarity
8	Publishing awareness bulletins to warn of the negative and nepotistic phenomena
9	Build behavioral models and show their success stories
10	Build political confidence
11	Strictly enforcing the law and enacting legislation with deterrent penalties
12	Activating supervision, especially in the branches of ministries, departments and institutions, especially outside the capital.
13	Activating the reward and punishment policy, in addition to accountability
14	Set the right person in the right place with activating the positive discrimination policy according to the merit system
15	Eliminating poverty and unemployment by creating job opportunities and encouraging investment
16	Agility of the government organizational structure and not creating unjustified government agencies

We quote here a logical solution to decrease the phenomenon of Wasta and favoritism. As Ibn Khaldun said “cuddling is the basis of construction, and if it starts from the family, his behavior will be reflected in society, and a set of values will be revived and then the state, but not only through legislation because there are values acquired from custom and others imposed by force from State, and it has to be associated with reward”. He adds, with respect to the latest proposals to escape from Wasta, “There must be a clear direction (of the state's mind) of public policies, and there must also be a rooting for positive values even if they are from other countries”.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

#### **Preface**

As mentioned earlier, this study aimed to explore the causes of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector. Moreover, the study aims to provide practical suggestions and solutions for the level of Wasta and favoritism in governmental bodies. In light of the analyzing of the quantitative and qualitative data, the study concludes with several results followed by a number of recommendations as shown below.

#### **1. Conclusions of the quantitative analysis**

- There is a moderate level of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector with a percentage of 60.6%.
- There are several reasons and motives that lead to Wasta and favoritism practices including absence of justice or fairness in society and declining public trust in government.
- Despite the practice of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector, 81% of respondents considered Wasta and favoritism as being unacceptable phenomena. However, this result reflects the level of awareness of government employees about the risk of Wasta and favoritism for Jordanian public administration and its institutions.
- Weak internal control and absence of transparency are considered the least influencing of causes for the practicing of Wasta and favoritism in Jordanian public sector organisations.
- Accelerating the completion of transactions and respecting the role, strengthening religious faith among employees and managers, activating the e-government applications and their systems for

completing government transactions and services, and activating the electronic link to accomplish government services between departments and institutions are practical solutions and suggestions to limit the spread of the Wasta and favoritism phenomena in the Jordanian public sector.

## **2. Conclusions of the qualitative analysis**

- The Wasta has negative connotations and meanings, including that it is a tool for defrauding the law, a type of corruption and uncivilised behaviour and a destructive tool for moral values.
- The Wasta has many reasons, that largely converge with the results of the quantitative analysis, including: poverty and unemployment; the absence of oversight and accountability in government agencies, especially in the branches of ministries and institutions; weak citizen trust in the government; instability of moral and societal values; absence of role models; absence of justice; weakness of inputs, especially in human resources.
- There are many difficulties that prevent the control of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector including: the ineffectiveness of laws; the weakness of religious faith among practitioners of Wasta and favoritism; the composition of the Jordanian social system; the weakness of administrative leaders in the Jordanian government agencies; and the absence of institutional work.
- Wasta and favoritism have become one of the prevalent phenomena in the institutions of the Jordanian public sector of different forms and names and, in most cases, they have turned into a form of financial and administrative corruption.

### **3. Recommendations**

In light of the data analysis, the study recommends the following:

1. increasing penalties for those who commit the crime of Wasta and favoritism in Jordanian public sector.
2. Activating the application of e-government and digital transformation for government procedures, processes and services.
3. Activating the E-linking between ministries, institutions and their branches to avoid the human interference that leads to the occurrence of Wasta and favoritism.
4. Reducing the phenomena of poverty and unemployment by creating new job opportunities, encouraging investment and providing incentives and benefits to Jordanian business, in addition to attracting foreign investments by providing an appropriate environment for investment.
5. Enhancing the concepts and practices of integrity and justice and consolidating ethical values through school' curricula and introducing curricula for a national integrity system or extracurricular activities in public and private Jordanian universities.
6. Activating the role of civil society institutions in raising awareness of the dangers of Wasta and favoritism such as places of worship, cultural, social and sports clubs, the Ministry of Youth and other relevant ministries.
7. Creating a government leadership generation by selecting government officials and decision makers based on values of

competence and integrity, and building role models for leadership and showing their success stories.

8. Activating oversight (control) especially in the branches of ministries, departments and public institutions, in general, and in remote areas outside in Amman, in particular.

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## **Appendix no 1 Study questionnaire**

### **The extent and prevalence of the phenomenon of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector**

Brothers and sisters, public sector employees in Jordan

The Integrity and Anticorruption Commission, in cooperation with the Queen Rania Centre for Jordanian Studies and Community service of Yarmouk University is conducting a field study to identify the prevalence of the Wasta and favoritism phenomena in the Jordanian public sector to know its causes and to assess its impact in a way that contributes to the development of effective solutions and proposals to reduce them. Therefore, please kindly read the questionnaire items and answer them all. Note that participation in this study is voluntary and you are entitled to withdraw from it at any time. We also confirm the confidentiality of the data and the research team will follow the instructions followed in preparing field surveys and in accordance with the ethics of scientific research. Appreciating your efforts and cooperation in advance.

Yours sincerely

Please kindly submit the questionnaire to the institution/department secretary after filling it in within three working days or hand it over to the field researcher immediately after its completion, if this is possible. For inquiries, you can contact the research team according to the following details.

## Part One: Demographic and employment data

### Gender

1. Male
2. Female

### Years of service

1. Five years or less
2. 6 to 10 years
3. 11-15
4. More than 16 years

### Age:

1. Less than 30 years
2. 30-40 years
3. 41-50 years
4. More than 50 years

### Job title

1. Manager
2. Deputy/ assistant manager
3. Head of section/ division
4. Employee

### Educational qualification

1. High school or below
2. Diploma
3. Bachelor
4. Master
5. PhD

### Nature of work

1. Administrative
2. Financial
3. Technical
4. Legal
5. Others (specify)

### Urban affiliation

1. City
2. Countryside / village
3. Badia
4. Camp

### Are you an employee?

1. Permanent
2. Contract
3. Others (specify)

### Monthly salary (JD)

1. 300 or less
2. 301- 500
3. 501- 700
4. 701-900
5. More than 900

### Workplace

1. Ministry

2. Central Department
3. Public institution
4. Independent agency
5. Municipality

## Part Two: Questionnaire of the study

This part consists of a number of dimensions, each dimension is measured with a number of items. We hope to answer all items of the questionnaire by placing a sign (x) in the column representing your opinion, knowing that the number 5 means practicing Wasta and favoritism permanently, whereas number 1 means not practicing favoritism and Wasta.

### 1.2 Practicing Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector

Q	Items	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1	Citizens resort to practice Wasta and favoritism to carry out their governmental transactions					
2	Employees refuse requests from their acquaintances and relatives to carry out violating transactions					
3	You apologize for not responding to mediate a transaction with one of your acquaintances or friends					
4	I avoid mediating for friends and acquaintances for any transaction					
5	Wasta and favoritism are unacceptable					
6	I try to complete the transactions of my relatives and acquaintances without paying the required fees					
7	I perform transactions of relatives and acquaintances, by passing the role of other clients					
8	I leave my office to mediate for relatives and acquaintances to complete their transactions					
9	I feel embarrassed if I do not mediate for relatives and acquaintances to complete their transactions					

10	I contact my colleagues to speed up the transactions of my relatives and acquaintances					
11	I complete the transactions of my relatives and acquaintances without their presence					
12	Failure to use e-government effectively to complete transactions increases Wasta and favoritism					
13	People resort to Wasta and favoritism as a result of their lack of confidence in obtaining their rights through official means					
14	People demand Wasta because of their desire to obtain benefits that are not theirs					
15	Increasing demand for various governmental services is one of the reasons for Wasta					

## 2.2 Reasons and motives for practicing favoritism and Wasta in the Jordanian public sector

No	Items	Very important	Important	Average importance	Not important	Not very important
1	Employees practice Wasta and favoritism because of weak internal control in the organization					
2	Employees practice Wasta because of lack of transparency in the organization's procedures and operations					
3	Employees mediate as a result of social pressure from relatives and acquaintances					
4	Wasta and favoritism are practiced due to the weak religious motive among employees					
5	Wasta and favoritism are practiced due to the weak					

	implementation of disciplinary penalties					
6	Wasta and favoritism increase due to weak accountability					
7	Wasta and favoritism are practiced because managers overlook the punishment of the jurors					
8	Failure to update anti-corruption and Wasta legislation help spread them					
9	The absence of justice in society is one of the leading causes of the phenomenon of Wasta and favoritism					
10	The spread of poverty and unemployment are among the causes of Wasta and favoritism					
11	The decline in the work and production values of employees result from Wasta and favoritism					
12	Failure to use e-government effectively to complete transactions increases Wasta and favoritism					
13	People resort to Wasta and favoritism as a result of their lack of confidence in obtaining their rights through official means					
14	People demand Wasta because of their desire to					



	obtain benefits that are not theirs					
15	Increasing demand for various governmental services is one of the reasons for Wasta					

3.2 Any other reasons not mentioned in the previous items (1-15), please estimate the degree of importance of the cause or motive by placing a sign (x) in the appropriate column

No	Reason – motive	Degree of importance				
		5	4	3	2	1
		Very important	Important	Average importance	Not important	Not very important
1						
2						
3-						
4						
5						

#### 4.2 Practical solutions and suggestions to reduce the phenomenon of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector

no	Items	5	4	3	2	1
		Very important	Important	Average importance	Not important	Not very important
1	Speeding the completion of transactions and respecting the role					
2	Activation and tightening penalties for those who practice Wasta and favoritism					
3-	Activate the e-government implementation and systems to complete government transactions/ services					
4	Activating internal control requirements (tools					

	and channels) on employees					
5	Holding awareness campaigns for employees about the negative effects of Wasta and favoritism					
6	Holding specialized training courses for employees in combatting Wasta and favoritism and to activate the integrity systems					
7	Rewarding employees who report cases of Wasta and favoritism					
8	Provide legal and employment protection for those who provide information on Wasta and favoritism cases					
9	Educating clients/ customers and society about the phenomenon of Wasta and favoritism					
10	Improve the financial position of employees to avoid any practices that lead to exploitation of the job position					
11	Create an ethical covenant to enhance the role of employees in combatting all forms of Wasta and favoritism					
12	Activating the principle of self-censorship among employees					
13	Finding a good role model from colleagues and management to					

	establish the values of integrity and citizenship					
14	Cooperating with control agencies and the integrity and anti-corruption authority					
15	Promote religious motives among employees and managers alike					
16-	Denial of promotion and job privileges for practicing Wasta and favoritism					
17	Withdrawing parts of the authority from employees practicing Wasta and favoritism					
18	Incorporating anti-corruption topics and embedding integrity values into school and university curricula					
19	Activating the role of media in revealing Wasta and favoritism					
20	Activating the role of preachers and clerics in combatting Wasta and favoritism					
21	Activate the electronic linkage to achieve government services between the departments and relevant institutions					

5.2 Any solution or suggestions not mentioned in items (1-20), we hope to estimate the importance of the suggestion or solutions by the placing of a sign (\) in the appropriate column according to your opinion

Q	Solutions and suggestions	Degree of importance				
		5	4	3	2	1
		Very important	Important	Average importance	Not important	Not very important

## **Appendix No. (2)**

### **Procedural guide for implementing focus groups**

#### **Introduction**

This guide aims to set the general framework for the implementation of interviews and focus groups for the study ‘The prevalence of the phenomena of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector’. The guide was divided into several main axes according to the study objectives and data collection stages from public officials in interviews and focus groups.

#### **Practical actions**

In order to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the qualitative research process and data collection through focus groups, the team will follow a number of procedures and practical methods based on scientific and global best practices and in line with the proper methodology for qualitative research, as outlined in the following sections.

#### **The first stage: Theoretical review**

The team will review comprehensive theory in the literature and previous studies related to the subject of the current study with the aim of developing a general perception of what the focus groups are, taking into account the objectives of the study as it came in the tender document specified by the Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission, to reach the identification of the main axes intended upon which to focus on in either the discussion groups or focus groups.

#### **The second stage: Building the general perception of focus groups**

After completing the building up of the general concept of how the discussion sessions would work, their contents and the main axes were formulated, in light of several basic foundations, which are:

1. The objectives and expected outputs of the study;
2. The initial results of the field research;

### 3. Relevant previous studies and research.

After completing the identification of the main themes of the focus groups, they will be presented to a number of arbitrators and experts from amongst university professors and experts to arbitrate the questions of the focus groups, to take their observations and acquire approval by the Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission.

#### **The third stage: Developing interview tools**

After completing the development of the main themes for discussion within the focus groups, the team will develop the focus group tools, which include two main sections. Firstly, general data or the characteristics of the participants from Jordanian public sector employees will be considered, taking into account the specificity of each of the categories discussed. Secondly, the stage will include discussion topics in focus groups, which will be written in a flexible manner in terms of asking, with a focus upon a gradual building up of questions and the possibilities for their asking in terms of ease and difficulty.

#### **Fourth stage: Preparation and implementation**

After confirming the validity of the discussion topics and their relevance to the subject of the study, its objectives and its scope, the preparation stage for the focus groups comes with a view to their implementation, and the implementation process will be preceded by a number of sub-actions that we summarize in the following steps:

1. Asking field researchers to ask government employees about their desire to participate in the discussion groups, in order to ensure compatibility between the outputs of the field study and its results on the one hand and the designing of the focus groups and the validation of them on the other. The focus group sample will include 30

employees divided into three sessions in the three regions of the country.

2. Communicating with the relevant authorities after taking an important facilitation book by the Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission with the aim of selecting employees (in focus groups), knowing their characteristics and preparing for a discussion session with them.
3. Prepare special places for holding the discussion sessions and scheduling them, while providing all the logistical requirements required for their implementation.
4. As mentioned previously, the discussion sessions of the focus groups will be held in a neutral location. The working group will follow the procedural sub-steps to successfully complete the discussion sessions as follows:
  - a. Training researchers on how to conduct discussion sessions;
  - b. Choosing a place and time for the discussion sessions in a way that suits the participants;
  - c. Confirming the dates of the discussion sessions before the actual implementation by phone and e-mail;
  - d. Clearing the discussion session data;
  - e. Analysing the qualitative data extracted from the discussion sessions and presenting their results.

#### **Fifth stage: Qualitative data management**

In order to effectively and qualitatively manage the qualitative data and obtain a high level of data quality, the team will follow the following procedural steps:

1. Motivating the participants to interact with the focus groups by providing a full explanation of the main objective of the study and the

returns expected from the conducting of it, in addition to clarifying all the relevant procedures of the focus groups.

2. Gradualism in the asking of the questions and the discussion axes from easiest to hardest, giving researchers the opportunity to explain what is meant by the question and its dimensions and creating an interactive environment for the participation of all respondents in the discussion without exception.
3. Formulating and asking questions and discussion axes for the focus groups in a way that is appropriate for the nature of each of the categories discussed.

#### **Sixth stage: Qualitative data analysis**

The team will follow the best scientific practices in qualitative research with the aim of analyzing the data and employing them in interpreting quantitative results on the one hand and achieving the goals of the qualitative study on the other. In practice, the team will follow the following steps in analyzing the qualitative data:

1. Taking notes first-hand during the discussion session;
2. Data transcription/writing the first draft of the data;
3. Building themes;
4. Data analysis and correlation of it with the results of the quantitative analysis;
5. Summarising, presenting and discussing the results.

As for ethical considerations, the work team will follow the following steps, in addition to the points mentioned earlier, to ensure the consistency of the qualitative research process with the applicable ethical and legal considerations. These procedures are:



1. Taking prior approval from the relevant authorities of the study, and the approval of the Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission to carry out the qualitative research (focus groups).
2. Obtaining the prior approval of all respondents or participants in the discussion sessions.
3. The use of pseudonyms in presenting the results of the qualitative analysis and quotations, such as: Abu Muhammad, Abu Khaled ...., employee No. 1, manager number 1 .... etc., with the aim of preserving the privacy of the respondents whilst giving the opportunity to those who wish to mention their real names, especially with regard to success stories and after obtaining written approval from the respondents and with the approval of the Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission.
4. Destruction of drafts or any papers related to focus groups after the completion of the study, with the approval of the Integrity and Anti-Corruption Commission.
5. Keeping the data in a safe place that can only be accessed by the persons or entities authorised to do so in accordance with the labor agreement, in addition to adopting specific and safe methods for transferring the qualitative data from the field, by putting it in secure envelopes.

### **General guidelines for research team implementing focus groups**

#### **Participant's reception**

The researchers should welcome all of the participants, provide an explanation of the proceedings of the discussion sessions, explain the main goal of the study, which is to identify the prevalence and extent of the phenomena of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector, draw their

awareness to the phenomena and to develop possible solutions. The researcher should be realistic in their expectations whilst, at the same time, they should be clear and neutral, emphasize the importance of the study and, in particular, develop practical solutions to limit the phenomenon under study.

Review all the ethical guidelines and considerations listed in this guideline, focusing on the voluntary nature of participation, and highlighting the right of participants to withdraw from the discussion at any time. The researcher has to refrain from answering any question, for instance, before starting the dialogue. They must be asked for their permission to record the discussions, with the emphasis that recording is not permissible unless we have the consent of all of those involved without exception.

Once questions are raised, all participants should be encouraged to take part in the discussion and, for sure, with no interruption. If no one initiates the discussion or answers the question raised, the question must be rephrased smartly to specific people. Consideration must be taken such that no embarrassing or privacy-related questions should be asked.

There should be no interference in dialectical or ideological issues or anything that affects the prestige of the country and its institutions, especially given that the issues of Wasta and favoritism may irritate and provoke some employees.

**During focus group discussions, attention should be paid to the following:**

**Effective time management:** Managing discussion time is an important issue in order to achieve the objectives of focus groups and to complete all of the required questions in the procedural guide for each of the categories discussed.

The role of the researcher is to listen to participants rather than be involved in their discussion. He has to direct the session and urge the participants to interact and never show his opinion on their answers or points of view, either negatively or positively, but rather give them absolute freedom to think and answer to clarify their points of view.

One of the important roles of the researcher is to encourage participants, especially those who are modest, shying away or remaining silent; in other words, the researcher gives roles to the largest number of those present by engaging with the dominant people and motivating and stimulating others who are, initially at least, less involved in the dialogue.

In regard to closure of discussions, the researcher who has organized the seminar should thank all the participants and remind them that the information they provide will be treated impartially and with the utmost confidentiality and, to increase their confidence, they might be asked for help in finding other new participants in case there is a need for them.

**After focus discussions are over, the following should be taken care of:**

After closing the discussion session, it is advised that the following instructions are followed, in addition to the practical steps listed in the guide for clearing and analyzing data.

Initially, the data should be prepared and notes arranged according to their importance and direct relation with the objectives of the study and the discussion session. The notes should be prepared in writing as follows:

- 1- Review, identify and write down the keywords used by participants in the discussion session, as they are important in the process of analysing qualitative data.

- 2- Track the discussion in its course, especially in situations in which participants changed their mind, and search for reasons that changed the participant's opinion.
- 3- Strike a balance between frequent and non-recurring issues, especially, if some participants tend to focus on specific topics, which means their importance for them whilst, at the same time, other topics, even if they were not emphasised or given attention as much as the frequent ones, should still not be neglected.
- 4- In the case of more detailed, direct or personal examples and experiences given by participants, signal the paramount importance of clear and accurate answers.
- 5- Emphasise the basic or big ideas presented by focus groups and keep in mind the main goal of the study; as such, enough and sufficient time needs to be allocated to specifying the ideas of utmost importance and the outputs that will be used to draw recommendations and formulated by the analyst of the study for more realistic and accurate policies.
- 6- Table 21 below can be used to collect and record discussion notes in the focus groups

**Table 21 Note taking and classification form**

Question	Text	Most important answers	Frequencies of answers	Percentage

## **Appendix No. (3)**

### **Focus group Form**

#### **Peace be upon you all**

Yarmouk University is conducting a study on 'the extent and prevalence of Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector' on behalf of the Integrity and Anti-corruption Commission. Firstly, I thank you all for your appreciated response and devoting your valuable time to answer the questions raised in this study. Please let me explain the course of the discussion before starting.

- 1- Any of you may withdraw from the discussion session at any time if you so wish.
- 2- You have the right to refrain from answering any questions that you consider inappropriate.
- 3- The discussion session takes 1-2 hours.

#### **Firstly, the procedural data**

Date	
Time	
Place	
Starting and closing time	

#### **Secondly: Discussion questions/topics**

- i) What does Wasta and favoritism mean to you?
- ii) Have any of you ever-practiced favoritism or Wasta? Please can you tell us about it?
- iii) What are the causes of Wasta and favoritism in the public sector in Jordan?
- iv) What are the motivations of people to practice Wasta and favoritism in the public sector?
- v) Do you think that Wasta and favoritism are phenomena in the public sector?
- vi) In your opinion, what are the challenges and difficulties that prevent the control of Wasta and favoritism in the public sector?
- vii) In your opinion, what are the mechanisms, policies and suggestions to reduce Wasta and favoritism in the Jordanian public sector?