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Abstract

While a large literature documents the negative effects of corruption on well-being, little attention has been paid to sexual corruption, the abuse of public power for sexual gain. Using original survey items fielded in South Africa as part of Wave 8 of the World Values Survey, this paper examines how perceived local occurrence and knowledge of sexual corruption in one's neighbourhood are associated with happiness, life satisfaction, and self-assessed living conditions. Population-weighted models associate neighbourhood knowledge with lower well-being, with more consistent associations among women and a significantly larger association for women's self-assessed living conditions. Replacing each respondent's report with the mean reported by other respondents in the same primary sampling unit yields negative associations with living conditions and life satisfaction for both women and men, reducing concern that the findings are generated by common-source reporting. Overlap-weighted and matched comparisons show that the key findings are not explained solely by imbalance on the specified observed characteristics. The findings therefore suggest that awareness of sexual corruption is associated with lower well-being, with the clearest gender difference appearing in assessments of living conditions.

Key words: sexual corruption, corruption, well-being, gender, institutional abuse

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Introduction

Corruption is widely recognised as a barrier to development, undermining institutional performance, economic outcomes, and human well-being. A substantial literature shows that these costs extend beyond indicators such as income and growth. Cross-national studies associate cleaner and more effective government with higher life satisfaction, sometimes finding that governance quality matters as much as, or more than, macroeconomic conditions (Helliwell & Huang, 2008; Tavits, 2008). Welsch (2008) finds that corruption reduces subjective well-being both indirectly through its economic effects and directly through non-material channels, with the latter effect being substantially larger. Using data from 150 countries, Tay et al. (2014) similarly show that national and individual perceptions of corruption are negatively related to subjective well-being, partly because corruption reduces national income and institutional trust. Subsequent research using alternative identification strategies also finds a negative relationship between corruption and happiness (Li & An, 2020). At the individual level, evidence from African countries shows that personal exposure to bribery is associated with lower well-being among both those from whom bribes are demanded and those who pay them (Sulemana et al., 2017). More recent evidence shows that well-being may also be reduced through contextual exposure: individuals report lower life satisfaction when they live in environments in which corruption is perceived to be prevalent, even when they have not personally experienced it (Gillanders et al., forthcoming).

Several mechanisms can account for these relationships. Materially, corruption diverts public resources, degrades public services, reduces economic opportunities, and imposes monetary and time costs on individuals seeking services to which they are entitled. It also makes access to public employment, health care, education, justice, and administrative services less predictable. Yet its well-being costs need not depend on a direct financial loss. Corruption signals that institutions are unfair and untrustworthy, weakens confidence that public authorities will act impartially, and leaves individuals more dependent on the discretion of officials. This combination of uncertainty, perceived injustice, diminished control, and institutional distrust can reduce well-being even among people who have not personally paid a bribe. Knowledge of corruption in one's immediate environment may therefore matter independently of direct victimisation.

Despite this progress, the corruption and well-being literature overwhelmingly focuses on monetary bribery or broad perceptions of public-sector corruption. It consequently tells us much less about forms of abuse in which the currency is non-monetary and the harm extends beyond the loss of income or access to a service. Recent scholarship has consolidated sexual corruption as a distinct analytical category in which a person entrusted with public authority conditions access to a service or benefit on a sexual act or another form of sexual compliance (Bjarnegård et al., 2024). Sexual corruption combines an abuse of public authority with sexual coercion or exploitation, often to the point of a violation of bodily integrity. Its potential consequences therefore include not only the material and institutional harms associated with corruption but also the psychological, physical, social, and reputational harms associated with sexual abuse.

This combination gives strong grounds to expect adverse effects on well-being. Conventional corruption is itself associated with anxiety and psychological distress, with some evidence that this burden is greater among women (Gillanders, 2016; Sharma et al., 2021), while the sexual dimension adds threats to bodily integrity, autonomy, and social standing. Exposure to sexual corruption may also erode political trust and damage the state–citizen relationship because public authority becomes the vehicle through which bodily integrity is threatened (Jonsson, 2026).

Sexual corruption can overlap with sexual harassment, but the concepts are not interchangeable. Sexual harassment that involves both an abuse of entrusted power and a quid pro quo element can usefully be

understood as sexual corruption (Lundgren & Wieslander, 2025). We develop the implications of this perpetrator-centred distinction below.

However, the vocabulary used to describe the phenomenon remains unsettled. The International Association of Women Judges formalised and popularised the corruption meaning of “sextortion” in 2012, defining it as the abuse of power to obtain a sexual benefit or advantage. Subsequent research uses both sextortion and sexual corruption to describe exchanges in which entrusted authority and control over a public service or benefit are leveraged to obtain sexual compliance (Eldén et al., 2020; Sundström & Wängnerud, 2024; Bjarnegård et al., 2024). We use the term sexual corruption because it makes the abuse-of-authority component explicit and encompasses cases in which a sexual exchange is expected or accepted even without an overt demand.

Sexual corruption has been documented in settings as varied as water and sanitation, migration, education, health care, policing, public employment, and business regulation (Pommells et al., 2018; Feigenblatt, 2020; Eldén et al., 2020; Stahl, 2021; Bicker Caarten et al., 2022; Lundgren & Wieslander, 2025; Aja-Eke et al., forthcoming). Nor is it confined to poorer or weakly governed states: recent survey evidence identifies substantial risks in Ireland and Northern Ireland (Gillanders et al., 2026), while the Global Corruption Barometer–European Union reports that 75 percent of EU residents believe sexual corruption occurs at least occasionally and 7 percent report either personal experience or knowing someone affected (Transparency International, 2021).

People of different genders and sexual orientations can be targeted, and men, boys, and LGBTQI+ people should not be rendered invisible by treating sexual corruption exclusively as a women’s issue. Nevertheless, the documented case literature and emerging comparative evidence identify women and girls as disproportionately at risk (Bjarnegård et al., 2024; van den Bos et al., 2025). This pattern reflects wider inequalities in access to resources and authority: officials are more often men, while women are more likely to occupy economically vulnerable positions, depend on gatekeepers for essential services, and face gendered stigma and retaliation if they report abuse.

Sexual corruption may therefore affect well-being through psychological distress, loss of agency, and institutional distrust. These harms need not be confined to those directly targeted: knowledge that such abuse occurs locally may alter expectations about personal safety, fair treatment, and reliable access to public services. Because women face greater documented risk, this knowledge may also carry different personal relevance and perceived threat for women and men, although whether this translates into different well-being effects is an empirical question.

Despite these plausible direct and contextual channels, little is known about how sexual corruption relates to well-being. Existing research has concentrated mainly on defining and documenting the phenomenon, identifying the sectors in which it occurs, and examining its legal, organisational, institutional, and political consequences. This paper addresses the well-being gap using original survey items fielded in South Africa as part of Wave 8 of the World Values Survey. We distinguish perceptions of local prevalence from reported knowledge of sexual corruption in one’s neighbourhood, examine whether the associations differ between women and men, and use reports from other respondents in the same small area to separate respondents’ well-being from their own reporting of sexual corruption.

The paper makes four contributions. First, it extends the corruption-well-being literature beyond monetary bribery and general corruption perceptions to a form of abuse in which public authority is exercised for sexual gain. Second, it distinguishes perceptions of local prevalence from knowledge, separating a generalised assessment of the surrounding environment from more proximate awareness of cases. Third, it exploits the clustered survey design to construct leave-one-out and cross-gender primary sampling unit

(PSU) measures from other respondents' reports. These tests directly address the possibility that a respondent's own reporting disposition jointly shapes measured exposure and well-being. Fourth, we examine whether perceptions of conventional corruption strengthen or attenuates the gendered association between sexual-corruption knowledge and subjective well-being. Corrupt environments may enable, normalise, and conceal sexual predation, even if officials sometimes demand money and sexual compliance as alternative forms of payment within particular transactions (Aja-Eke et al., 2025). We conclude with a discussion of the implications of the findings and suggestions for further research.

Literature Review

Corruption as an Environmental Determinant of Well-Being

The established relationship between corruption and well-being is not confined to people who personally pay bribes. Direct exposure can impose financial costs and obstruct access to services, but corruption also operates as an environmental condition by shaping beliefs about fairness, predictability, and institutional integrity (Helliwell & Huang, 2008; Ciziceno & Travaglini, 2019). Gillanders et al. (forthcoming), for example, find lower life satisfaction among people living in environments where corruption is more prevalent even when they have not personally experienced it. Contextual exposure can therefore matter because it signals that outcomes are arbitrary, rights are insecure, and institutions cannot be trusted to act impartially.

This distinction provides the starting point for our analysis of sexual corruption. Perceived local occurrence captures a generalised assessment of the institutional environment, whereas neighbourhood knowledge represents more proximate awareness of cases. Both may reduce well-being without reported personal victimisation, but neighbourhood knowledge may make the threat more immediate and personally relevant.

Sexual Corruption as a Distinct and Harmful Form of Corruption

Sexual corruption differs from monetary corruption in both form and consequence. Bjarnegård et al. (2024) conceptualise it as an abuse of public authority in which sex functions as the currency of exchange. The extraction is embodied rather than external to the person targeted, collapsing the boundary between the individual and the bribe and directly implicating bodily autonomy and dignity.

The concept can overlap with sexual harassment without encompassing all sexual harassment. Lundgren and Wieslander (2025) argue that harassment containing both an abuse of entrusted power and a *quid pro quo* element can usefully be understood as sexual corruption. Their analysis of testimonies from the Swedish police shows the analytical value of centering the conduct of the authority-holder: whether power over a professional opportunity, service, or benefit was abused for sexual gain. Responsibility then rests with the person abusing that authority irrespective of whether the demand was explicit, the target objected, or the behaviour was presented as humour or workplace banter. This perspective also directs attention to organisational hierarchy, dependency, cultures of silence, and retaliation as conditions that enable the abuse.

Sexual corruption consequently combines the material and institutional harms of corruption with the coercion and violation of bodily integrity associated with sexual abuse. It transforms the relationship between service-seeker and provider into one characterised by dependency, exploitation, and moral violation, with potentially serious consequences for psychological well-being and the state–citizen relationship (Jonsson, 2026).

Mechanisms Linking Sexual Corruption Exposure to Lower Well-Being

From the broader corruption literature and recent work on sexual corruption, we identify three principal mechanisms through which direct and indirect exposure may reduce well-being: (1) psychological harm and trauma, (2) loss of agency and coerced choice, and (3) erosion of institutional trust. Existing research and the gendered structure of sexual corruption also suggest that these effects are likely to be greater for women. The interplay between monetary and sexual corruption, however, is theoretically ambiguous.

Psychological Harm and Trauma

Personal exposure to corruption is associated with stress, anxiety, and reduced life satisfaction, while contextual exposure can impose a psychological burden even without direct victimisation (Gillanders, 2016; Sharma et al., 2021; Gillanders et al., forthcoming). Sexual corruption may intensify these harms because its overlap with sexual abuse introduces fear, shame, stigma, and the risk of long-term trauma. Qualitative evidence from Brazilian public services further shows how institutional disbelief and fear of retaliation can leave women with few avenues for protection or redress (Forattini et al., forthcoming).

The harm may also persist through the “lock-in” dynamics identified by Jonsson (2026). Dependence on services, fear of retaliation, and manipulation by perpetrators can trap those targeted in continuing exploitative relationships. Knowledge that such incidents occur locally may itself generate distress, particularly when institutions appear unable or unwilling to protect victims. Sexual corruption can therefore produce cumulative psychological effects among both those directly targeted and those exposed through their social environment by hearing about cases of abuse.

Loss of Agency and Coerced Choice

Subjective well-being is closely linked to perceived control over one’s life (Lachman & Weaver, 1998). Corruption undermines this by making outcomes contingent on arbitrary demands. Sexual corruption amplifies this dynamic by placing individuals in situations of coerced choice, where access to essential services depends on compliance with exploitative sexual demands. Such exchanges cannot be understood as voluntary: the authority-holder controls an opportunity, entitlement, or service that the target may be unable to forgo (Bjarnegård et al., 2024). Direct exposure can therefore damage well-being through the loss of bodily autonomy and control, while awareness of such demands may reduce perceived security and agency among others who depend on the same institutions.

That loss of agency may arise even before a service encounter takes place. People who anticipate that seeking a public service could expose them to sexual demands, coercion, or humiliation may delay or avoid approaching the relevant institution altogether, or rely on more costly, less reliable, or lower-quality alternatives. Because women face greater documented risk and often fewer safe alternatives, this anticipatory withdrawal may be especially consequential for them. Sexual corruption could therefore produce effective non-access even where formal access remains available: it may change not only the terms on which services are obtained, but also whether people attempt to obtain them. The present data do not observe this avoidance margin directly, so we treat it as a candidate mechanism rather than an identified channel.

Erosion of Institutional Trust

Institutional trust is a central mechanism linking corruption to well-being. Greater institutional trust is associated with higher subjective well-being (Hudson, 2006), while a substantial comparative literature shows that both personal experiences of corruption and exposure to corrupt institutional environments erode confidence in government and weaken broader regime legitimacy (Seligson, 2002; Anderson &

Tverdova, 2003). Jonsson (2026) demonstrates that sexual corruption has particularly strong negative effects on political trust, with individuals exposed to such practices significantly more likely to distrust both local and national government. Indeed, her findings show that sexual corruption experiences are more strongly associated with the propensity to distrust than conventional bribery experiences.

Jonsson (2026) uses betrayal trauma theory to explain this relationship. Citizens approach public institutions with an expectation of fair treatment and protection, but sexual corruption turns a relationship of public service into one of exploitation. The betrayal is particularly consequential when people depend on the institution for essential services and cannot readily withdraw. Awareness of this abuse may therefore undermine trust and well-being beyond the individuals directly targeted by signalling that institutions will not protect citizens from grave abuses of authority.

Why the Effects Are Likely Stronger Among Women

Sexual corruption is gendered by structural inequalities in authority, resources, and dependence. Men more often occupy positions from which services and opportunities can be granted or withheld, while women are more likely to depend on those gatekeepers and to face stigma or retaliation if they report abuse (Bjarnegård et al., 2024). Women may therefore experience both a greater risk of direct victimisation and a stronger sense of personal threat when they become aware of sexual corruption in their environment.

Direct comparative evidence supports the gendered-risk argument. In a nationally representative Ghanaian survey, women were 2.3 times more likely than men to encounter sexual demands in service-delivery interactions (van den Bos et al., 2025). Perpetrator-side evidence points in the same direction: in a small pilot survey of female entrepreneurs in Burkina Faso, all reported sexual-corruption requests had been made by men (Borcan et al., 2025). The Burkina Faso study cannot estimate women's risk relative to men's, but it illustrates the gendered distribution of authority within reported encounters.

This vulnerability can also constrain women's economic agency before direct victimisation occurs. Cross-national evidence associates greater sexual-corruption risk with lower opportunity-driven entrepreneurship among women but not men (Aja-Eke et al., 2024), while pilot evidence from Burkina Faso indicates that the threat is greatest for women entrepreneurs as they start a business (Borcan et al., 2025). Qualitative evidence from the same setting describes how male officials exploit financial desperation and the absence of viable alternatives (Aja-Eke et al., forthcoming). Research across Brazilian public services similarly emphasises the enabling roles of discretion, systemic impunity, and the socioeconomic marginalisation of service-seekers (Forattini et al., forthcoming). Together, these findings suggest that awareness of sexual corruption can alter behaviour, perceived security, and assessments of one's material environment without reported personal victimisation.

The consequences may also be intensified by gendered shame and reputational costs, which can inhibit reporting and reinforce isolation. Evidence from conventional corruption suggests that its psychological consequences are themselves gendered: using cross-sectional and panel data from rural Vietnam, Sharma et al. (2021) find that exposure to everyday petty corruption is associated with greater psychological distress and that this relationship is stronger for women. For sexual corruption specifically, Jonsson (2026) finds especially strong negative implications for women's political trust: the increase in the probability of distrusting government is larger for women exposed to sexual corruption than for women exposed to conventional bribery. Greater exposure risk, anticipatory threat, higher social costs, and evidence that corruption-related distress can be more pronounced among women therefore provide complementary reasons to expect larger negative well-being effects among women exposed to sexual corruption in their social environments compared to men.

Sexual and Conventional Corruption: Complements or Substitutes?

At the institutional level, conventional and sexual corruption may be complements. Weak accountability, discretionary authority, and informal networks can displace formal rules, protect perpetrators, and normalise the exploitation of those who depend on public officials. Aja-Eke et al. (2025) find that sexual corruption is more common in more corrupt countries even though public recognition of the problem is lower. This aligns with the argument that corruption both facilitates and masks sexual predation. Evidence from Malawi similarly links sexual corruption and ‘double bribery’ to informal networks and gender-imbalanced power (Stahl, 2021), while subnational evidence from the European Union shows that petty corruption predicts sexual corruption under some institutional and socioeconomic conditions (Breen & Gillanders, 2025).

At the transactional level, however, monetary and sexual demands may be substitutes. Research on water and other essential services describes circumstances in which women who cannot meet monetary demands are pressured into sexual compliance, while other evidence shows that women may be subjected to both monetary and sexual demands (Pommells et al., 2018; Eldén et al., 2020; Stahl, 2021). Conventional corruption may therefore create an enabling environment for sexual corruption while monetary payments and sexual compliance remain alternative, or indeed cumulative, forms of extraction in particular encounters. At the contextual level examined here, perceived conventional corruption could consequently either magnify the threat conveyed by knowledge of sexual corruption or reduce its marginal effect because assessments of subjective well-being are already shaped by pervasive corruption. These competing mechanisms provide no unambiguous directional prediction.

Theoretical Expectations

The existing literature therefore yields distinct expectations for the two forms of contextual exposure. Perceived local occurrence should reduce well-being by signaling an unsafe, arbitrary, and untrustworthy institutional environment. Neighbourhood knowledge should also reduce well-being because it provides more proximate evidence that public authority is being used for sexual exploitation. Women’s greater exposure risk, anticipatory threat, and potential stigma provide reasons to expect both effects to be stronger among women. By contrast, the institutional and transactional relationships between conventional and sexual corruption yield no unambiguous prediction about their interaction.

From this framework, we derive three hypotheses and one research question:

H1: Higher perceived local occurrence of sexual corruption is associated with lower well-being.

H2: Neighbourhood knowledge of sexual corruption is associated with lower well-being.

H3: The negative associations specified in H1 and H2 are stronger among women.

RQ1: Does perceived conventional corruption strengthen or attenuate the gendered association between neighbourhood knowledge of sexual corruption and assessments of well-being?

South Africa as a Context for Studying Sexual Corruption and Well-Being

South Africa provides a particularly important context in which to examine the relationship between sexual corruption and well-being. Although the country has made substantial democratic and institutional advances since the end of apartheid, it continues to face persistent challenges associated with corruption, socioeconomic inequality, and gender-based violence. These challenges are closely intertwined. High levels of dependence on public institutions for access to essential services, including health care, education, policing, and social assistance, combined with persistent institutional weaknesses create opportunities for abuses of public authority that extend beyond conventional bribery. Recent nationally representative

evidence suggests that corruption remains deeply embedded in citizens' everyday experiences and is widely perceived as affecting both communities and personal well-being (Gordon & Pienaar, 2024). The same report shows widespread public concern that officials seek sexual compliance in exchange for services, indicating that sexual corruption is viewed as a significant governance challenge rather than an isolated phenomenon.

Recent scholarship suggests that sexual corruption should be understood as a manifestation of broader institutional and gender inequalities rather than simply another form of administrative corruption. Studies of South Africa document demands for sexual compliance across multiple public-sector settings, including policing, migration, public employment, and other state institutions, where unequal power relations enable public officials to exploit individuals seeking essential services (Hlongwane, 2017; Bicker Caarten et al., 2022; Hagglund & Khan, 2023). These findings are consistent with broader conceptual work arguing that sexual corruption differs fundamentally from conventional bribery because it exploits bodily integrity rather than financial resources and disproportionately affects women and other socially marginalised groups (Williams, 2024; Forattini, 2024). Rather than representing isolated acts of individual misconduct, sexual corruption reflects institutional environments characterised by weak accountability, unequal power relations, and barriers to justice, reinforcing existing social and economic inequalities (Forattini, 2024). Indeed, evidence from a report by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in South Africa demonstrates that perceptions of sexual extortion are strongly associated with awareness of sexism, knowledge of victims, and broader perceptions of corruption, while experts identify patriarchal norms, gendered power imbalances, economic vulnerability, and weak law enforcement as central drivers of sexual corruption in South Africa (Gordon & Pienaar, 2024).

Understanding sexual corruption in South Africa also requires situating it within the country's broader context of gender-based violence. South Africa continues to experience exceptionally high levels of violence against women, with gender-based violence widely recognised as one of the country's most pressing social challenges (Enaifoghe et al., 2021; Govender, 2023). Scholars argue that these patterns are sustained by entrenched patriarchal norms, unequal gender relations, and structural socioeconomic inequalities that reinforce women's vulnerability to coercion and abuse. Within such an environment, sexual corruption is unlikely to be experienced merely as another instance of public-sector corruption. Rather, knowledge that public officials exploit women in exchange for access to essential services may reinforce existing perceptions of insecurity, vulnerability, and institutional failure. Sexual corruption therefore occurs within a broader environment of gendered violence in which abuses of authority over women's bodies are embedded in wider systems of unequal power. This broader context suggests that even indirect exposure to sexual corruption, through awareness that such practices occur within one's community, may influence how individuals and in particular women, evaluate the safety, fairness, and quality of the social environment in which they live.

Existing research on subjective well-being in South Africa further underscores the importance of considering these broader contextual conditions. Rather than being determined solely by individual socioeconomic circumstances, subjective well-being has been shown to reflect characteristics of the wider social, cultural, and institutional environment. Blaauw and Pretorius (2013) demonstrate that subjective well-being is associated with a broad range of socioeconomic and contextual factors, and more recent research emphasises that understandings of well-being are shaped by South Africa's distinctive cultural and social context (Adedeji et al., 2023). Other studies show that perceptions of crime and insecurity are negatively associated with subjective well-being, highlighting that individuals' evaluations of their lives are influenced not only by direct victimisation but also by perceptions of the environments in which they live (Fisher et al., 2022). Collectively, this literature suggests that contextual perceptions of institutional quality, safety, and everyday social conditions constitute important determinants of subjective well-being.

Against this backdrop, South Africa represents an especially informative setting in which to examine whether exposure to sexual corruption shapes well-being. Existing research has established that corruption and gender-based violence remain pervasive challenges, that sexual corruption constitutes a distinct and gendered form of institutional abuse, and that subjective well-being is responsive to broader social and institutional environments. To our knowledge, however, no previous study has examined whether awareness or perceptions of sexual corruption constitute an additional pathway through which institutional failure undermines well-being, or whether these relationships differ systematically between women and men. By combining original measures of perceived local sexual corruption and neighbourhood knowledge with nationally representative survey data from the World Values Survey, this study addresses this gap and provides new evidence on the gendered consequences of sexual corruption for well-being in South Africa.

Data and Methodology

Data, Sample, and Measures

Our analysis uses original survey items fielded in South Africa as part of Wave 8 of the World Values Survey (WVS). The survey contains 667 primary sampling units (PSUs), with a median of six interviewed respondents per area. To ensure that the descriptive statistics refer to a consistent group of respondents, we restrict them to observations included in the principal living-conditions model using the sexual-corruption knowledge index. This produces a primary estimation sample of 3,431 respondents. Non-substantive responses on the outcomes and focal variables (including don't know, refusal or no answer, not applicable, and not asked) are excluded from the relevant analyses. As described below, explicit non-substantive categories are retained for some categorical background variables in the individual-level propensity-score models.

We examine two standard indicators of subjective well-being and one domain-specific assessment of material well-being. Happiness captures respondents' affective evaluation of their lives, whereas life satisfaction provides a broader cognitive evaluation (Diener, 1984; Kahneman & Krueger, 2006; OECD, 2013). Happiness is coded one for respondents who report being very happy or rather happy and zero for those who report being not very happy or not at all happy. Life satisfaction is measured using the standard 1–10 item asking how satisfied respondents are with their life as a whole these days and is rescaled to range from zero to one. Single-item life-satisfaction measures have demonstrated substantial validity in large population surveys (Cheung & Lucas, 2014). Self-assessed living conditions capture a more domain-specific evaluation of respondents' material circumstances, analogous to measures of self-rated economic welfare (Ravallion & Lokshin, 2002). Respondents are asked to describe their present living conditions as very bad, bad, good, or very good; this outcome is coded one for good or very good living conditions and zero otherwise.

The principal explanatory variables capture two forms of contextual exposure to sexual corruption. The first, perceived local occurrence, is based on agreement with the statement that some public officials in the respondent's neighbourhood ask people to provide a "sexual favour" to obtain access to basic public services. Responses range from one to five, with higher values indicating stronger agreement. The second, neighbourhood knowledge, is an index constructed from three items asking how often during the previous 12 months respondents had heard of anyone in their neighbourhood being asked by public officials to provide a "sexual favour" to access basic public services in the education, health, and law-enforcement sectors. The original items range from one (very often) to five (never). We reverse-code and average them so that the resulting index ranges from one to five, with higher values indicating more frequent reported knowledge of sexual-corruption cases. The three items form a reliable scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.838$). Throughout the paper, "knowledge" denotes reported awareness of, or having heard about, neighbourhood cases; it does not necessarily indicate direct personal victimisation or independently verified incidence.

Gender is represented by an indicator for respondents recorded as women. We interact this indicator with the relevant sexual-corruption exposure to test whether its association differs between women and men. The analysis addressing RQ1 additionally examines whether perceived conventional corruption conditions the gendered association between neighbourhood knowledge and assessments of living conditions. The conventional-corruption measure asks how often ordinary people in the respondent's neighbourhood must pay a bribe, give a gift, or provide another favour to local officials or service providers to obtain needed services. We refer to it as conventional corruption rather than monetary bribery because the item encompasses monetary and non-monetary demands.

We control for age, self-rated health, relationship status, parental status, race, education, religion, income class, employment status, province, and perceived conventional corruption. We do not include worry about crime and neighbourhood disorder, sexual harassment, or violence against women in the primary models. These perceptions may themselves be affected by knowledge of sexual corruption and may form part of the psychological-threat mechanism through which exposure relates to well-being. Including them could therefore attenuate an association that operates through these pathways. When all three are added as additional controls, the estimated associations remain substantively similar (Appendix Table A9). Low confidence in public institutions is a potential empirical indicator of the broader distrust mechanism linking sexual-corruption exposure to well-being, so conditioning on institutional trust would estimate an association net of a potentially downstream variable. As an exploratory exercise, we add a five-item institutional-confidence index to otherwise identical specifications in the appendix (Table A11); the main associations are substantively unchanged. By contrast, controlling for perceived conventional corruption helps distinguish the association with sexual-corruption exposure from that of more familiar forms of service-access corruption. Table 1 provides summary statistics for the key variables.

Empirical Strategy

For happiness and living conditions, we estimate probit models using population weights. For life satisfaction, which is bounded between zero and one after rescaling, we estimate fractional logit models using the same weights. Standard errors are clustered by the primary sampling unit. All outcome models include province fixed effects, so the estimated relationships are based on comparisons among respondents or PSUs within the same province rather than from differences across provincial institutional and socioeconomic contexts. In each model, the relevant sexual-corruption measure is interacted with the gender indicator. Because interaction coefficients in nonlinear models do not directly represent gender-specific effects, we report average marginal effects separately for men and women together with the women-minus-men difference. These models test H1–H3. The appendix reports full coefficients.

To address common-source reporting, we next replace each respondent's knowledge index with the mean reported by all other respondents in the same PSU. The PSU peer-report analysis provides a further check on whether the relationship between sexual-corruption knowledge and well-being might simply reflect how individual respondents tend to answer survey questions. In the main analysis, both sexual-corruption knowledge and well-being are reported by the same person. It is therefore possible that people who are generally more negative in their assessments of their circumstances are also more likely to report having heard about sexual corruption. To address this concern, we replace each respondent's own report of sexual-corruption knowledge with the average level reported by other respondents living in the same small area, or PSU. The respondent's own answer therefore cannot directly determine the measure of sexual-corruption knowledge used to predict their well-being; the focal respondent's own sexual-corruption answers cannot mechanically generate this leave-one-out measure. We estimate the same population-weighted nonlinear models and continue to cluster standard errors by PSU. As sensitivity checks, we calculate the peer mean using population weights and use only reports from the opposite gender - men's

reports for women and women's reports for men. If the original findings were mainly driven by individual respondents having a general tendency to give more negative answers to both sets of questions, we would expect the associations to become weaker when sexual-corruption knowledge is based on other people's reports. If, instead, the associations persist this would be consistent with the possibility that knowledge of sexual corruption captures something about the local environment in which respondents live, rather than simply a characteristic of how individual respondents answer survey questions. Because the typical leave-one-out mean is based on only five peers, these measures are necessarily noisy; their value lies in separating the reporter of the exposure from the reporter of the outcome.

We additionally use overlap weighting and matching to address a different concern: that people who report high levels of sexual-corruption knowledge may differ systematically from those who report lower levels in ways that also affect their well-being. For example, respondents with high reported knowledge may differ in their socioeconomic circumstances, family situations, or characteristics of the areas in which they live. We therefore make the comparison between people with high and lower reported knowledge more comparable on the characteristics that we can observe. Overlap weighting does this by giving more weight to respondents whose characteristics make them similar to people in the other group; for example, a respondent with high reported knowledge who otherwise looks similar to respondents with lower knowledge receives more weight in the comparison. We use a similar approach to compare areas with higher and lower levels of reported knowledge, taking account of differences in the characteristics of the people and places within those areas. We also use conventional one-to-one matching, which makes the same basic comparison in a more direct way by pairing respondents with similar observed characteristics who differ in their level of reported knowledge. If the relationship between sexual-corruption knowledge and well-being were mainly the result of differences in the kinds of people or areas in which higher knowledge is reported, we would expect the relationship to weaken substantially once these differences are taken into account. If, however, the main pattern persists across these approaches, this would provide additional evidence that the findings are not simply a product of differences in observed characteristics between the groups.

More specifically, at the individual level, we assess whether observed compositional differences account for the principal result using propensity-score overlap weighting (Crump et al., 2009; Li, Morgan, and Zaslavsky, 2018). The treatment is "high reported neighbourhood knowledge", defined as an index value of at least three (equivalent to an average response of at least 'sometimes') versus a value below three. Propensity scores are estimated separately for men and women using age, income class, relationship and parental status, number of children, household size, race, respondent and parental education, religion, employment and chief-wage-earner status, respondent and parental country of birth, home language, household-income bracket, government-grant receipt, employment sector, district, town size, and settlement type. The primary score also contains perceived conventional service-access corruption and perceived general neighbourhood corruption. Each respondent's population weight is multiplied by the overlap component, and we estimate weighted linear models with the outcome controls and province fixed effects, clustering standard errors by small area.

The individual analysis targets the average treatment effect in the overlap population (ATO): the contrast between high and lower reported knowledge among respondents whose observed profiles make both exposure states plausible. It is neither the average treatment effect for the full sample nor the average treatment effect among respondents reporting high knowledge. Because propensity scores are estimated separately for men and women, the gender-specific estimates refer to different overlap populations; the women-minus-men entries therefore compare sex-specific ATOs rather than effect modification in one common covariate population. Exact balance on the terms included in a fitted logistic propensity score is a property of overlap weighting and should not be treated as evidence that the score is correctly specified

or that unmeasured factors are balanced. We also report scores omitting the conventional-corruption measures, an extreme high-versus-low contrast, conventional one-to-one propensity-score matching (Rosenbaum and Rubin, 1983), and a Rosenbaum sign-test sensitivity analysis (Rosenbaum, 2002).

We then move the treatment to the PSU level. A PSU is classified as high knowledge when the unweighted mean of its respondents' knowledge indices is at least three. Of the 667 PSUs, 266 meet this definition and 401 do not. The propensity score is estimated once per PSU, weighted by the sum of its respondents' population weights. The primary specification uses province, town size, settlement type, the PSU means of conventional service-access and general neighbourhood corruption, and population-weighted measures of the PSU's age, income, household structure, education, relationship, parental, racial, employment, grant-receipt, public-sector, chief-wage-earner, and South-African-birth composition. Complete propensity-score information is available for 666 PSUs. The resulting PSU overlap component is carried back to respondents and multiplied by each respondent's population weight; outcome models control for the same individual-level variables described above and cluster standard errors by PSU.

The PSU robustness analyses omit the two conventional-corruption measures, estimate the propensity score using a broader set of area-level compositional controls, use a population-weighted rather than unweighted exposure mean, and vary the treatment threshold. In the strongest cross-informant variants, men's reports define women's PSU exposure and women's reports define men's exposure. The individual and PSU analyses answer distinct overlap-population questions: respectively, the high-versus-lower reported-knowledge contrast among individual reporters and the high-versus-lower contextual contrast among areas. We treat both as secondary robustness checks of sensitivity to observed composition.

TABLE 1. SUMMARY STATISTICS FOR THE PRIMARY ESTIMATION SAMPLE

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max	N
Living conditions (1=good)	0.479	0.500	0	1	3,431
Happiness	0.798	0.402	0	1	3,429
Life satisfaction (0-1)	0.615	0.286	0	1	3,425
Local sexual-corruption perception	2.855	1.234	1	5	3,417
Sexual-corruption knowledge index	2.672	1.240	1	5	3,431
Woman	0.523	0.500	0	1	3,431
Age	39.636	15.016	18	86	3,431
Income class	4.863	2.398	1	10	3,431
Has children	0.763	0.426	0	1	3,431
Perceived conventional corruption	2.431	1.100	1	4	3,431

Notes: Descriptive statistics use the primary estimation sample from the living-conditions model using the sexual-corruption knowledge index. Means are weighted using the population weights. Life satisfaction is rescaled to the 0–1 interval. Perceived local occurrence is coded 1–5, with higher values indicating stronger agreement that officials request sexual compliance to provide services. The neighbourhood-knowledge index averages the three reverse-coded sectoral items, so higher values indicate more frequent reported knowledge of cases in education, health, and law enforcement.

Results

Perceived Local Sexual Corruption

We begin with H1 by examining perceived local occurrence of sexual corruption. Table 2 reports average marginal effects from models using agreement with the statement that some public officials in the respondent's neighbourhood request sexual compliance in exchange for access to basic public services. The estimated associations with happiness and life satisfaction are small and statistically indistinguishable from

zero for both women and men, as are the women-minus-men differences. Perceived sexual corruption therefore does not show a consistent relationship across the three well-being outcomes.

The pattern differs for self-assessed living conditions. For men, the estimated association is close to zero and statistically insignificant. For women, a one-point increase in perceived local occurrence is associated with an approximately 2.6 percentage point reduction in the probability of reporting good living conditions. The 2.9 percentage point women-minus-men difference is significant at the 10 percent level. The result is therefore consistent with H1 for women's assessments of living conditions, while the gender difference provides suggestive, outcome-specific support for H3.

TABLE 2. AVERAGE MARGINAL EFFECTS OF LOCAL SEXUAL-CORRUPTION PERCEPTION, BY GENDER

Outcome	Men	Women	Women - Men	N
Happiness	-0.0059 (0.0103)	-0.0102 (0.0090)	-0.0043 (0.0130)	3,472
Living conditions	0.0031 (0.0119)	-0.0255** (0.0110)	-0.0286* (0.0155)	3,446
Life satisfaction	-0.0035 (0.0072)	-0.0065 (0.0067)	-0.0030 (0.0091)	3,471

Notes: Entries are average marginal effects. Standard errors are in parentheses. Happiness and living conditions are estimated using survey-weighted probit models; life satisfaction is estimated using fractional logit with population weights and clustered standard errors. All models include the controls listed in the methodology section. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

Neighbourhood Knowledge of Sexual Corruption

Figure 1 evaluates H2 using the more proximate neighbourhood-knowledge of sexual corruption index and shows stronger, more consistent associations. A one-point increase in the index is associated with an approximately 1.8 percentage point reduction in women's probability of reporting that they are happy. The corresponding estimate for men is close to zero. However, the women-minus-men difference is not statistically significant, so the happiness result is consistent with H2 for women but does not establish the gender difference anticipated by H3.

The strongest continuous-model result is again for living conditions. A one-point increase in neighbourhood knowledge is associated with an estimated 2.7 percentage point reduction in the probability of reporting good living conditions among men and a 5.9 percentage point reduction among women. Both associations are statistically significant, and the 3.2 percentage point women-minus-men difference is itself statistically significant at the 5 percent level.

For life satisfaction, a one-point increase in neighbourhood knowledge is associated with reductions of approximately 2.4 percentage points among men and 2.6 percentage points among women. Both estimates are statistically significant, but their difference is negligible and imprecisely estimated. Taken together, the continuous models show adverse associations across all three outcomes for women and on living conditions and life satisfaction for men. Formal evidence that the association is stronger among women is confined to living conditions.

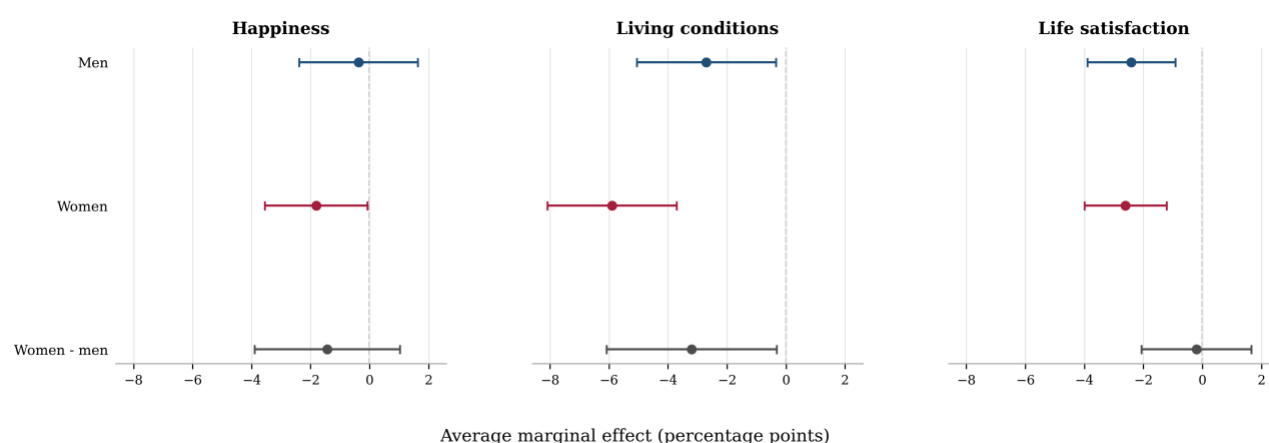
The concentration of the gender difference in living conditions is substantively important. Happiness and life satisfaction are broad evaluations shaped by many domains of personal life. Self-assessed living conditions are more directly connected to the local material and institutional environment, including access to services, perceived security, and the fairness of everyday encounters with public authority. The sharper

gender difference for this outcome is therefore especially consistent with heightened psychological threat and diminished agency among women.

We find no evidence that perceived conventional corruption systematically moderates the relationship between neighbourhood knowledge and well-being. None of the three-way interactions are statistically significant (living conditions $p = 0.228$; happiness $p = 0.905$; life satisfaction $p = 0.542$; Appendix Table A10). The results therefore do not support a systematic strengthening or attenuation of the gendered association across outcomes.

Overall, these models reveal a consistently adverse pattern for women and narrower associations among men. They cannot, however, exclude the possibility that respondents with lower well-being are also more likely to report hearing about sexual corruption. We therefore next replace respondents' own knowledge reports with reports provided by other people in the same small area before turning to the matched comparisons.

FIGURE 1. AVERAGE MARGINAL EFFECTS OF SEXUAL-CORRUPTION KNOWLEDGE ON WELL-BEING, BY GENDER



PSU Peer-Report Analyses

Table 3 reports models using the leave-one-out mean knowledge index. Peer-reported knowledge is unrelated to happiness for either gender. By contrast, a one-point increase is associated with a 7.4 percentage point reduction in good living conditions among men and a 5.8 point reduction among women, together with reductions in life satisfaction of 2.8 and 3.6 points respectively. All four within-gender estimates are statistically significant, but neither women-minus-men difference is. The peer-report results therefore support H2 for living conditions and life satisfaction while providing no evidence of gendered effects at the contextual level.

TABLE 3. LEAVE-ONE-OUT SMALL-AREA ESTIMATES

Outcome	Men	Women	Women - Men	N
Happiness	-0.005 (0.016)	-0.012 (0.016)	-0.007 (0.019)	3,453
Good living conditions	-0.074*** (0.019)	-0.058*** (0.018)	0.015 (0.021)	3,430
Life satisfaction	-0.028** (0.011)	-0.036*** (0.012)	-0.008 (0.016)	3,456

Notes: Entries are average marginal effects of a one-point increase in the mean knowledge index reported by all other respondents in the focal respondent's small area. The respondent's own report is excluded. Happiness and living

conditions use population-weighted probit models; life satisfaction uses fractional logit. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered by PSU. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

The result is not sensitive to weighting peer reports by the survey population weights. It also survives the stronger cross-gender comparison. When women's outcomes are related only to men's reports in the same area, a one-point increase predicts a 3.5 percentage point reduction in good living conditions ($p = 0.028$) and a 2.4 point reduction in life satisfaction ($p = 0.019$). Women's own reporting disposition therefore cannot mechanically account for these two associations through their own exposure reports. The corresponding opposite-gender estimates are also negative for men, and the full set of peer-report results appears in Appendix Table A4.

Overlap-Weighting and Matching Robustness

As secondary robustness checks, Appendix Tables A5-A8 report individual- and PSU-level overlap-weighted comparisons. The individual design achieves near-exact balance on the included propensity-score terms, with effective sample sizes of approximately 437-501 in each gender-by-exposure group. High reported knowledge is negatively associated with all three outcomes among women in the individual overlap populations, whereas estimates for men are less consistent (Tables A5-A7). Because the scores are estimated separately by gender, the women-minus-men entry is a difference between sex-specific ATOs rather than a common-population effect-modification estimate.

The PSU-level overlap analysis includes 266 high-knowledge and 401 lower-knowledge PSUs. High PSU knowledge is negatively associated with living conditions and life satisfaction among both women and men, and the pattern generally survives alternative score specifications, thresholds, and cross-informant treatment definitions (Table A8). This overlap-weighted consistency provides additional reassurance against imbalance on the specified observed characteristics, while the estimates remain contrasts for the relevant overlap populations rather than universal effects. One-to-one matching points in the same direction for women's living conditions, but its sensitivity values are modest ($\text{Gamma} = 1.15\text{-}1.25$ for women and 1.00 for men).

Discussion

Taken together, the findings point to a more specific conclusion than simply that sexual corruption is associated with lower well-being. What appears to matter most consistently is knowledge that sexual corruption occurs within one's immediate social environment. Perceived local occurrence, which captures a more general assessment of whether sexual corruption takes place in the neighbourhood, is associated with lower assessments of living conditions among women but not with happiness or life satisfaction. By contrast, neighbourhood knowledge is negatively associated with all three outcomes among women and with living conditions and life satisfaction among men. The gender difference is statistically significant for living conditions, but not for happiness or life satisfaction. Thus, H2 receives substantially stronger support than H1, while H3 is supported for one dimension of well-being rather than across the board. The absence of a consistent gender difference across all outcomes is important: the findings suggest not that sexual corruption necessarily has larger well-being consequences for women in every respect, but that its gendered consequences may be particularly visible in how women evaluate the conditions in which they live.

The stronger and more consistent relationship for neighbourhood knowledge is substantively important. A general perception that sexual corruption occurs may represent a broad judgement about the institutional environment, whereas knowing that such incidents have occurred in one's neighbourhood provides more concrete and proximate information that public authority may be used for sexual exploitation. For people who depend on public institutions, this knowledge may change how they view the security and predictability

of everyday interactions with officials. It may also make the possibility of exploitation more personally relevant even when the respondent has not experienced it directly. This interpretation is consistent with the broader literature showing that corruption can affect well-being through the social and institutional environment in which people live, rather than only through direct financial losses or personal victimisation. Our results suggest that this contextual dimension may also apply to sexual forms of corruption, where the potential threat concerns not only access to services but bodily autonomy, dignity, and protection from abuse.

This finding also helps clarify why sexual corruption may have consequences beyond those directly targeted by sexual demands. Sexual corruption involves an abuse of public authority, and its effects may therefore extend through people's expectations about how institutions operate. When people hear that officials demand sexual compliance in exchange for services or opportunities, they may infer that access to public institutions is less fair, less predictable, and less secure than it should be. For women in particular, such knowledge may also carry an additional meaning because women face greater documented exposure to sexual corruption and may perceive a greater personal vulnerability to this form of abuse. The well-being association we identify may therefore reflect not only what sexual corruption does to its direct victims, but what its presence signals to others about the social and institutional environment in which they must navigate. Given survey data limitations, establishing whether psychological distress, reduced agency, fear, or declining institutional trust is the principal pathway is beyond the scope of this study, but the fact that peer-reported exposure remains associated with living conditions and life satisfaction is consistent with a contextual process of this kind.

The concentration of the gender difference in assessments of living conditions is also theoretically revealing. Our measure of living conditions is not an objective indicator of household resources, income, or housing quality. It captures respondents' assessment of the circumstances in which they live. This makes it particularly relevant to the possibility that sexual corruption influences perceptions of the wider social environment. Women's greater exposure to sexual corruption, together with the potential for stigma, retaliation, and threats to bodily autonomy, may make knowledge of sexual exploitation by public officials particularly salient when women assess the quality and security of their living environment. At the same time, the absence of a statistically significant gender difference in happiness and life satisfaction indicates that we should not interpret the results as evidence of a general gender amplification of the well-being costs of sexual corruption. Rather, the findings point toward a more conditional form of gendered vulnerability, in which the consequences of awareness may be especially apparent in evaluations of the immediate circumstances in which people live. This distinction is worth exploring in future research rather than assuming that all measures of well-being respond to sexual corruption in the same way.

The absence of evidence that conventional corruption systematically moderates the relationship between sexual-corruption knowledge and well-being is similarly informative. We find no significant three-way interaction indicating that the association between sexual-corruption knowledge and living conditions differs systematically according to perceived conventional corruption. This does not suggest that the two forms of corruption are unrelated. Conventional corruption may create institutional conditions—such as discretion, weak accountability, and limited avenues for redress—that allow sexual exploitation to occur. At the same time, monetary and sexual demands may sometimes substitute for one another or occur together within particular transactions. Our results indicate only that these possibilities do not generate a clear moderating relationship in people's broader assessments of their living conditions. The null interaction therefore shifts an important question for future research from whether the two forms of corruption are generally connected to the more specific question of when and how they intersect within particular institutional settings and transactions.

The additional analyses provide reassurance that the main findings are not easily explained by the way the survey questions are reported or by observable differences between respondents and areas. Replacing respondents' own reports of sexual-corruption knowledge with reports from other people in the same small area produces negative associations with living conditions and life satisfaction for both women and men. The same broad pattern is obtained when reports from the opposite gender are used. These analyses make it less plausible that the main findings simply reflect a tendency for some respondents to give more negative answers to both the sexual-corruption and well-being questions. The overlap-weighted analyses provide a further degree of confidence because the central negative associations persist after reweighting respondents and areas toward profiles in which high and lower knowledge are both observed. The matching results are directionally consistent for women's living conditions, but their modest hidden-bias sensitivity means that they remain supportive rather than decisive.

These findings make several contributions to the growing literature on sexual corruption. First, they broaden the study of the consequences of sexual corruption beyond direct experiences of sexual demands. Much of the emerging literature has focused on documenting the phenomenon, identifying where it occurs, and understanding its implications for victims, institutions, and gender equality. Our findings suggest that its consequences may also operate at the level of the wider social environment: simply knowing that sexual corruption occurs locally is associated with lower well-being. This places sexual corruption within a broader literature showing that people's well-being is shaped by the quality and perceived security of the institutions and communities in which they live.

Second, the distinction between perceived occurrence and neighbourhood knowledge points to the importance of proximity and concreteness in understanding contextual exposure. Not all awareness of sexual corruption appears to carry the same implications. A general belief that sexual corruption occurs may be too distant or abstract to have a strong relationship with well-being, whereas knowledge of cases within one's neighbourhood may provide a more immediate signal that the problem is part of the respondent's social environment. This distinction could be important well beyond the South African case. It suggests that future research should pay greater attention to how people encounter information about sexual corruption (through personal experience, witnessing, knowledge of victims, community discussion, or more general perceptions) and whether these different forms of exposure have different consequences.

Third, the findings contribute to understanding the gendered nature of sexual corruption without reducing its consequences to a simple women-versus-men comparison. The stronger association for women's living conditions is consistent with women's greater vulnerability to sexual exploitation, but the lack of significant gender differences for happiness and life satisfaction cautions against assuming that gender differences will be identical across measures of well-being. This raises a broader conceptual possibility: gender may shape not only the magnitude of the consequences of sexual corruption, but also the particular domains of life through which those consequences are experienced. Research that measures security, agency, institutional trust, psychological distress, and access to services alongside standard measures of subjective well-being could test this possibility more directly.

Several important questions remain unanswered. Future research could attempt to identify the mechanisms through which knowledge of sexual corruption may affect well-being. These mechanisms may operate simultaneously, and their relative importance may differ between women and men. Future research working with more detailed measures of exposure would also be valuable. Distinguishing between personally experiencing a sexual demand, witnessing an incident, knowing someone who has experienced one, and simply hearing that such practices occur would allow researchers to determine how far the consequences extend from direct victimisation to increasingly indirect forms of exposure. Another important next step is to move beyond cross-sectional evidence. Longitudinal data could, for instance, establish whether exposure

to sexual corruption precedes changes in well-being over time. Finally, comparative research across countries and institutional settings could establish whether the patterns identified in South Africa reflect the country's particular combination of gender inequality, corruption, and gender-based violence or whether they represent a more general feature of sexual corruption.

Overall, the findings suggest that sexual corruption should be understood as more than a problem of individual misconduct or an additional form of corruption affecting access to public services. Its significance may extend to the wider social environment in which people live. When public authority can be used to extract sexual compliance, the resulting harm may reach beyond the immediate target by undermining perceptions of safety, fairness, agency, and institutional protection. The evidence presented here provides an important first indication that the well-being costs of sexual corruption may be both gendered and socially diffuse. This makes sexual corruption relevant not only to debates about corruption and gender equality but also to the broader question of how institutional abuse shapes people's experience of their everyday lives.

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Appendix

TABLE A1. FULL MODELS FOR LOCAL SEXUAL-CORRUPTION PERCEPTION

	Happiness	Living conditions	Life satisfaction
Local sexual-corruption perception	-0.0228 (0.0396)	0.0085 (0.0325)	-0.0154 (0.0313)
Woman	0.1373 (0.1574)	0.2386* (0.1289)	0.0950 (0.1287)
Local sexual-corruption perception × woman	-0.0191 (0.0515)	-0.0784* (0.0426)	-0.0134 (0.0400)
Perceived conventional corruption	-0.0430 (0.0307)	-0.0427* (0.0251)	0.0101 (0.0254)
Age	-0.0069* (0.0036)	-0.0045 (0.0032)	0.0014 (0.0029)
Good/very good health	0.7059*** (0.0693)	0.2933*** (0.0617)	0.3612*** (0.0602)
Has children	-0.0140 (0.0808)	-0.0001 (0.0664)	-0.1246* (0.0659)
Income class	0.0253* (0.0149)	0.0599*** (0.0138)	0.0725*** (0.0141)
Relationship status controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Race controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Education controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Employment status controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Religion fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Province fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	3,472	3,446	3,471

Notes: Coefficients are reported with standard errors in parentheses. Happiness and living conditions are estimated using survey-weighted probit models. Life satisfaction is estimated using fractional logit with population weights. Standard errors are clustered by primary sampling unit. Because these are nonlinear-model coefficients, the exposure and interaction coefficients are not gender-specific marginal effects; those effects and their differences are reported in Table 2. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

TABLE A2. FULL MODELS FOR SEXUAL-CORRUPTION KNOWLEDGE

	Happiness	Living conditions	Life satisfaction
Sexual-corruption knowledge index	-0.0146 (0.0399)	-0.0739** (0.0330)	-0.1052*** (0.0333)
Woman	0.2330 (0.1458)	0.2552** (0.1211)	0.0606 (0.1346)
Knowledge index × woman	-0.0598 (0.0499)	-0.0899** (0.0415)	-0.0096 (0.0422)
Perceived conventional corruption	-0.0430 (0.0327)	0.0061 (0.0266)	0.0448 (0.0275)
Age	-0.0073** (0.0036)	-0.0043 (0.0032)	0.0013 (0.0029)
Good/very good health	0.7085*** (0.0695)	0.3045*** (0.0617)	0.3730*** (0.0596)
Has children	-0.0198 (0.0812)	-0.0041 (0.0663)	-0.1358** (0.0669)
Income class	0.0281* (0.0150)	0.0660*** (0.0137)	0.0746*** (0.0140)
Relationship status controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Race controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Education controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Employment status controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Religion fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Province fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	3,454	3,431	3,457

Notes: Coefficients are reported with standard errors in parentheses. Happiness and living conditions are estimated using survey-weighted probit models. Life satisfaction is estimated using fractional logit with population weights. Standard errors are clustered by primary sampling unit. Because these are nonlinear-model coefficients, the exposure and interaction coefficients are not gender-specific marginal effects; those effects and their differences are reported in Figure 1 and Table A3. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

TABLE A3. AVERAGE MARGINAL EFFECTS OF SEXUAL-CORRUPTION KNOWLEDGE INDEX, BY GENDER

Outcome	Men	Women	Women - Men	N
Happiness	-0.0038 (0.0103)	-0.0181** (0.0089)	-0.0143 (0.0126)	3,454
Living conditions	-0.0270** (0.0120)	-0.0590*** (0.0112)	-0.0320** (0.0147)	3,431
Life satisfaction	-0.0241*** (0.0076)	-0.0261*** (0.0071)	-0.0020 (0.0095)	3,457

Notes: Entries are average marginal effects underlying Figure 1. Standard errors are in parentheses. Difference is the women-minus-men difference in marginal effects. Happiness and living conditions are estimated using survey-weighted probit models; life satisfaction is estimated using fractional logit with population weights and clustered standard errors. All models include the controls listed in the methodology section. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

TABLE A4. ALTERNATIVE SMALL-AREA PEER-REPORT ESTIMATES

Specification	Outcome	Men	Women	Women - Men	N
Leave-one-out mean	Happiness	-0.005 (0.016)	-0.012 (0.016)	-0.007 (0.019)	3,453
Leave-one-out mean	Living conditions	-0.074*** (0.019)	-0.058*** (0.018)	0.015 (0.021)	3,430
Leave-one-out mean	Life satisfaction	-0.028** (0.011)	-0.036*** (0.012)	-0.008 (0.016)	3,456
Population-weighted mean	Happiness	-0.003 (0.016)	-0.017 (0.015)	-0.014 (0.019)	3,453
Population-weighted mean	Living conditions	-0.076*** (0.019)	-0.063*** (0.017)	0.013 (0.020)	3,430
Population-weighted mean	Life satisfaction	-0.027** (0.011)	-0.032*** (0.012)	-0.005 (0.015)	3,456
Opposite-gender reports	Happiness	0.008 (0.015)	-0.007 (0.014)	-0.015 (0.019)	3,496
Opposite-gender reports	Living conditions	-0.067*** (0.017)	-0.035** (0.016)	0.033 (0.020)	3,469
Opposite-gender reports	Life satisfaction	-0.020* (0.011)	-0.024** (0.010)	-0.004 (0.014)	3,492

Notes: Entries are average marginal effects of a one-point increase in the relevant peer-reported knowledge measure. The focal respondent's own report is excluded from both leave-one-out measures. The opposite-gender specification uses women's reports for men and men's reports for women. Models and controls match Table 3. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered by PSU. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

TABLE A5. FULL INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL OVERLAP-WEIGHTED MODELS

	Happiness	Living conditions	Life satisfaction
High sexual-corruption knowledge	-0.0206 (0.0262)	0.0160 (0.0313)	-0.0310* (0.0186)
Woman	0.0415* (0.0236)	0.0743** (0.0297)	0.0230 (0.0195)
High knowledge × woman	-0.0236 (0.0367)	-0.1091** (0.0435)	-0.0323 (0.0258)
Perceived conventional corruption	-0.0088 (0.0088)	0.0004 (0.0106)	0.0082 (0.0069)
Age	-0.0023** (0.0011)	-0.0016 (0.0013)	-0.0001 (0.0008)
Good/very good health	0.2183*** (0.0242)	0.1162*** (0.0250)	0.1009*** (0.0162)
Has children	-0.0019 (0.0225)	-0.0280 (0.0256)	-0.0362** (0.0167)
Income class	0.0112*** (0.0043)	0.0260*** (0.0053)	0.0194*** (0.0037)
Relationship status controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Race controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Education controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Employment status controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Religion fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Province fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	3,422	3,393	3,419

Notes: Coefficients are from linear probability models for happiness and living conditions and a linear model of rescaled life satisfaction. The coefficient on high sexual-corruption knowledge is the estimated contrast among men. The corresponding contrast among women is the sum of that coefficient and the high knowledge × woman interaction; the gender-specific contrasts and corresponding standard errors are reported in Appendix Table A6. Survey population weights are multiplied by individual propensity-score overlap weights. Propensity scores are estimated separately by gender and include both conventional-corruption measures, individual and parental background, household structure, socioeconomic characteristics, public-service exposure, district, town size, and settlement type. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered by PSU. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

TABLE A6. INDIVIDUAL-LEVEL OVERLAP-WEIGHTED ESTIMATES ACROSS SPECIFICATIONS

Specification	Outcome	Men	Women	Women - Men	N
Primary: with corruption	Happiness	-0.021 (0.026)	-0.044* (0.024)	-0.024 (0.037)	3,422
Primary: with corruption	Living conditions	0.016 (0.031)	-0.093*** (0.031)	-0.109** (0.044)	3,393
Primary: with corruption	Life satisfaction	-0.031* (0.019)	-0.063*** (0.018)	-0.032 (0.026)	3,419
Without conventional corruption	Happiness	-0.036 (0.025)	-0.047** (0.023)	-0.011 (0.034)	3,474
Without conventional corruption	Living conditions	-0.022 (0.030)	-0.097*** (0.029)	-0.076* (0.041)	3,445
Without conventional corruption	Life satisfaction	-0.032* (0.017)	-0.062*** (0.017)	-0.030 (0.024)	3,470
Extreme high vs low	Happiness	0.005 (0.042)	-0.032 (0.033)	-0.038 (0.052)	1,928
Extreme high vs low	Living conditions	0.005 (0.044)	-0.112** (0.045)	-0.117* (0.060)	1,911
Extreme high vs low	Life satisfaction	-0.042* (0.026)	-0.082*** (0.031)	-0.040 (0.039)	1,927

Notes: Entries are high-versus-lower sexual-corruption knowledge contrasts with clustered standard errors in parentheses. The primary and no-corruption specifications compare index values ≥ 3 with values < 3 . The extreme specification compares values ≥ 4 with values ≤ 2 and excludes the middle range. "Without conventional corruption" omits both local bribery and general neighbourhood corruption from the propensity score and omits bribery from the outcome model. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

TABLE A7. INDIVIDUAL BALANCE, MATCHED-PAIR SENSITIVITY, AND CONTINUOUS ROBUSTNESS

Diagnostic or estimate	Men	Women
Panel A. Overlap balance		
Maximum SMD before weighting	0.787	0.774
Maximum SMD after weighting	0.000	0.000
Covariates with SMD > 0.10 after	0	0
ESS: lower-knowledge group	456.6	501.2
ESS: high-knowledge group	460.8	437.4
Panel B. One-to-one matching		
Pairs, with corruption	501	506
Good-conditions difference, with corruption	-0.028	-0.107
Critical Γ , with corruption	1.00	1.25
Pairs, without corruption	643	633
Good-conditions difference, without corruption	-0.034	-0.074
Critical Γ , without corruption	1.00	1.15
Panel C. Continuous-index robustness		
Living conditions, district FE	-0.023* (0.012)	-0.049*** (0.011)
Living conditions, original 1–4 scale	-0.060** (0.024)	-0.125*** (0.021)
Happiness, original 1–4 scale	-0.023 (0.022)	-0.058*** (0.019)
Life satisfaction, original 1–10 scale	-0.218*** (0.069)	-0.235*** (0.064)

Notes: SMD is the standardized mean difference; ESS is effective sample size. Matched-pair differences are high minus lower knowledge in the probability of reporting good living conditions. Critical Γ is the first Rosenbaum sensitivity value at which the worst-case one-sided p-value reaches 0.05; $\Gamma = 1.00$ denotes no baseline statistical significance. Panel C entries are slopes for a one-point increase in the knowledge index, with clustered standard errors in parentheses. The women-minus-men differences for district-fixed-effect living conditions and original-scale living conditions are -0.026 (SE = 0.015) and -0.066 (SE = 0.030), respectively. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

TABLE A8. PSU-LEVEL OVERLAP-WEIGHTING ROBUSTNESS

Specification	Outcome	Men	Women	Women - Men	N
Primary: with corruption	Happiness	-0.032 (0.033)	-0.027 (0.028)	0.005 (0.041)	3,503
Primary: with corruption	Living conditions	-0.101*** (0.035)	-0.134*** (0.032)	-0.033 (0.044)	3,469
Primary: with corruption	Life satisfaction	-0.048** (0.020)	-0.071*** (0.018)	-0.023 (0.026)	3,491
Without corruption	Happiness	-0.043 (0.029)	-0.032 (0.026)	0.010 (0.037)	3,544
Without corruption	Living conditions	-0.128*** (0.031)	-0.138*** (0.030)	-0.010 (0.039)	3,510
Without corruption	Life satisfaction	-0.043** (0.018)	-0.072*** (0.017)	-0.029 (0.024)	3,532
Full composition score	Happiness	-0.019 (0.035)	-0.036 (0.030)	-0.017 (0.044)	3,473
Full composition score	Living conditions	-0.068* (0.036)	-0.113*** (0.033)	-0.045 (0.046)	3,439
Full composition score	Life satisfaction	-0.046** (0.021)	-0.057*** (0.019)	-0.010 (0.027)	3,461
Population-weighted PSU mean	Happiness	-0.015 (0.033)	-0.027 (0.029)	-0.012 (0.043)	3,503
Population-weighted PSU mean	Living conditions	-0.093*** (0.035)	-0.153*** (0.032)	-0.060 (0.044)	3,469
Population-weighted PSU mean	Life satisfaction	-0.054*** (0.020)	-0.071*** (0.020)	-0.017 (0.028)	3,491
Cutoff = 2.67	Happiness	-0.020 (0.030)	-0.012 (0.029)	0.009 (0.040)	3,503
Cutoff = 2.67	Living conditions	-0.081** (0.034)	-0.145*** (0.032)	-0.064 (0.042)	3,469
Cutoff = 2.67	Life satisfaction	-0.030 (0.020)	-0.054** (0.021)	-0.024 (0.030)	3,491
Cutoff = 3.33	Happiness	-0.025 (0.037)	0.011 (0.028)	0.036 (0.044)	3,503
Cutoff = 3.33	Living conditions	-0.069* (0.040)	-0.071* (0.037)	-0.002 (0.049)	3,469
Cutoff = 3.33	Life satisfaction	-0.072*** (0.020)	-0.066*** (0.018)	0.006 (0.025)	3,491
Men report / women outcome	Happiness		-0.020 (0.024)		1,748
Men report / women outcome	Living conditions		-0.068** (0.031)		1,734

Specification	Outcome	Men	Women	Women - Men	N
Men report / women outcome	Life satisfaction		-0.052*** (0.018)		1,741
Women report / men outcome	Happiness	0.015 (0.027)			1,752
Women report / men outcome	Living conditions	-0.081** (0.034)			1,732
Women report / men outcome	Life satisfaction	-0.022 (0.018)			1,747

Notes: Entries are high-versus-lower PSU exposure contrasts from overlap-weighted linear models. Unless otherwise stated, high exposure is a PSU knowledge mean of at least three. The first three rows report the primary PSU specification. 'Full composition' adds parental education and country of birth, actual income, language, religion, and their missingness indicators. In the cross-informant models, the reporting and outcome genders do not overlap, so a women-minus-men contrast is not estimated. Standard errors in parentheses are clustered by PSU. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

TABLE A9. ROBUSTNESS TO CONTROLLING FOR PERCEIVED INSECURITY

Panel A. Perceived local occurrence of sexual corruption

Outcome	Men	Women	Women - Men	N
Happiness	-0.0076 (0.0103)	-0.0122 (0.0092)	-0.0045 (0.0132)	3,394
Living conditions	0.0066 (0.0120)	-0.0245** (0.0110)	-0.0311** (0.0153)	3,375
Life satisfaction	-0.0029 (0.0061)	-0.0064 (0.0065)	-0.0035 (0.0085)	3,399

Panel B. Neighbourhood knowledge of sexual corruption

Outcome	Men	Women	Women - Men	N
Happiness	-0.0022 (0.0102)	-0.0196** (0.0091)	-0.0174 (0.0126)	3,389
Living conditions	-0.0187 (0.0118)	-0.0592*** (0.0112)	-0.0405*** (0.0146)	3,369
Life satisfaction	-0.0192** (0.0078)	-0.0261*** (0.0078)	-0.0069 (0.0094)	3,393

Notes: Entries are average marginal effects from models that additionally control for three perceived-insecurity measures: worry about crime and neighbourhood disorder, sexual-harassment concern, and concern about violence against women. Standard errors are in parentheses. Happiness and living conditions are estimated using survey-weighted probit models; life satisfaction is estimated using fractional logit with population weights and standard errors clustered by primary sampling unit. Women – Men is the difference in marginal effects. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

TABLE A10. THREE-WAY INTERACTION TESTS

Outcome	Model	Three-way interaction (SE)	p	N
Happiness	Survey-weighted probit	-0.0058 (0.0483)	0.905	3,454
Living conditions	Population-weighted LPM	-0.0157 (0.0130)	0.228	3,432
Life satisfaction	Weighted fractional logit	0.0215 (0.0353)	0.542	3,457

Notes: Three-way interaction = knowledge index $\times$ perceived conventional corruption $\times$ woman. Coefficients are on model-specific scales and are not comparable across rows. Standard errors are clustered by primary sampling unit.

TABLE A11. CONTROLLING FOR INSTITUTIONAL CONFIDENCE

Exposure and outcome		Women: baseline	Women: confidence index	+ Women - Men: baseline	Women - Men: + confidence index	N
Perceived occurrence Happiness	—	−0.0097 (0.0091)	−0.0091 (0.0091)	−0.0002 (0.0132)	−0.0005 (0.0133)	3,396
Perceived occurrence Living conditions	—	−0.0284** (0.0112)	−0.0270** (0.0112)	−0.0305* (0.0158)	−0.0314** (0.0158)	3,366
Perceived occurrence Life satisfaction	—	−0.0054 (0.0067)	−0.0048 (0.0067)	−0.0024 (0.0092)	−0.0028 (0.0093)	3,391
Neighbourhood knowledge Happiness	—	−0.0176* (0.0091)	−0.0192** (0.0092)	−0.0134 (0.0129)	−0.0130 (0.0129)	3,388
Neighbourhood knowledge Living conditions	—	−0.0565*** (0.0113)	−0.0615*** (0.0112)	−0.0313** (0.0150)	−0.0312** (0.0149)	3,359
Neighbourhood knowledge Life satisfaction	—	−0.0243*** (0.0071)	−0.0266*** (0.0071)	0.0000 (0.0097)	0.0001 (0.0097)	3,384

Notes: Entries are average marginal effects; standard errors are in parentheses. The baseline and + confidence-index specifications use the same complete-case sample for each row. Institutional confidence is a five-item index covering confidence in the police, courts, government, parliament, and civil service. * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

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