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The Management of the Corruption Phenomenon and its Approaches

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Abstract

Corruption is one of the plagues of the modern world that is characteristic especially of the economic, administrative, and political areas. The history of civilization shows us that this phenomenon has existed in the world since the beginning. Still, depending on the era and the measures taken against it, it was more or less developed. From an economic perspective, it is considered to be particularly harmful because it constitutes an obstacle to the healthy, prosperous, and fair development of a nation. In our era, the phenomenon of globalization has acquired very strong valences, unfortunately, and corruption has acquired an impressive development, ripping the fruits of global deepening, especially now that we are also talking about corruption manifested across borders when it affects or is promoted by multinational companies. Of course, the phenomenon of corruption cannot be completely eradicated and there is no country in the world that can boast of such a performance, but firm measures are needed to limit and stop it.

Romania has been dealing with this phenomenon for a long time, and the legislative measures, the political will and the pressures of the European institutions should aim, in the medium term, to reduce it. The present article evokes the terminological aspects of the phenomenon of corruption, analyzing its causes and possible solutions, but also a perspective of mathematical modeling of its progression.

The study's novelty is given by the deepening of the corruption phenomenon in light of the opportunities offered by the new paradigm of the globalization phenomenon.

Keywords: *corruption, business, economics, globalization, management, economy*

JEL Classification: M21

Introduction

As in other fields of activity in which we find this phenomenon, from a conceptual and economic perspective, corruption is a volatile concept. Even if globalization has meant

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a borderline definition of all social and economic sciences, the limits imposed by corruption are extremely wide, since this phenomenon has not been manifested for a long time only within the nation-state, but at the international level, fact encouraged by all geo-politics changes, by the large international organizations, with activity in the territories of several states, or even at continental level. Thus, there have been identified so many negative aspects regarding the concept of corruption, but also have been established some connotations considered positive of this phenomenon.

1. Aspects of terminology

Especially in the legal field, the definition of corruption refers mainly to bribery and less to other aspects, but corruption implies more than just the acquisition or solicitation of benefits. As well, The Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language (known under the abbreviation of DEX), insists on the moral side, corruption representing a *"deviation from morality, from honor, from duty; fornication, depravity"* [DEX, 2009].

The Merriam-Webster *Dictionary* defines corruption as "*depravity, decay, violation of integrity, virtue, or moral principle; inducement to wrong by improper or unlawful means; a departure from what is moral and right*" [*Webster-Mirriam Dictionary,* 2022].

According to the *World Bank*, corruption represents "*the abuse of public office for private gain. Bribery, misappropriation of property, nepotism, and influence of self-interest systems* [World Bank Data, 2022]. Or, more precisely*, the biggest obstacle to economic and social development. It undermines the development by minimizing the rule of law and weakening the institutional foundation on which economic growth depends*" [World Bank Data, 2022].

Transparency International considers that corruption is the biggest challenge in the contemporary world because it destroys good governance, and public policies, destroys the correct or complete allocation of public funds, and influences the public sector, especially the trust in state institutions of the people living below the poverty line [Transparency International data, 2021].

Though, from the above definitions, should be made a clear distinction between the term "*bribe*" and the term "gift/present", often the bribe is disguised as a gift. However, the terms differ in the fact that bribery always involves an act of reciprocity, in the short or long term, while a gift does not force a common reaction.

In a distinct approach, corruption is *"an abusive exercise of the power to make public decisions to increase or maintain power or its sources, wealth and status, for individual or political gain - which adversely affects the purpose or the values of the social and political system"* [Radu, 2010].

Because the authors could not agree on a definition, they were content to highlight those characteristics that, together, lead to the identification of the phenomenon of corruption or tried to classify and systematize the phenomena that compose it.

Thus, in the classification of the specialists of the International Monetary Fund, corruption can be bureaucratic or political, coercive, or collusive, centralized or decentralized, predictable or arbitrary, with or without pecuniary implication [Tanzi, 1998].

As a social phenomenon, corruption is defined as a repeated and unpunished violation of the rules of an organization or institution by some members who, through the authority they hold, use the organization's resources for purposes other than those established by the respective organization or institution. From this perspective, corruption is perceived

as a state of moral and normative imbalance at the level of a community, which directly affects interpersonal and institutional relations.

The economic approach makes a pragmatic division between the party that gains the benefits and the party that bears the costs, especially in the transition states. This approach also calls into question a "positive" connotation of bribery, which is an incentive for state employees, who, by helping certain companies, reduce the waiting time for them, favoring the economic progress.

From an administrative point of view, corruption represents a sum of illegal activities, acts, deeds, and actions committed by civil servants or other state employees in connection with the performance of their duties by violating the rules of professional ethics [Stoleru, 2011].

In ***political corruption***, there is a fundamental difference between the public discourse of those involved, which is based exclusively on the idea of promoting the "interest of the people" and their real intentions, most often being to increase prestige, gain visibility for facilitating some situations or, of course, enrichment.

The definitions of political corruption obviously differ depending on the political system they refer to. Therefore, in liberalism, corruption is defined as the abuse of trust and attempt to control the political area through influence and abuse of power. [Heywood, 1994].

In a new perspective, Alatas considers that a comprehensive definition of the phenomenon of corruption can only be developed by identifying the types of corruption, which is why he identified six distinct types of corruption: investment, nepotism, defense, extortion, autogenous, and support [Alatas, 1990]. By summing the characteristics of the many definitions of this term, Robert Harris characterizes corruption as the exploitation of public office obtained through the electoral system, but for a private gain, not for a gain of the electorate [Harris, 2010].

From a legal perspective, corruption is linked to the term "integrity", because Article 11 from the United Nations Convention against Corruption stipulates that magistrates have a fundamental role to play in modern society, so each state is obliged to make every effort to strengthen their integrity and to prevent any attempt to corrupt or impair their independence [Mobutu, 2004].

The repeated attempts to theorize the phenomenon of corruption have led to discussions about measuring corruption and establishing some indices associated with this phenomenon and applicable to a larger number of states so that associated international indices have emerged. The first such index was published in the International Country Risk Guide, which is still used today by many investors in order to make decisions about investing in a particular area.

Another index for measuring the corruption level is the one developed and used by Transparency International, namely the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). Transparency International drew attention to the fact that, using the perception index, over 70% of the 133 countries under analysis are in the upper echelon, with a high level of perception of corruption. The CPI uses at least three distinct sources for a state in an attempt to determine the perceived level of corruption. The accuracy of the CPI differs, and to explain as accurately and completely as possible the results obtained by each state, Transparency International offers additional explanatory terms, such as standard deviation of grades, extreme scores and the number of sources used for each state [Radu, 2010]. T.I. also uses the Bribe Payers Index (BPI) and the Global Corruption Barometer (GCB). Another index, Corruption Control, was proposed by Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi in 2003 [Kaufmann

& Kraay, 2007], and it has been used since then as a novelty compared to the previous approaches [Kraay & Mastruzzi, 2007].

2. Perspective regarding the causes of corruption in the public space

Because corruption is mainly associated with the public act because through the public system people understand that part of the administration that serves the general public interest, that activity performed by several people, in support, and for the citizen, officials being remunerated for the work done for the citizen, we will try to briefly list a number of factors, mostly situational or contextual, which, by their nature, influence the occurrence or perpetuation of the acts of corruption.

- **Political and legal factors –** the quality of the political system, the individual characteristics of the judiciary, the quality of the democratic state, the degree of decentralization, the efficiency of the electoral system, the predominant type of public administration.
- **Historical factors** - In an analysis of 18 African states, 2 researchers [N'Zue & N'Guessan, 2006] identified a relationship between several causes, as follows: 1. Poverty affects economic growth; 2. Economic growth influences corruption and inequality; 3. Corruption generates inequality; 4. Corruption and poverty influence economic growth; 5. Poverty and growth influence corruption; 6. Inequality and growth influence corruption.
- **Social and cultural factors** - religion is considered to have a decisive influence on people's attitude towards behavior and approaches values such as sincerity, loyalty and respect. Daniel Treisman puts forward the idea that some religions, especially the more rigid ones in which authority predominates, such as Islam, Catholicism, and Orthodoxy, generate acts of rebellion, such as acts of corruption. In contrast, the Protestant religion, for example, as an egalitarian religion and individualist, is more capable of punishing abuses, especially since it promotes the individual, not the family, so excludes the acts of nepotism [Treisman, 2000].
- **Economic factors -** the level of economic openness, the size of the public sector in an economy, and the level of the salaries within the administration. Moreover, when it comes to corruption, it is always trying to analyze this phenomenon in parallel with the improving performance in providing a certain type of service by changing the responsibility between the actors involved in the act, by establishing some performance levels, but also by increasing the flow of information among them, through decentralization, as a way to prevent the phenomenon of corruption. [Huchinson, 2004].
- The decentralization process started in Romania in the perspective of integration into the European Union should have theoretically ensured several effective public policies. Still, not infrequently, we have noticed that poor implementation of decentralization policies has increased corruption at the local level, generating negative consequences in the medium and long term [Andrei&Matei&Roșca, 2000].

Gjaalt de Graaf identified a set of 6 theories about the causes of corruption, with different variables and different causal patterns, because the author considers that there are so many varieties of corrupt behavior that it is not possible to clearly establish the causes that lead to corruption, being more difficult to obviously classify them. However, a distinction is made between the causes of corruption in low-income countries and high-income countries, where, however, corruption is the exception to the rule.

At an ethical level, people perceive corruption as being higher or lower. A police officer, for example, who demands a sum of money to make a fine forgotten, is perceived as "*more*" corrupt than a policeman who accepts a sum of money offered to him. Corruption is, regardless of its size, perceived as something wrong, deviant, immoral, or unnatural behavior, and what is categorized as corrupt is immediately viewed negatively, likewise, an honest person is naturally perceived as a positive person [De Graaf, 2007].

In the author's opinion mentioned above, the most widespread theory regarding the causes of corruption is **the Public Choice Theory**. This theory focuses on an individual who makes a perfectly rational decision that results in a positive outcome for him. Still, he becomes corrupt because the benefits he gains are far greater than the combination of disadvantages, such as criminal punishment or social degradation. In economic terms, an individual becomes corrupt when the potential benefits of corruption exceed the potential costs. According to another explanation on the same note, if the benefits of corruption minus the likelihood of being caught are greater than the benefits of not being caught at all, an individual will rationally choose to become corrupt [Klitgaard, 1998].

Therefore, according to this theory, the actions of the corrupt officials are determined by a conscious, rational and deliberate process of analysis, in which they "*coldly*" determine what is the behavior that maximizes their usefulness. Unlike other theories, the one about public choice focuses on a single agent, the individual who makes a choice based on the pros and cons of his potential facts and does not take into account other determinants of corruption, including the big picture, meaning the society as a whole.

Another theory regarding the causes of corruption refers to **the Rotten Apple Theory**. This theory identifies as the primary cause of corruption the existence of individuals with reprehensible characters, a kind of rotten apple of the society in which they operate. Thus, the root of corruption is the human character and the predisposition of individuals to have illegal and illegitimate activity, generated by human weaknesses such as greed or envy. That is why the gain pursued by a corrupt person does not necessarily have to refer to pecuniary aspects. Still, it can aim for other gains, such as a higher social standing, the pleasure of alternative work, exaltation, and healing of frustration.

The Organizational Culture Theory extends the area of the causes of this phenomenon to the organization as a whole. At the level of a structure, there are certain culture and certain principles that often determine a behavioral model for the members of that structure and, implicitly, lead to a certain mental state, and that mental state leads to corrupt behavior. However, the theory does not explain why, in a given organization, not all the members of the same mental state will commit acts of corruption [De Graaf, 2007].

In a material of the International Monetary Fund regarding corruption at the international level [Tanzi, 1998], a distinction is made between **the direct and the indirect factors favoring corruption**. Among the direct factors mentioned, the first place, in the opinion of financial specialists, is occupied by national regulations and authorizations. Their existence and the fiscal, investment, and managerial policies give officials a monopoly that allows them to dictate the economy as they please, often using their political status to demand bribes in order to unblock bureaucratic situations.

In Romania, as in other Eastern European countries, we are confronting another factor that favors corruption, namely the deficient legislation in the field of taxes and duties paid to the state. In the countries where tax legislation is clear, the level of corruption of the officials is lower, while in the countries where laws are difficult or interpretable, due to poor adaptation of European to national standards and the direct contact between taxpayers and the administrators of these taxes is common, corruption has a high level. Another factor that favors corruption from an economic point of view is the lack of transparency in the case of administrative procedures, such as the selection criteria for auditors, but also in the way of determining the amount of taxes levied by the state. From the same perspective, the economic one, corruption can be accentuated in the case of public spending, as is the case of investment projects. These frequently generate acts of corruption, given the fact that the officials sometimes forget to present the sources of project financing, the decision-making process, the procurement procedures followed, etc. Moreover, investment projects with funds from international bodies have sometimes been carried out precisely to provide some individuals or groups enrichment opportunities by collecting "*commissions*" from those selected to carry out a particular project.

Regarding the *indirect* factors favoring corruption, perhaps the most important factor in the opinion of the specialists of the International World Fund is the level of earnings in the public sector. In an IMF working material, the authors [Rijkeghem, 1997], put forward the idea that there is a direct relationship between the low level of income in the public system and the degree of corruption at the administrative level.

Thereby, a relationship has been established between the incomes expected by the representatives of the public administration and the need to maximize them, which is a potential factor that generates acts of corruption. There is a balance between corrupt behavior and the punishment obtained if you are trapped. Sanctions include immediate release from public office and even custodial sentences.

The mathematical/economical relationship can be illustrated as follows:

$$EI = [1 - P(C)]\big(CB + W_g\big) + [P(C)(W_p - f)]$$ [Rijkeghem, 1997]

where EI = expected income;
P = the probability of being caught;
C= the (variable) number of corrupt acts;
B = the bribery;
W_g = the wages in administration.
W_p = the wages in the private sector.
f = other punishments, including imprisonment.

This relationship refers to the situations in which the expected income can be determined when the act of corruption is not discovered. Otherwise, the expected income refers to the gain from the private sector minus other penalties, including imprisonment.

If some term adjustments are made, the equation changes:

a) The probability of detecting the act of corruption can be expressed as a negative function of punishment, including immediate release from prison or imprisonment if the society considers that the punishment received by a corrupt person is too high because the

degree of corruption is low, understandably, justifiable, etc., as I have shown above, that a police officer who receives a bribe is considered less corrupt by the public than the one who asks for a bribe, for the immediate resolution of a traffic offense;

b) The size of the bribe ("*B*") can also be a variable factor, depending on the profitability of the act of corruption, from the perspective of those who offer the bribe, the level of the potential punishment or the probability of being caught.

$$EI = \left[1 - P(C, f, W_g - W_p)\right]X[CB(P, f)] + P(C, f, W_g - W_p)X(W_p - f)$$

Another variable may appear in this equation, namely O = opportunity. The expected income is maximized if C$\leq O_n$, respectively the number of corrupt acts is less than or equal to the number of opportunities.

The research shows that in this case, the number of corrupt acts can be zero if the income expected by the public administration officials is **correct**, meaning it ensures a satisfactory standard of living. In the case of using the same equation but of a model called by the research authors a "*dodging model*", corruption will disappear at a fairly high-income level as long as bribe levels are low. Also, a higher level of internal and external control is associated with a low degree of corruption [Rijkeghem, 1997]. Therefore, **institutional control** is another important factor to consider in establishing a relationship between the level of corruption and the probability of being caught. Normally, the most effective control at the level of an entity is the one performed internally, either by the internal auditor or by control commissions, or by the specialized structure that performs the activity of internal managerial control, trying to implement unitary standards at the level of an entity.

Clear ethical rules, honest auditors, and honest supervisors, as well as good and transparent rules and procedures, should be essential elements in the fight against corruption. However, the internal control structures should be independent of the management of the organization they are auditing and should have massive resources and an honest staff so they can be immune to acts of corruption. Often, those who identify non-compliant acts have to report these malfunctions to those who perform them or, in the case of government structures, to the highest hierarchical level, which drastically reduces their effectiveness and often politicizes the process. An example of this is the exhortation spread in 1976 by Mobutu Sese Seko (he was the President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 1965 to 1971, and later Zaire from 1971 to 1997, during which he stole more than $ 5 billion from the country's 12 IMF loans for reconstruction and development), the dictator of Zaire (Democratic Republic of the Congo), in his famous anti-corruption speech: "*If you want to steal, steal a little cleverly, in a nice way. If you steal so much as to become rich overnight, you will be caught*" [Mobutu, 1976].

The economic literature appreciates that unequal income distribution is one of the determinants of corruption. Corruption affects the distribution of incomes in an "*inverted U*" manner. More precisely, a low income is associated with high levels of corruption, and a high income when corruption is transitional. Moreover, corruption affects the distribution and the increase of revenues [Shabbir & Mumatz, 1976].

Also, the degree of globalization is inversely proportional to corrupt norms because middle-income countries create less prosperity for most citizens in from developing countries. Thus, in developing economies, the additional marginal income has a significant impact on the living conditions of citizens. Studies have shown that the degree of financial prosperity of a nation generates variations in the level of corruption, either through a negative

relationship between development and the level of corruption, or through a positive relationship [Shabbir & Mumatz, 1976].

Corruption can affect the allocation of resources, either by changing investors' appreciation regarding the resources or by misallocating them as a result of crooked government decisions. Corruption can also drive away private investors by increasing public administration costs. Other economic causes of corruption are identified by Jean Cartier-Bresson as: the existence of exploitable natural resources that provide political and administrative opportunities for authorities to obtain substantial payments; public goods with fixed prices set by the state, whose obtaining require additional resources for those interested; low level of earnings in the public area; state protectionism, price policy, licensing of imports or exports, but also economies in transition [Bresson, 2002].

3. Aspects regarding the "positive" perspectives of corruption

In another approach to the subject, in a study [Eatzaz, 2012], published by the Catholic University of Chile, it has been argued that in addition to the negative aspects of corruption, this phenomenon can also have a positive connotation, as it can prevent the failure of governments and promote short-term economic growth. Among the "*positive*" aspects of corruption are:

- If there have been generated inefficient rules, corruption helps to prevent the implementation of these rules at a low cost, thus corrupting supports economic growth;
- The perception of bribes as "quick money", namely resources that help to unblock situations or conflicts that could not be resolved otherwise and would block an entire economic or political process / gear [Ahmad & Ullah & Arfeen, 2012].

In a material of the year 1909, Robert C. Brooks approached corruption from a positive perspective, making a number of arguments in its favor, even if the arguments presented are immediate and involve an inconsistent gain [Brooks, 1909].

1. In the first phase, *corruption helps the business environment* (indirectly), an example for this idea being the poor or interpretable regulation of gambling. Even if these have a special status, their illicit support will generate a capital contribution from those who come to spend their money. This is only immediate and refers only to the welfare of a particular social category, not to the general economic well-being, but the financial inflow is beneficial for any economy.
2. Second, the author claims that the acts of corruption are compensated by the efficiency with which the corrupt ones work to carry out that action, in fact *promoting a general social good.*
3. Another positive action of corruption consists in *reducing the influence of the crowd through acts of corruption and encouraging the consumption of goods and services by the population.* These practices are often encountered around elections when large masses of the population are likely to be influenced by the goods, they receive for free in order to favor a particular candidate. The practice of "*electoral bribery*" with consumer goods, free transport season tickets, excursions, and gifts in perishable products of immediate need is also practiced in our country, and the media has popularized cases like these frequently.
4. Finally, the fourth argument in favor of corruption is that *this phenomenon is part of an evolutionary process, and at the end of it the benefits are always greater than the negative effects*. In other words *"The ends justify the means"* [Radu, 2010].

Conclusions

Corruption is a global phenomenon, difficult to control and almost impossible to eradicate and only a few countries in the world can be proud of not having acts of corruption. Throughout history, the causes of corruption have been blamed on human nature, on the historical conditions of state development, on tradition, on the misperception of the concept of democracy. The fact that too few countries are proud of the lack of corruption makes us look at this phenomenon with pessimism, in the idea that in our country, the accumulation of historical, political, legal, economic, sociocultural factors, etc. makes the phenomenon virtually impossible to be completely eradicated, even if there have been taken steps to reduce it. According to the Transparency International report, in 2021, Romania ranked 66th out of 180, with a slightly higher corruption index than the constants of the last two or three years, respectively 45 [Transparency International data, 2021].

Thereby, Cuba, Namibia, Malaysia or Montenegro are above Romania, these scores showing that regardless of whether Romania has adopted many measures to reduce corruption in recent years, by approving European regulations, by making the relevant legislation compatible, there are still fundamental differences in their application.

An observation was made by researchers in the field, namely that once installed, corruption "*remains*" and that the anti-corruption actions were placed exclusively in the charge of justice, without analyzing or taking into account the measures regarding the reduction or prevention, which could be much more effective [Radu &Gyula, 2010].

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