VIRAL NATURE OF CORRUPTION
IN A WORLD OF BUSINESS AND ACADEMIA

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Abstract: Disruptive force of corruption and its ability to spread away like a virus is globally known and commonly understood. However, as one can notice while observing both business an academic life, this knowledge and understanding does not prevent corruptive activities from occurring. This paper aims to shed a light on viral nature of corruption and its influence on integrity in the academic community by presenting a particular set of academic community's behaviors that are destructive for its integrity as well as by presenting a universal set of instruments and methods for preventing both the higher education sector as well as business sector from corruption diffusion.

Keywords: corruption in academia, corruption in business, corruption as a virus, integrity, transparency.

1. Introduction

The selected cases of academic misconduct by various universities' members are usually described as a separate phenomenon without scrutiny of its organizational and societal context and the presented studies do not reveal the mutual impact between behaviors of different groups that compose the academic community. Will the student be more prone to participate in corrupt processes (e.g. such as buying promotional works) if they are aware that some faculties from the same university have committed plagiarism? Will the faculty perceive cheating as an unacceptable practice if they experience it quite often among their students? Will the experiences of colleagues' bribery (e.g. as a witness) increase the probability to one directly participate in such activity? These are the questions that are still waiting for a scientifically verified answer and that is why Gallegos & Kamnuansilpa (2014) suggest that there is a lack of research that would diagnose the corruption perception from many perspectives. Thus, there is a need for in-depth, multidimensional diagnosis of corrupt behavior perception from the perspectives of different internal stakeholders of the entities of

higher education (not only students but also faculties and administrative staff) as well as for the investigation of the reasons of corruption diffusion among students, faculty members and the universities as a whole.

It is important to emphasize that today the subject of scientific interest becomes the perception of corruption understood as the theoretical, conceptual assigning of particular unethical behaviors as the corrupt behaviors, and the experience of corruption associated with the direct participation in corruption (active and passive corruption) as well as the indirect participation in corrupt processes (the role of corruption witness).

Some studies related to corrupt behaviors in higher education concentrate on recognition of the determinants of such conduct. The most discussed determinants are the demographics that shape the people's attitudes to the phenomenon of corruption. In the literature there were discussed demographics such as gender, age (Borkowski, & Urgas, 1998), the study profile (business-related or non-business) (Tse, &Au, 1997) or education level (undergraduates, graduates, post-graduates) (Lopez, Rechner, & Buchanan, 2005, Stachowicz-Stanusch, 2011). There has also been analyzed the impact of other environmental factors (see Peterson et al. 2001; Wimbush J.C. et al., 1997). Moreover, in the field of study that is focused on recognition of determinants of academic corruption, one may notice culture as another issue for discussion. For instance, Mirshekary & Lawrence (2009) investigated corrupt issues in relation to the universal ethical values and ethical behaviors in an international context with the use of cultural values as the significant variables. There were also other studies that were conducted from cross-national perspectives (Whipple, & Swords, 1992, Wankel et. al., 2011). Some of them focus on national cultures or contexts as comparative investigations were conducted between the United States and nations such as China and Mexico (Waite, & Allen, 2003), the Czech Republic (Preiss et al., 2013) or the United Arab Emirates (Williams et al., 2014). There were also scrutinized corrupt processes at the universities in European countries such as Portugal (Freire 2014) or Romania (Teodorescu, & Tudorel, 2009), African ones such as in Ghana (Kuranchie et al. 2014), those in Arabic regions such as Pakistan (Ramzan et al. 2012) or in Taiwan from the Asian continent (Lin, & Wen 2007). However, there is visible an empirical gap as there is a lack of studies that would consider the economic situation the research sample (especially of students). It would be worth of considering whether both demographic traits and economical status impact at all, and if yes, to what extent the diffusion of corruption, enabling it to spread like a virus.

This paper aims to conduct initial investigation in the area of perception and understanding of corruption in business and academia, linkages between academic curricula and practices and their influences on business performance as well as the description of determinants of viral nature of corruption.

2. Perception and experience of integrity and corruption in business and academia

Defining integrity, Peter Drucker (1992) argued that it is "concurrence between actions and words, between behavior and professed beliefs or values". Thus, it is the notion that is strongly associated with morality and is understood as one of personal virtues (Huang, 2011), that may be shaped by leaders, who may enhance ethical as well as unethical behaviors within an organization (Sims, & Brinkman, 2002). In the subject literature integrity is usually associated with particular attitudes and behaviors, which causes its recognition at the individual level (East, 2010). However, there has been noticed that a kind of integrity may be shaped and recognized at the organizational level, namely the institutional integrity (Bertram et al., 2009). This idea has also been reflected in academic institutions, but we still should be aware that the integrity of universities' authorities is not enough to build the university's integrity as a whole. Integrity of this kind of institution depends on integrity and moral attitudes of all the members of the academic community – students, faculties and academic staff (Stachowicz-Stanusch, 2012). That is why some efforts are made to create an environment that reflects the academic integrity in the individual attitude of academic community members (McGowan, 2005), but also in the organizational construct (McCabe et al., 2003, 2006). An instrument of such a rationalization of academic community members' behaviors, which functions at particular universities, is the ensuring of the ethical infrastructure, namely creating of adequate policies, procedures, codes, etc. (Kuranchie et al., 2014).

On the other hand, it is worth remembering that the problem of widely understood corruption became one of the most intensively discussed problems in the few recent decades. The problem is discussed not only in famous journals but increasingly often in scientific publications, including the papers of management sciences. Scientists have been trying to precisely define this phenomenon for years, although there still exists an opinion that the applied definitions are too general to be useful (Waite, & Allen, 2003). Some of the authors indicate material gain (Anechiaricho, & Jacobs, 1996), others focus on its private character (Nye, 1967), and others notice the strong embeddedness of this phenomenon in public office (e.g. Jain, 2001). Not surprisingly corruption is quite often discussed in association with sectors especially prone to the abuse of public functions, including police (Bouza, 2001), politics (Kotkin, & Sajo, 2002) or the health care sector (Nishtar, 2010). The sector of education has not been ignored in this discussion (see Hallak, & Poisson, 2007). An important field in these considerations is the widely understood field of business and economics education, as scrutinized by the common critics of this sector (see for instance Swanson, 2004; Bennis, & O'Toole, 2005, Sims, & Felton, 2006). Many scholars indicate higher education as the indirect cause of global corporate collapse and of the global economic crisis

a few years ago (Ghoshal, 2005; Mitroff, 2004). However, there are some authors that express their hopes for actively shaping the future moral climate in business activity, as they notice that today's students will be the future employees, managers, executives and public officers (Jaffe, & Tsimerman, 2005). This is why in the paper there will be made efforts for identifying corrupt behaviors in academic organizations.

Most of the available research reports on the corruption phenomenon in higher education focus on cheating (Nowell, & Laufer, 1997; Teixeira 2013), which includes the use of prohibited crib notes, helping someone to cheat in a test, learning in advance what the test was about from someone who took it previously (Teixeira, & Rocha 2010), used unauthorized electronic equipments during exams, or work on assignment with others when asked for individual work (Lin, & Wen, 2007). This specific misconduct has been investigated in detail by a great number of authors. There have been indicated determinants of cheating, such as demographic characteristics, attitudes toward cheating, personality variables, and situational factors (Freire, 2014). Moreover, cheating occurs to be a very rational activity and it depends on the perception of potential benefits, risk of being caught and perceived costs of detection (Williams, & Hosek, 2003).

Cheating is also often associated with plagiarism (see Kiehl ,2006; Park, 2003), understood as the failure to properly credit ideas or materials taken from another, namely the deliberate use of another's work without any mention of the original author (East, 2010). A noticeable characteristic of the presented research is the concentration on dishonest conduct of students as they are the only group of interest in this field of investigation. Also the research on perception of corruption at the higher education sector are usually conducted just from a students' perspective (see McKibban, & Burdsal, 2013). But Rumyantseva (2005), who presented the taxonomy of corruption in higher education, argues that there exist the other aspects of corruption in that sector that include the various groups of the academic community in the investigation process. There has been distinguished the academic corruption which is connected with the relation between students and faculty, as well as the academic services corruption that includes the activity of administrative and university staff. Also Heyneman (2011) indicated corruption of different universities' members and divided examples of dishonest academic behaviors into two groups. The first one is the corruption committed for the personal gain which includes faculty research falsification, plagiarism, sexual favors and personal favoritism, as well as students' sexual exploitation, exchange cheating, and plagiarism. The second one is corruption for monetary gain, which is strongly related to bribery. There were mentioned behaviors such as purchasing accreditation (rectors buying from ministry of education), enrolment (students buying from the rector, dean, or enrolment committee), transcripts, housing, library use (bought by students from administrators) and grades (purchased from faculties). In accordance with this there are some research studies that indicate these just mentioned and other rarely investigated examples of academic misconduct, such as falsification of the biography in research papers (e.g.,

Stachowicz-Stanusch, 2012), nepotism (Orkodashvili, 2011), bribery (Jain, Shelly, 2013), financial frauds (Kranacher, 2013) or ghostwriting (Logdberg, 2011). This set of unethical behaviors among the academic community may be supplemented by the cases discussed in the Global Corruption Report on Education prepared in 2013 by Transparency International (Sweeney et al., 2013), where there are also mentioned practices such as teacher absenteeism (Ngwé, 2013), selling fake diplomas (Diallo, 2013), shadow education understood as providing extra-fee charging classes (Bray, 2013) or sexual harassment (Leach, 2013). Nnodum (2008) mentions also compelling students to buy handouts or extortion, neglect of duty (by faculties).

3. Corruption as a virus – a contagion effect

The occurrence of corruption is presented in a literature of the subject from quazi-medical point of view, comparing corruption to a virus which can be spread away almost without any control. As Mathur (2013) writes "the worst part of corruption is its contagion effect, like a contagious disease. There is a cascading effect of corruption, when the corruption is top down at any level of government or in private sector. A contagious disease spreads from one person to another by mere exposure to the diseased person. The spread of the disease of corruption requires a certain minimum level of corruption before it spreads to others and becomes the social norm. However, it is hard to pinpoint the minimum threshold because it is influenced by cultural traditions, lack of monitoring and accountability, lack of transparency and an incentive system that includes rules, regulations and laws." It is further proved that misconduct is definitely more infectious that ethical behavior. Dimmock and Gerken (2018) claim that contagiousness of employee fraud tells us that even your most honest employees become more likely to commit misconduct if they work alongside a dishonest individual. And while it would be nice to think that the honest employees would prompt the dishonest employees to better choices, that's rarely the case. Corruption has in the past gained the name of a virus which can be passed on from one person to another, developing a specific culture of corruption as it passes over to the next person. This infectious nature of corruption in particular has been theoretically illustrated in the collective corruption model of Ashforth and Anand (2003). Although this model concerns the spread of corrupt behavior inside the company, it is likely, like all infectious viruses, that corruption can pass not only from one person to another within a single company but also can pass from one company to another.

The infection can begin with one simple bribe. Organizations are like living organisms that can be infected by the virus of corruption. Similar to a viral contagion, corruption will spread throughout an organization if not treated intensively at the onset of symptoms with an antibiotic called "zero tolerance" (Henz, 2015).

There has been now a lot of empirical investigations being conducted in different part of the world giving evidence for a viral nature of corruption. For instance Quazi, Langley and Till (2013) explain "i.e. how one country's corrupt practices spread to another country. It can be reasonably assumed that corruption is shaped by the culture or climate of doing business within a particular country, and these practices are shared to some extent by the neighboring countries. For example, if one country is more corrupt than its neighboring country, then the less corrupt country will be exposed to the corrupt practices in the more corrupt country through a variety of channels such as immigration, tourism or trade. Due to this exposure, the less corrupt country will likely contract some of these corrupt practices from the more corrupt country, and in turn pass some of them on to its own neighboring countries. It is, thereby, theoretically possible for corruption to spread from one country to its neighbors, but the rate at which corruption spreads from the originating country to each additional country should diminish with geographical distance, as the exposure of the neighboring countries to the corrupt practices of the originating country should weaken as the distance between them grows". Other analyzes conducted by Das and DiRienzo (2012) in 42 countries in Africa and the Middle East based on results of Corruption Perception Index (CPI) by Transparency International show that corruption is indeed contagious between neighboring countries, and the contagion rate decays as the distance between countries grows further. Research by Attila (2008) base on "spatial dependency model" show that a country's national level of corruption is positively correlated with its regional level of corruption (the average level of corruption in its neighboring countries), which suggests that corruption can spread from a country to its neighbors. This study also found that this corruption correlation can be explained by the level of economic development, foreign aid, and trade openness.

As an empirical study focused on the United States found that an increase in the levels of corruption in neighboring states of 10% led to increased levels of corruption in a state by 4-11%, seemingly confirming the contagious nature of corruption (Goel, and Nelson, 2007). Similarly, a 2008 multicountry study found that corruption can be viewed as a regional phenomenon and that any attempts at decreasing corruption in one nation will lead to decreased levels of corruption in neighboring countries (Becker et al., 2009; Dimant, and Tosato, 2017).

As Nekovee an Pinto notice "the hierarchical level at which the bad apples are located has significant impact on the corruption spreading dynamics. As one would expect, the higher the level at which the bad apples are located, the faster and wider the spread of corruption in the organization. However, if the organization is able to hire employees who are less likely to succumb to corrupt influences, then the differential impact of hierarchical level is even more pronounced, i.e., junior-level bad apples have a much lower impact on corruption spreading dynamics than senior-level bad apples. This implies that the testing of senior-level job applicants with regard to ethics should be conducted more rigorously than for junior-level job applicants. However, once again it seems that in real-life the opposite is true, and junior-level

positions (e.g., sales staff in retail organizations, or tellers in consumer banking) are subjected to greater scrutiny on ethics than senior-level positions (e.g., sales managers, bank branch managers). Also, the socialization processes for junior employees (e.g., management trainees) is usually far more formal, rigorous and comprehensive than for senior employees. Also, the socialization processes for junior employees (e.g., management trainees) is usually far more formal, rigorous and comprehensive than for senior employees. Therefore if a senior employee is carrying a "corruption virus" with him or her, the lack of a rigorous socialization process will allow the virus to be retained and it could initiate a corruption contagion in the future" (Nekovee, Pinto, 2017).

4. Can one prevent corruption from spreading?

The presence of whistle-blowers can be an effective antidotum to corruption spreading (Nekovee, Pinto, 2017). As the authors say "even if 5% of the workforce are potential whistle-blowers then the chances of the corruption being inhibited are very high, and if this number can be raised to around 25%, then the impact of bad apples on corruption spreading will be negligible.

The study of Das and DiRienzo (2012) concluded that anti-corruption policy reforms enacted in a country can create positive externalities for its neighbors and help rein in corruption within a larger geographical area.

You can kill the virus if we see a company as a living organism, then some kind of preventive treatment should be prescribed for this disease. Compliance workshops can work much like vaccinations. With relevant case discussions and role-playing exercises, employees can learn about potential situations they could face, how to react, and what consequences could occur. Like an antivirus, this knowledge stays inside the employee and can be activated when needed. Bureaucracy provokes corruption and vice versa. To avoid this downward spiral, a company should establish internal processes that are as simple as possible to ensure transparency and employee accountability. Compliance Officers cannot do their jobs only from behind closed office doors. They must be easy to reach and well-known across the company. Trusted employees can be offered the additional role of "Compliance Promoter," and IT tools can ensure that an anonymous reporting system is available 24 hours a day. Compliance training sessions cannot be limited to presentations about rules and regulations. It they are, employees will only behave if they feel controlled. Instead, companies need to establish a values-based culture where employees understand their role inside the organization and how corruption could affect their job. In this culture, everyone is equipped to face difficult situations – and not just employees in typical risk groups such as sales or procurement. Is your company protected against this kind of "corruption contagion"? What

kinds of "vaccinations" does your company have in place to stave off bribery and corruption? (Henz, 2015).

Understanding why co-workers make similar choices about whether to commit misconduct can guide managers in preventing misconduct. Given its nature, knowledge and social norms related to misconduct must be transmitted through informal channels such as social interactions. More generally, understanding why co-workers behave in similar ways has important implications for understanding how corporate culture arises and how managers can shape it (Dimmock, Gerken, 2018).

5. Conclusions

The phenomenon of corruption became one of the most important problems and topic of scientific discourse of the last decade. In the light of the recent corruption scandals, attempts of understanding what corruption is and how it occurs in an organization has driven scholars' attention, especially when the number of revealed corrupt scandals has risen dramatically, despite there being the more and more organizations that are carefully scrutinized. Unfortunately, our knowledge about this occurrence and about the way in which this independent entity (an organization) becomes a corrupted one is limited. However, increasingly more commonly attention is put on the strong roots of corruption in public duties. That is why the corruption is associated and discussed in relation to public sectors that are especially prone to abuse of public office, including the educational sector. A significant place in this area is the education sector of higher level, especially the entities educating in (widely understood) business. This idea is brought forward from common critics of this sector. Lots of authors indicate higher education as the indirect cause of large corporation collapses and the global moral crisis observed in the last decade.

There is still a need of elaboration of the universal model of academic corruption prevention and of integrity development in high education as well as providing the universities with a particular set of instruments and methods for academic corruption prevention and with practical recommendations, based on research results, for shaping the culture of academic integrity and the increase of universities' integrity. At the same time, there is a need to recognize and verify mechanisms of its performance for corruption prevention and to create the fundamentals for its efficient performance in a turbulent environment that rather encourages spreading of corruption than sustaining it from diffusion.

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