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**PHENOMENOLOGY OF CORRUPTION: SOCIO**  
**PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECT**

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***Abstract***

This article is devoted to the analysis of corruption issues, where the authors set the task to answer such questions as: whether the concepts of “corruption activity” and “corruption behavior” are identical; what variations of coping mechanisms may more disguise and realize unconscious aspects of corrupt behavior; what factors are fundamental for the development of corrupt behavior of an individual and taking such a model of behavior as a base when solving controversial issues during interpersonal communication, as well as in intractable life situations; what approach will be most effective for understanding corruption issues from the point of view of social psychology. In the process of answering these questions, the authors considered various interpretations of the understanding of corruption, its manifestations and features in the structure of interpersonal communication. The existing typologies of corruption in the analysis of their characteristics has been analyzed. The scientific views on the origin, sources and factors of the development of corruption in modern society are given. The authors describe the factorial system of determinants that determine the “trigger mechanism” of the potentials of corruption at the individual level. The article provides a phenomenological analysis of the manifestations of corruption. The concepts of “corrupt behavior” and “corrupt activities” are differentiated. A phenomenological analysis of corruption is summarized by highlighting variations in coping mechanisms that mask and implement unconscious aspects of corrupt behavior.

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**Keywords:** Corruption, corrupt behavior, psychological mechanisms of protection.



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## 1. Introduction

The study of the phenomenon of corruption and propensity for corruption can be classified as multidimensional research tasks. At the same time, the analysis of determinants (factors) defining the “trigger mechanism” of corruption potentials at the individual level, especially if it is implemented in a heuristic scientific search format, is of the greatest interest. The latter, in turn, can be initiated empirically, through instances in psychological practice or the practice of life observations, which help to raise non-standard questions for the traditional understanding and consideration of corruption issues.

According to Shedy (2015), the forms of corruption are multiple, and its manifestations are very varied: from simple, for example, taking bribes for committing illegal actions, to complex ones (selling posts, lobbying laws for remuneration, etc.). For example, based on the “application area”, they distinguish economic (bribing as receiving, promising, offering, giving or soliciting a bribe, or any other unlawful use by the person of his public status, coupled with obtaining benefits both for himself and for any other person, contrary to law to the economic interests of a citizen, a legal entity) and political corruption, which is associated with the activities of officials of the apparatus of political power, which is based on an unofficial, uncontrolled exchange of the resources between the ruling elite and the other structures of the society. The forms of political corruption are considered to be: corruption lobbying; corruption favoritism; corruption protectionism; secret political contributions; contributions to the elections with the subsequent payment of public office and others. Contradictions between the interests of the ruling elite and the norms of morality and law arise not so much because of bribes, but because of established clan relations, in which the principle of kinship is predominant.

At the same time, the author notes that D. Jones, J. Hellman and D. Kaufmann distinguish two forms of corruption: administrative corruption (deliberately introducing distortions in the process of implementing laws and rules in order to secure for themselves or other people they need ) and “buying up the state” (individual corporations or groups of individuals using bribes seek to adopt and implement laws and economic policy measures that are beneficial for them, and as a result, the state acts in private rather than in general interests) (as cited in Shedy, 2015, p. 35). Also Shedy (2015) notes a more complex typology offered by M. Johnston in his works. It is based on a synthesis of the empirical experience of countries and takes into account not only the degree of competition in the markets and features of the political regime, but also the degree of development of institutions, i.e. he used the deductive method in compiling the classification, identifies the following four types of corruption in the state: 1) influence markets, 2) elite cartels, 3) oligarchy and clans, high-ranking tycoons.

Typology of corruption A. Schleifer, R.U. Vishnya and S. Rose-Ackerman based on the induction method, as noted by E.A. Stasyuk, that is, modeling a separate market of corruption services with one civil servant and private sector representative, as well as with one service, and spreading the identified patterns to the economic system as a whole with the search for examples of the existence of the detected types of countries in practice (as cited in Stasyuk, 2016, p. 25).

Based on the foregoing, it can be noted that the empirical foundations of typology most often comprise the developed countries of the West, the countries of Southeast Asia, Latin America and Africa, and also Russia. Research in the field of the typology of corruption contains both the processing of a significant amount of empirical data and a significant theoretical potential. At the same time, the definitions

of corruption are quite diverse, but they are fundamentally similar and reflect the fact that corruption harms the fundamental principles of state power, destabilizes the situation in the management of state and municipal bodies, institutions, destroys their authority, inhibits healthy competition and economic development of the country, distorts the legal conscience of citizens, forming a specific superstructure in the consciousness of the individual about the likely satisfaction of personal and social needs through bribing officials.

Based on the structural and dialectic understanding of the unfolding of socio-psychological phenomena and phenomena in our world, we should assume that corruption in its current state has its roots of origin, grounds for strengthening and acquiring a ubiquitous character. In this case, an analysis of the relevant factors and reasons determining at the moment the manifestation of this phenomenon is implied.

Turning to the legal sciences, most of the following reasons for the development of corruption stand out:

The nature of legal culture and legal awareness of society itself, significant miscalculations in the development of the institution of state power in Russia in the early 1990s, the specifics of the emergence and development of civil society in Russia, lack of transparency information and public control, negative social phenomena, the instability of the economy, its raw material nature, imperfect anti-corruption legislation. (Bakalyas & Teplyashin, 2018, p. 34)

Whereas in sociology and economics, the reasons for the development and stabilization of corruption are the level of socio-economic development and the quality of state institutions, stiffness of anti-corruption control; political instability (Treisman, 2015); level of democracy (Montinola & Jackman, 2002); degree of development of political and market institutions, quality of public administration, openness of foreign trade, degree of development of democracy (Broadman & Recanatini, 2001).

In psychology, corruption refers to the number of generalized concepts used to describe and characterize personality traits, experiences, emotions and feelings, motivations, defensive reactions, manifested in relation to other people. For the most part, in the context of psychological research, corruption is considered either as a form of behavior (Devyatovskaya & Symaniuk, 2014), including as a form of deviant behavior (Zmanovskaia & Rybnikov, 2019), or as a systemically organized social phenomenon (Zhuravlev & Yurevich, 2012), or associate corruption with addiction (Fedyaeva, 2015, p. 25). Meanwhile, in our opinion, these characteristics of corruption do not quite correctly reflect its essence from the point of view of psychology, since corruption is for the most part a socio-psychological phenomenon destabilizing and demoralizing a person's personality. It is a phenomenon, since it has a certain constancy in its content, duration in the time aspect and the inner experience that is realized by a person here and now. At the same time, corruption is characteristic of people of different ages, social status, various social, including ethnic, groups. Also, the allegations that corruption is an illegal form of activity will, in our opinion, be valid only for economic, sociological and legal sciences, since it does not grasp the psychological essence of this phenomenon.

Speaking about activity in the context of its corruption orientation, we note that, in our understanding, corruption activity is an activity of a subject with a negative behavioral pattern, aimed at his

conscious desire to resolve the problematic situation around him in an immoral way. In other words, this is an activity that implies, above all, the meaningfulness and purposefulness of negative actions (in the person-to-person system) against the moral and ethical component of the personality structure, its morality and normativity. In addition, in scientific literature, corrupt activities are often identified with corrupt behavior, which, in our opinion, is fundamentally wrong, because, according to Dridze (1984),

In contrast to the category of “activity”, which serves “to describe non-reactive processes”, i.e. suggesting a measure of awareness of the impulses that caused it, and associated, as a rule, with a conscious desire to resolve problematic life and social situations, the category of “behavior” is historically associated with the description of reactive processes, which analyze the external stimulation of activity manifestations. (p. 34).

Consequently, it is more correct to mean by corrupt behavior the unlawful standard and cliché of actions, realized outside, borrowed by a person either from personal experience or as a result of imitation of well-known or other illegal samples and stereotypes of actions.

Developing this idea, we most likely note the fundamental factors in favor of choosing a strategy of corrupt behavior by a person we can determine the following factors: the lack of his personal and environmental resources, the lack of coincidence of personal and objective tasks, the attenuation of normal behavior, asynchrony of mental processes. Because the conscious choice of this strategy of behavior is realized due to the movement of a person along the path of less resistance. It is not profitable for a person to spend his personal and environmental resources due to their scarcity, including because of the discrepancy between his personal and objective tasks that arise before him. In this case, a specific action acts as a substantive task - to take a bribe or, for example, to abuse its official powers, while the personal task is much broader than the objective one in its qualitative understanding, since it answers the question of whether a person can take such a wrongful act. When he realizes and understands that he is able to accept such a model of asocial, illegal behavior, then he needs to artificially weaken his normativity in order to follow this model of behavior in the future, i.e. drown out that censor, which does not allow him to cross the line. In other words, we are talking about the attenuation of the normative behavior of the individual. However, to do this, an internal support is needed - asynchrony of mental processes, i.e. for a person prone to corrupt activities and realizing it in life, different mental functions have different sensitive periods both in duration and age of their occurrence.

At the same time, the decisive factor in the behavior of a corrupt official is his opinion about the world around him and about himself, since the striving for success in solving life problems, the striving for perfection is an important characteristic of a corruptioneer. Social interest is a prerequisite for achieving its main goal - ensuring the development of one's personality and one's own well-being. Being a congenital human potency, social interest develops in accordance with the individual lifestyle of each. At the same time, the corruptioneer's lifestyle is formed starting from the early childhood era and represents a creative force, thanks to which he realizes the world and acts in it accordingly. The corruptioneer's lifestyle serves as a way to resolve the conflict, overcome crises and stress situations. It is important to understand, if we consider stress as a transactional process, it is a process of personal-environmental interaction, which is

caused by the need to restore balance in the “personality-environment” system, broken due to the impact of events (stressors) that are subjectively significant for a corrupt official. Stress begins with an assessment of the event and the resources to overcome (the primary and secondary assessment) and the emergence of appropriately estimated emotions. This is followed by the choice of coping strategies (coping), their implementation and evaluation of the results of the actions performed. The absence of the expected result makes it necessary to adjust the ideas about the stressor and the optimal response methods. Consequently, on the basis of the feedback mechanism, a cycle of continuous interaction of the corrupt with the outside world occurs (Nurmukhametov & Nurmukhametova, 2018; Nurmukhametova, 2015).

Psychology identifies a number of psychosocial factors that contribute to adaptation to stressful situations, regardless of the characteristics of these situations. These include, in particular, a set of adaptive individual-typological (mainly cognitive-style) features, for example, coping competence, optimism, self-esteem, an internal locus of control, resilience, as well as social network properties and the adequacy of social support. However, in the case of a corrupt individual, the socio-psychological adaptation will be characterized, most likely, by a low level of personal adaptation, non-acceptance of oneself and those around us, as well as pronounced escapism and emotional discomfort. This is likely to entail the use by a person with a penchant for corrupt activities of problem-oriented coping, which has as its goal a change in the situation and emotionally-oriented coping, aimed at regulating the emotional state caused by the problem situation, more precisely, its assessment. Taking into account that corruption activity is an activity of a subject with characteristic features, purposeful, which has the ability to develop over time and at the same time it is caused by socially significant goals for a person, “established” by social tools and means, then for its in-depth understanding and causation of occurrence, as well as further development, it will be appropriate to resort to the activity approaches of many experts.

## **2. Problem Statement**

At the present time there are sufficiently considered economic and legal components of corruption, while the psychological component is insufficiently analyzed in relevant studies, because they often discuss only two of its components: motivational and emotional-volitional. At the same time, among all the most significant works that have made certain contribution to the development perspectives of the psychology of corruption, special attention should be given to Vannovskaya (2018) many years of research, which allowed to draw a psychological portrait of a corrupt personality. At the same time, mutual research done by and Kamneva and Zhuykova (2015) is also of great value. They, on the contrary, were aimed at studying individuals prone to the reverse form of corrupt behavior - to bribery – and that allowed them to distinguish three types of such individuals: "balanced realist", "impulsive competitor" and "irresponsible follower" (p. 45). However, despite all this, scientists still have not found out the reason for corrupt behavior, what factors, from the point of view of psychology, contribute to the formation of corrupt behavior and the development of corruption in general. Consequently, the problem of corruption in the psychological aspect is that its phenomenology is not fully disclosed, valid and reliable psychological tools that allow to reveal the mechanisms underlying the changes in the orientation of an individual and, as a consequence, its acceptance of corrupt behavior as the norm are not properly worked out.

### **3. Research Questions**

1. Are the concepts of "corruption", "corrupt behavior", "corrupt activity" identical?
2. What variations of coping mechanisms to a greater degree can mask and implement unconscious aspects of corrupt behavior?
3. What factors can be considered essential for development of corrupt behavior and taking such a behavior model as the main one when dealing with controversial moments in the course of interpersonal communication, as well as when dealing with difficult life situations?
4. What approach will be most effective for understanding corruption issues from the point of view of social psychology?

### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this work is to try to outline a certain system of determinants (factors) that determine the "trigger" potential of corruption at the personal level.

### **5. Research Methods**

This theoretical study involves such methods as analysis and synthesis, abstraction and concretization, induction and deduction, comparison, generalization, systematization and interpretation of facts.

### **6. Findings**

As the results of the theoretical study of the phenomenology of corruption and the determinants (factors) of corruption, we can note the following:

1. Corrupt behavior and corrupt activity are not synonymous concepts, despite general subject field, corruption – this is the activity of the subject with a negative behavioral pattern, aimed at his conscious desire to resolve the problem situation around him in an immoral way, while under corruption behavior it is most correct to understand the illegal standard and clichés of actions implemented outside, borrowed by a person either from personal experience, or as a result of imitation of well-known or someone else's illegal patterns and stereotypes of actions. More over the corruption can be described as social-psychological phenomenon that is destabilizing and demoralizing the identity of a person.

2. In the qualitative analysis of the problem of corruption and corruption from the point of view of social psychology, the most effective approach in understanding this problem is the activity approach of A.N. Leontyev. Since corruption activity, like any other type of activity in its structure has structure and system, with its main structural component being a specific action, for example, receiving or giving a bribe, and the organization of activity as a whole is a hierarchy of systems of actions of different levels of complexity.

3. By coping mechanisms, which largely mask and implement the unconscious aspects of corrupt behavior can be attributed problem-oriented coping and emotionally-oriented coping, the first - is aimed at

changing the situation, while the second - is aimed at regulating the emotional state of mind caused by the problem, or rather, its assessment.

4. The fundamental factors for choosing a strategy of corruption behavior are lack of personal and environmental resources, incoincidence of personal and objective tasks, attenuation of normative behavior, asynchronous mental processes. Since a person follows the path of less resistance, he does not want to spend his personal and environmental resources because of their scarcity, as well as because of the discrepancy between personal and objective tasks. (and whether he will be able to "play" such game, the passion, a game component is shown). When he understands that he is able to adopt such a model of antisocial, illegal behavior, then he needs to artificially weaken the normative behavior that would continue to support such a game, silence the censor that will not allow him to implement corrupt practices (attenuate normative behavior). However, it needs internal help - asynchronous mental processes, a person prone to corruption and implementing it should have the following: different mental functions have different sensitive periods both in duration and age of their occurrence.

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, a brief phenomenological analysis of corruption makes it possible to note the growing interest of the academic community in this topic. Although, as the deep analysis of the special literature shows, our country occupies the lower rank in terms of the degree of elaboration of the problem of corruption, i.e. the number of studies and articles broadcasting the results of data on corruption carried out and printed in Russia is significantly less than the number of publications on Russian corruption published in foreign publications.

The various interpretations of corruption, its manifestations and features in the structure of interpersonal communication, as well as the studied typologies of corruption in analyzing their characteristics, a reasonable factor determinant system that determines the "trigger mechanism" of corruption potentials at the individual level, allows us to conclude that the damage to society is caused not by the absolute level of corruption, but by the lack of understanding of its mechanisms, which is crowded out, on the one hand, by popular media constructs, on the other, by non-systems very small (relatively to the public demand) fundamental and practice-oriented research in this area.

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