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ANALYSIS OF THE CORRUPTION PHENOMENON IN LOCAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

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Corruption is a complex phenomenon that has a negative impact on the economic and social development of a country. At the organization level, the incidence of corruption can lead to its bankruptcy or loss of reputation. Regardless of the severity of its consequences, the studied phenomenon has a universal and subjective character.

The importance of doctoral thesis topic entitled ANALYSIS OF THE CORRUPTION PHENOMENON IN THE LOCAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION derives both from the international attribute of the corruption phenomenon and the interdisciplinary specificity (economic, social, legal, psychological, etc.) of the approached subject. In local public administration, the phenomenon of corruption is present at different levels and in different forms. Therefore, the study of the corruption phenomenon in the local administration presents a number of peculiarities apart from the manifestations of the same concept in the private sector, because if in the public sector corruption affects the general interest and has negative effects on the local community, in the private sector corruption has negative effects on the company's performance and profit.

Starting from these considerations, *the purpose of the scientific research* is to determine the specificities of the corruption phenomenon in the local public administration institutions. We mention that our scientific research is carried out within the City Hall of Craiova.

Therefore, we set the fallowing *research objectives*:

OS1: building a composite measure (index) to quantify the level of knowledge of the corruption phenomenon among employees in public institutions.

OS2: determining the factors that represent measures to combat the corruption phenomenon within public institutions.

OS3: measuring the degree of efficiency of the activities that require measures by which the level of corruption in public institutions can be diminished.

OS4: assessing the professional efficiency and achieving the public institution's goals against the vulnerabilities generated by the risks to corruption acts.

OS5: establishing the elements that are generating causes of corruption in public institutions.

OS6: determination of the negative degree of influence of the elements generating corruption in public institutions.

OS7: identify the relative importance of the factors that determine the public institutions employees perception of about the risk of corruption.

OS8: identify the relative importance of the factors that determine the perception of employees within public institutions about the emergence of the concrete risk of corruption caused by interested persons.

OS9: developing a conceptual model for analyzing the elements that influence the perception of the internal legal framework for the implementation of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy.

OS10: to analyze the existing relationships between citizens and local public authorities in implementing the objectives set by public policies, vitiated by the corruption phenomenon.

OS11: statistical analysis of the corruption phenomenon as a result of the implementation of the National Anticorruption Strategy (2016-2020) in local public institutions.

OS12: elaboration of a conceptual model for analyzing the elements influencing the perception on the internal legal framework for the implementation of the National Anticorruption Strategy.

Taking into account that the public administration is made up of all the public institutions and authorities that manage the activities with public impact, we have selected the City Hall of Craiova to carry out the scientific research.

The City Hall Craiova is an important public entity in the local public administration system and due to the size of the city and the complex economic and social issues belonging to it, we meet in the structure of this organization the favorable framework for observation and scientific research.

The institution is organized in specialized departments, departments that manage the public affairs of Craiova municipality in an integrated approach with other state institutions acting in economic and social areas with a strong representation status. Also, the City Hall of Craiova together with the Local Council are the respective executor and the initiator of the local normative framework necessary to support the public activities.

According to literature, the areas managed by the City Hall of Craiova City are susceptible to corruption, with high potential risks and vulnerabilities. The desideratum of the institution is to optimize the relationship with citizens by increasing the quality level of the administrative act, combating bureaucracy and implicitly diminishing the corruption acts. Although it faced cases of highly publicized corruption, followed by convictions and suspensions from the public office, the City Hall of Craiova developed a set of main actions and specific anti-corruption targets taken over by the National Anticorruption Strategy (2016-2020).

In order to achieve our research objectives, we have proposed that in this study a series of questions integrated in a *Questionnaire about the determination of corruption level in the local public administration sector* should be answered, together with statistical information of public interest from accredited sources.

The questionnaire was applied at the level of the City Hall of Craiova by interviewing a representative sample of 190 employees and the primary data collected from the investigated professional environment were pertinent, conclusive and useful to the research. Conclusions resulting from the applied scientific research can be used in the activity of substantiating the managerial decisions and in the preventive purpose based on their objectivity.

As a result of the legislative, economic and social changes, both at international and national level, the sphere of public realities is in a permanent dynamics and, implicitly, the corruption phenomenon manifests through new valences related to these changes.

Under these circumstances, the role of this approach is up to date because of the message sent to the organization staff as a sum of individuals and their influence on the behavioral side in the avalanche of new risks.

The scientific research has observed and estimated the dysfunctional aspects in the decision-making and execution processes as well as the disturbing factors through the high risk of corruption acts.

The questionnaire was designed to identify the phases of corruption risk management within the public administration.

Regarding the scientific research structure, the two research axes have been oriented towards the theoretical part of the paper in which we will critically analyze the relevant aspects of the corruption phenomenon (definition, typology, causes and effects of corruption) and the applicative part in which we will study the phenomenon of corruption in the local public administration grafted on the selected entity, respectively the City Hall of Craiova.

In the first chapter of the thesis, titled - *THEORETICAL* APPROACHES *OF THE CORRUPTION PHENOMENON* - we have critically analyzed different definitions of corruption and we highlighted the differences between them. Each researcher sought to incorporate in the definition of corruption that particularity he had observed in a case study. Thus, Johnston (1999) analized the relation between democratization, economic development and corruption, proposing that corruption can be used as a diagnostic tool for understanding the particular problems of democratization and development of a country. For many researchers, corruption is declared as violation of the rules of the game (Jain, 2001).

The theoretical axis was also used for critical analysis of approaches to corruption in national and international literature. Therefore, we have presented the notion of corrupt act, the dimensions of corruption, the reflection of the phenomenon in the international normative framework and the local legislation. International organizations and conventions have also been identified and nominated.

The second chapter of the theoretical part of the research, titled - EVALUATION OF THE CORRUPTION PHENOMENON - focused on the critical analysis of the literature on the measurement of the corruption phenomenon and his effects.

In a logical succession, it was necessary to debate the methods of fighting against corruption phenomenon and the particularities of this fight in public administration in Romania.

The sustained efforts of a public-private partnership have resulted in a responsible attitude towards corruption issues and tangible results in this area.

Chapter 3, titled - THE METHODOLOGY OF THE SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH ON THE CORRUPTION PHENOMENON IN LOCAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION covered the practical axis of scientific research and reviewed the methodology of scientific research on corruption phenomenon with its particularities in public administration. Our research was a quantitative one, based on a questionnaire on the level of corruption in the local public administration sector, and the way the questionnaire was developed aimed at the identification of the phases of corruption risk management within the public administration (eg identification of risks corruption, the assessment of corruption risks and the reduction of corruption risks).

In a first stage we analyzed *the level of knowledge of the corruption phenomenon at the City Hall of Craiova* and we established the following four hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: what is the actual status of knowledge of the participants from the scientific research about the corruption phenomenon within public institutions in Romania (high - over 50%).

Hypothesis 2: how familiar are the participants in scientific research with the general frame of corruption offenses in Romania (high - over 50%).

Hypothesis 3: the corruption level to which the scientific research participants are exposed (high over 50%).

Hypothesis 4: if the participants in scientific research are familiar with the masures and instruments for preventing and fighting corruption.

In order to *evaluate the actions to combat the corruption phenomenon at the City Hall of Craiova we elaborated a model of the scientific research based on the hypothesis* presented below:

Hypothesis 1: Identification of vulnerabilities and risks, along with the intensification of preventive activities is an effective measure of the legal anti-corruption framework.

Hypothesis 2: Knowing the legal framework and the consequences of the violation of the rules is an effective measure of the legal anti-corruption framework.

Hypothesis 3: Gradual measures for the civil servants violating the code of ethics is an effective measure of the legal anti-corruption framework.

Hypothesis 4: Penalizing the citizens who put pressure on civil servants is an effective measure of the legal anti-corruption framework.

Hypothesis 5: The presentation of corruption cases handled by authorities or reported by citizens in the media is an effective measure of the legal anti-corruption framework.

Hypothesis 6: The increase of salaries is an effective measure of the legal anti-corruption framework.

Hypothesis 7: Increasing the degree of institutional transparency is an effective measure of the legal anti-corruption framework.

Hypothesis 8: Establishing procedures for activities is an effective measure of the legal anti-corruption framework.

Hypothesis 9: Knowledge of the updated legislation is an effective measure of the legal anti-corruption framework.

Hypothesis 10: Promoting staff in the long run, regardless of hierarchical professional performance, is an effective measure of the legal anticorruption framework.

Hypothesis 11: developing self-control and hierarchical control is an effective measure of the legal anti-corruption framework.

Hypothesis 12: Continuous professional development is an effective measure of the legal anti-corruption framework.

Hypothesis 13: Increasing the level of transparency in the drafting of acts of authority is an effective measure of the legal anti-corruption framework.

Hypothesis 14: Improving preventive activities, to the detriment of the findings, is an effective measure of the legal anti-corruption framework.

Hypothesis 15: Improving communication within the organization is an effective measure of the legal anti-corruption framework.

Hypothesis 16: objective professional assessments and unannounced controls are an effective measure of the legal anti-corruption framework.

Hypothesis 17: Improving the relationship with citizens is an effective measure of the legal anti-corruption framework.

Hypothesis 18: Analyzing the level of the public barometer in relation to civil service benefits is an effective measure of the legal anti-corruption framework.

Hypothesis 19: The proactive reaction of the authorities is an effective measure of the legal anti-corruption framework.

A part of our study was designed to evaluate the causes of corruption in the City Hall of Craiova and we will formulate a major hypothesis that shows a positive relatonship between how the current corruption level in the local public administration system and the elements identified at the hypothesis stage as potential causes that can limit the anti-corruption efforts.

The broad hypothesis developed for a thorough examination of the proposed objective was as follows:

Hypothesis 1: The existence of a parallel work agenda is an important cause of corruption.

Hypothesis 2: Educational and cultural factors specific to the local socio-economic environment are an important cause of corruption.

Hypothesis 3: poor staff training and poor recruitment and promotion is a major cause of corruption.

Hypothesis 4: lack of effective and strict control over employee activity is an important cause of corruption.

 Hypothesis 5: The personal relationship between citizens and employees of the public entity is an important cause of corruption.

Hypothesis 6: Perpetuating an organizational culture that is not in line with professional ethics is an important cause of corruption.

Hypothesis 7: The specificity and complexity of finding and instrumenting corruption is an important cause of corruption.

Hypothesis 8: Low salary and specific working conditions are a major cause of corruption.

Hypothesis 9: Incoherent legislative framework and inadequately correlated with effective managerial measures is an important cause of corruption.

Hypothesis 10: The lack of transparency and communication in the public sector is an important cause of corruption.

Hypothesis 11: The existence of a degree of politicization of the administration is an important cause of corruption.

Hypothesis 12: Gaps in personality and employee training are an important cause of corruption.

Hypothesis 13: The passive attitude of citizens towards public administration is an important cause of corruption.

Hypothesis 14: Excessive bureaucracy is a major cause of corruption.

Hypothesis 15: The existence of monopoly in providing services is an important cause of corruption.

The scintific research has continued with the impact assessment of the corruption phenomenon on the working climate of the City Hall of Craiova.We have elaborated the next hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: the nature of the professional activity directly and significantly influences the perception of the occurrence of the concrete corruption risk.

Hypothesis 2: The analysis and processing of the malfunctions directly and significantly influences the perception of the occurrence of the concrete corruption risk.

Hypothesis 3: Familiarity with job-specific vulnerabilities influences directly and significantly the perception of the occurrence of concrete corruption.

Hypothesis 4: The effectiveness of the legal framework directly and significantly influences the perception of the emergence of concrete corruption risk.

Hypothesis 5: Vulnerabilities to corruption in the developed activity directly and significantly influences the perception of the occurrence of concrete corruption risk.

Hypothesis 6: The allocation of resources directly and significantly influences the perception of the concrete risk of corruption.

Hypothesis 7: The reaction of leadership, colleagues directly and significantly influences the perception of the emergence of concrete corruption risk.

An important aspect of the analysis of the impact of the corruption phenomenon is the analysis of the structural relations between the different actions undertaken within the public institutions and the impact on the perception regarding the efficiency of the legal framework, and anti-corruption. Therefore, we elaborated and tested a scientific model of the structural relations between actions undertaken within public institutions and the perception of the effectiveness of the internal anti-corruption internal legal framework.

In order to perform this analysis, we formulated three main hypotheses (Ip1, Ip2 and Ip3) and other hypotheses (Ip3a, Ip3b and Ip3c) which take into account the indirect effect of the moderating variables on the effectiveness of the legal anti-corruption framework:

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive and strong relation between the degree of satisfaction of the public institution employees and the allocated resources (time, financial, logistic and human) for the implementation of the anticorruption standards and the perception of the effectiveness of the anti-corruption legal framework.

Hypothesis 2: There is a positive and strong relation between the degree of familiarity with job specific vulnerabilities and the probability of committing corruption acts and the perception of the effectiveness of the anti-corruption legal framework.

Hypothesis 3: There is a positive and strong relation between the dysfunctions that can generate corruption acts and the perception on the effectiveness of the legal anti-corruption framework

Hypothesis 3a: There is a positive and strong relation between degree of analysis and processing of malfunctions that can generate corruption acts (to as part of the continuous training program) and the level of satisfaction of the employees regarding the allocation of the resources

Hypothesis 3b: There is a negative and strong relation between the degree of analysis and processing of malfunctions that can generate corruption acts (to as part of the continuous training program) and the degree of identifying negative aspects that can be considered as vulnerabilities to corruption in the managerial activity

Hypothesis 3c: There is a negative and strong relation between the degree of identifying negative aspects that can be considered as vulnerabilities to corruption in the managerial activity and the the level of satisfaction of the employees regarding the allocation of the resources

To estimate all the effects, we used the rule of multiplying the impact for situations where a variable exerts both a significant direct impact on the perception of the effectiveness of the internal anti-corruption internal framework and an indirectly impact over another variable included in the model.

In the fourth chapter of the doctoral dissertation and the second part of the practical part of the scientific research, entitled - ANALYSIS OF THE CORRUPTION PHENOMENON IN THE LOCAL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION : CASE STUDY TO MUNICIPALITY CRAIOVA I developed a scientific model of structural links between actions in public institutions and the perception of the effectiveness of the legal framework internal anti-corruption based on an analysis of structural links existing between the various measures in public institutions and impact (influence) on the perception of the effectiveness of the legal framework, anti- corruption. On the basis of the research results, we concluded that the hypothesis **1** : there are significant differences depending on the respondent's gender about the impact of the corruption phenomenon on the work environment of the institution - is Rejected hypothesis 2 : there are significant differences depending on the age of the respondent on the impact of the corruption phenomenon on the work environment of the institution - is partially

validated (for the variable V5 - *Efficiency of the legal framework*), and hypothesis 3 : there are significant differences depending on the age of the respondent at work regarding the impact of the phenomenon of Corruption on the working environment of the institution - is Rejected hypothesis 4 : there are significant differences depending on the role of the respondent in the public institution regarding the impact of the corruption phenomenon on the work environment of the institution is partially validated (for variable V3 - A *parity r concrete corruption problem*).

We have also built up a composite measure to quantify the corruption phenomenon among staff in public institutions to establish the theoretical framework for interpreting the results obtained from the statistical analyzes in this scientific approach and to compare the of the reality existing within the public institutions with the results obtained from the specialized studies carried out by the bodies authorized in this area of interest.

As a result, the index built up in this scientific approach to measure the level of knowledge of the phenomenon of corruption is composed of individual indicators, grouped into three main categories: General picture of corruption phenomenon (General picture of corruption - V1), Exposure (Corruption Practices Manifestation - V2 , Knowledge of Corrupt Practices - V3, Participation in Events-V4),Anti-Corruption Tools (National Anti-Corruption Strategy 2016-2020 - V5, Corruption Monitoring Bodies - V6, Corruption Analysis Instruments - V7, Corruption Prevention Tools - V8, ISO37001 Standard - V9.

Based on the interpretation intervals of the results obtained for the composite score that measures the level of knowledge of the corruption phenomenon we have concluded that: The degree of knowledge of the phenomenon of corruption is moderate, the score being 42% → **Hypothesis 1 is not confirmed ,** The degree of familiarity with the general picture of the phenomenon of corruption is high, the value of the score being 66% → **Hypothesis 2 is confirmed. ,** The degree of exposure to corruption acts is moderate to low, the value of the score being 31% → **Hypothesis 3 is not confirmed.** The degree of familiarity with corruption-fighting organisms and instruments is moderate to low, with the score being 30% → **Hypothesis 4 is not confirmed.**

The scientific research consisted in analyzing the elements regarding the model of evaluation of the actions to combat the phenomenon of corruption at the City Hall of Craiova**.** The conclusions of the scientific approach are as follows: **two hypotheses** are **validated** (**Hypothesis 5: The** presentation of corruption cases handled by authorities or signaled by citizens in the media is an effective measure of the legal anti-corruption framework **and the hypothesis 9:** knowledge of the updated legislation is a measure effective anti-corruption legal framework), **Six hypotheses are validated** (**Hypothesis 1:** Identify vulnerabilities and risks, while enhancing preventive activities is an effective anti-corruption legal framework, **and Hypothesis 4:** sanctioning, where appropriate, citizens who put pressure on civil servants is an effective measure of the legal anti-corruption framework; **Hypothesis 6:** The wage increase is an effective anti-corruption legal framework; **Hypothesis 8:** establish procedures for activities activities is an effective anti-

corruption legal framework; **Hypothesis 10:** Promoting term staff, irrespective of hierarchical performance, is an effective measure of the legal anti-corruption framework; **Hypothesis 19:** proactive response of the authorities is an effective measure of the legal anti-corruption), **11 hypotheses are partially validated** (**Hypothesis 2:** knowledge of the legal framework and the consequences of violation of the rules is an effective measure of the legal anti-corruption, **Hypothesis 3:** gradual and **quick** punishment of civil servants violating the code of ethics is an effective measure of the legal anti-corruption framework **Hypothesis 7:** increasing the degree of institutional transparency is an effective measure of the legal anti-corruption framework **Hypothesis 11:** the development of self-control and hierarchical control is an effective measure of the legal anti-corruption framework; **Hypothesis 12:** professional development continues is an effective anti-corruption legal framework; **Hypothesis 13:** increase transparency in drafting authority is an effective anti-corruption legal framework; **Hypothesis 14:** emphasis on preventive activities, at the expense of finding, is an effective anti-corruption legal framework; **Hypothesis 15:** Improving communication within the organization is an effective measure of the legal anti-corruption framework; **Hypothesis 16:** professional evaluations goals and spot checks are an effective anti-corruption legal framework; **Hypothesis 17:** improving networking with citizens is an effective anti-corruption legal framework; **Hypothesis 18:** analysis barometer level public servants in relation to benefits is an effective anti-corruption legal framework).

Our research continued with the **model for assessing the causes of the corruption phenomenon at the City Hall of Craiova .**

Two hypotheses are validated: (Hypothesis 4: lack of effective and strict control over employee activity is an important cause generating corruption and Hypothesis 6: perpetuating an organizational culture inconsistent with the standards of professional ethics is an important cause generating corruption);

Four hypotheses are partially validated. Although the level of significance does not meet the statistical criterion (sig.> 0.05), the calculated influence on the level of corruption is above the average. Thus, it can be concluded that these attributes can have a significant impact on future corruption, so close monitoring is required.

Although variables V5, V9, V2 and V3 do not contribute significantly statistically at present, we note their impact on the dependent variable. Therefore we believe that these elements should be carefully monitored because they are possible future cases generating corruption: Hypothesis 5: personal relationships between citizens and employees of the public entity is a major cause of the corruption; Hypothesis9 legislative framework incoherent and poorly correlated with effective management measures is an important cause generating corruption, Hypothesis2 educational and cultural factors specific local socio-economic environment is an important cause generating corruption, Hypothesis 2 poor staff training and poor recruitment and promotion is a major cause of corruption.

The scientific research ends with **assessing the impact of corruption on the work environment of Craiova City Hall.**

From the analysis of the data we concluded that not all predictors included in the analysis significantly contribute to the explanation of the dependent variable and between the variable V4 - Resource allocation and the perception of the concrete corruption risk is established an inverse link of influence:

Predictors with statistically significant values:

1. Nature of professional activity ($\beta = 0.428$, $t = 6.700$, sig $= 0.000$);
2. Analysis and processing of malfunctions ($\beta = 0.142$, $t = 2.628$, sig $= 0.009$);
3. Corruption vulnerabilities in the ongoing activity ($\beta = 0.152$, $t = 2.405$, sig $= 0.017$);
4. Assignment of resources ($\beta = - 0.128$, $t = -2.501$, sig $= 0.013$);

Predictors with values without statistical significance:

5. Familiarity with position vulnerabilities ($\beta = 0.062$, $t = 1.662$, sig $= 0.098$);
6. Efficiency of the legal framework ($\beta = - 0.052$, $t = -1.024$, sig $= 0.307$);
7. Reaction of management, colleagues, citizens ($\beta = 0.029$, $t = 0.766$, sig $= 0.445$).

The results of the scientific approach reveal the fact that 3 hypotheses are validated hypothesis 1: the nature of the professional activity influences directly and significantly the perception of the occurrence of the concrete corruption risk, hypothesis 2: the analysis and processing of the dysfunctions directly and significantly influences the perception of the occurrence of the specific risk corruption and hypothesis 5: vulnerabilities to corruption in the work directly and significantly affect the perception of risk occurrence of corrupt) , three hypotheses are validated hypothesis 3: familiarity with job-specific vulnerabilities directly and significantly influences the perception of the emergence of concrete corruption risk; hypothesis 4: efficiency of legal framework directly influence and significant perception of risk occurrence of corrupt and hypothesis 7: reaction management, colleagues, citizens directly influence and significant perception of risk occurrence of corrupt) , a hypothesis is partially validated (hypothesis 6: allocating resources directly and significantly affect the perception of risk occurrence of corrupt).

Personal contributions are reflected on two levels:

- on a theoretical level consists of the critical analysis of the specialized literature on the definition, typology, causes , measurement and measures to combat corruption;

- on a practical level, I realized the following:

  ➤ I evaluated the significant differences among the respondents regarding the impact of the corruption phenomenon on the working climate of the City Hall of Craiova

  ➤ I have built an index on the evaluation of the level of knowledge of the corruption phenomenon at the City Hall of Craiova.

  ➤ I developed and tested the model for assessing the causes of the corruption phenomenon at the City Hall

- ➢ I was scrutinized and tested the model of evaluation of actions to combat the phenomenon of corruption at the City Hall of Craiova.
- ➢ I evaluated the impact of the corruption phenomenon on the working climate of the City Hall of Craiova.

Future research will focus on testing and implementing measures to combat the phenomenon of corruption in private organizations and political organizations to assess the impact of corruption at different organizational levels on civil society and the business environment.

Another direction of research will be oriented towards how corruption in local public administration is perceived by civil society, and for this purpose, starting from the results of this study, we will compare the answers given by the public servants within the City Hall of Craiova and those of the citizens of Craiova.