University Corruption and Governance from a Relational Perspective
Based on 118 Judgments of China

Shuai HUANG, Hua JIANG* and Sheng-bo LIU
Graduate School of Education, Dalian University of Technology,
No. 2 Linggong Road, Ganjingzi District, Dalian City, Liaoning Province, P.R.C.
*Corresponding author

Keywords: University corruption, Relationship; Social network analysis, Corruption governance.

Abstract. Taking 118 judgments on corruption cases in colleges and universities as the basic materials, this paper makes a descriptive analysis of the behavior fields of the posts, departments and corruption cases of corruption subjects in colleges and universities by extracting relational data. By using the method of social network analysis, this paper makes centrality analysis, multi-dimension analysis and clique analysis of the corruption network in colleges and universities in China. The dual interpretation of the “relationship” in the corruption network warns that the social role is improperly embedded in the university organization, and attaching importance to the relationship governance in colleges and universities is an important content that should be paid attention to in the process of the corruption governance of colleges and universities.

Introduction

Corruption, in its general sense, refers to the use of public power to seek illegitimate resources or interests. However, corruption in colleges and universities refers to the behavior that occurs in colleges and universities, in which the main body of power takes advantage of its public power to illegally obtain the interests of individuals or groups. Corruption in colleges and universities contains double elements that are contrary to morality and law. In addition, it may involve students, so from the perspective of social stability, university corruption is not only more socially destructive than corruption occurring in other social systems and organizational fields, but also has a subtle imitation effect among the younger generation.

In reality, colleges and universities once known as “ivory towers” are the “moral heights” and “social conscience” in the eyes of the public. However, in recent years in colleges and universities, “corruption has infiltrated from infrastructure to enrollment, from scientific research to academic research.” No.6 of the Report on China's Anti-corruption and Anti-corruption Construction pointed out that the “prominent problem of power rent-seeking in key areas”, “collective corruption, a series of cases” and other problems are the main problems urgently to be solved in colleges and universities. The study and management of university corruption has broken through the field of universities and become an urgent social problem to be solved.

Literature Review

In the analysis of the causes of college corruption, there are cultural influentialists who believe that the negative effect of traditional culture and the collision of eastern and western cultures are the important causes of college corruption; Some people insist on the theory of institutional defects, and believe that the lack of effective supervision mechanism is an important reason for the corruption in universities; Institutional deficiency theorists believe that the “opportunity” factor of the lack of internal supervision system in colleges and universities has “encouraged” corruption in colleges and universities to some extent. In Chinese society, as a “differential pattern”, human relations rooted in all aspects of social life are an important cause of corruption in China, which is “human relations theory”. From the perspective of institutional economics, university corruption is a rational choice made by the behavior subject after comparing costs and benefits. Another interesting view is power
expansion theory, which holds that the free extension of the right of running a school in the blind area of supervision is the source of the risk of corruption in universities.\textsuperscript{(11)}

Corruption is a construction of social relations, and it is a alienated construction. Through content analysis, a study of the confessions of 19 corrupt officials concluded that there were four periods during the process of corruption, including the establishment of the relationship between the subject and the briber, the gap consolidation, the use of the relationship and the termination of the relationship.\textsuperscript{(12)} Research on Chinese people's action logic shows that interpersonal relationship exists in Chinese society as an exchange behavior.\textsuperscript{(13)} and corruption is an exchange of power in essence. Therefore, the interpretation of corruption from the perspective of relations is of special significance in China's social environment. This study tries to analyze the corruption in colleges and universities from the perspective of relations, analyze the causes and provide a way to deal with corruption.

Data Sources and Research Ideas

A judgment is an instrument written by a court on the basis of a judgment. In response to social concern, it takes the initiative to accept social supervision. \textit{Provisions of the Supreme People's Court on the Publication of Judgment Documents on the Internet} was formally implemented on January 1, 2014; the judicial interpretation stipulates that the supreme law has set up a network of Chinese judicial documents on the Internet, and the effective judgment documents of the people's courts at all levels shall be promulgated uniformly. Through the “China Judicial Instrument Network”, 118 pieces of court judgments related to college corruption were collected (the date of inquiry is up to October 2017) as the primary data of the study. Of these, 100 were judgment of first instance and 18 were judgment of second instance. In the judgment, the content of the criminal facts is described, and the seven elements, including time, place, motive, purpose, means, plot and result, reflecting the facts of the criminal behavior of the person who committed the case, are comprehensively described, providing abundant information and data for the research.

In this study, 118 judgment documents were used as the basic data source, and after repeated reading and screening, the following information was extracted: ①A total of 123 power subjects were extracted and classified into 72 types of corruption subjects according to different positions. Furthermore, they were merged into 26 types of university posts according to different positions. ②36 types of social role information were extracted, including self-run companies, students, colleagues and leaders directly related to the interests of power subjects, and holding companies related to the operation of the school; In addition, most of them are individuals and enterprises that have corrupt relations with the power subject. ③According to the corruption frequency, there is corruption between the power subject and a social organization or individual, that is, “1”, and so on. By summarizing the above three kinds of data, we can construct a two-dimensional relational matrix consisting of the power subject and different social organizations or individuals. Social network analysis is an art and technology specialized in quantitative analysis of Social relations.\textsuperscript{(14)} This study adopts this method to analyze corruption in the field of colleges and universities.

The Main Body Characteristic and the Case Characteristic of University Corruption

The Distribution Characteristics of Posts and Departments of Corruption Subjects in Colleges and Universities

From 118 judgments, 26 kinds of different positions related to corruption in colleges and universities are sorted out, which are distributed in 20 departments, including leading departments, functional departments, faculty and affiliated units. Therefore, the distribution characteristics of corruption subjects can be analyzed from the two dimensions of posts and departments.

In the job dimension, the positions with more corrupt subjects are chief, vice chief, vice president and section chief, which respectively account for 22.8%, 16.3%, 8.1% and 8.1% of the total number of corruption subjects. Among them, the department distributions of the chief and the vice chief are
the most dispersed, involving 7 and 6 on-campus functional departments respectively. This was followed by the post of director, which was distributed among 2 functional departments, 1 faculty and 3 subsidiary units. As the principal person in charge of a department, department cadres usually do not have decision-making power. However, as the middle layer of an emotional communication and the specific executors after the decision-making, they can greatly influence the decision-making results. “Power has mutated in the executive branch of the chief”[15]. The vice president is usually in charge of the departments of infrastructure, logistics and finance, and the improper use of his power of approval is believed to be related to corruption.[16]

In the department dimension, the departments with a large number of corruption subjects are the infrastructure department, the logistics department and the university-level leadership, respectively accounting for 33.3%, 13.8% and 8.9% of the total number of corruption subjects. Corruption bodies exist in all 10 positions in the infrastructure department, involving from chief to section chief, and even section staff and engineers. The infrastructure department has become an intensive place for corruption in colleges and universities.

Behavior-Domain Distribution Characteristics in Corruption Cases in Universities

Bribe-taking is the most major corruption in universities, with a total of 395 person-times, which is consistent with another study on university corruption.[17] Moreover, bribery involves 10 fields, including financial management, procurement, personnel management and logistics management, almost covering the whole field where corruption occurs in universities. On average, there are 39.5 bribe-taking in each field. From the perspective of field dimension, bribery is particularly prominent in the field of infrastructure construction, which is closely related to the historical background of China's college enrollment expansion, campus expansion and increased investment in infrastructure construction.[18] Bribe-taking is also prominent in the fields of procurement, recruitment and personnel management. Corruption is the most common phenomenon in the use of scientific research funds, and it is also serious in the field of financial management directly related to fund management. In addition, the phenomenon of fraud in financial management, student employment, logistics management and industrial management is also a very alarming problem of corruption.

Analysis of the Social Network of College Corruption

By integrating all the case information in the judgment into the same network, the whole network can be obtained, which is actually an “ideal” university with all the corruption relations in 118 judgments. In an “ideal” university, 72 corruption subjects and 36 types of social roles form a network through the transfer of interests such as bribery and taking bribes, solicitation of bribes and bribery, etc. Thus the 72-by-36 job-social role matrix is formed, and the number in the matrix represents the number of corruption relations between corruption subjects and social roles. Centrality analysis, multidimensional scale analysis and faction analysis were conducted on the network with UCINET software to investigate the power size and distribution, actors' relationship and factions in the network of university corruption.

Centrality Analysis of Corruption Network Based on Position

Centrality analysis shows that seven positions, such as chief of infrastructure department, chief of logistics department, vice president, president, chief of finance department, secretary of the party committee and vice President, deputy director of logistics in the network have a high centrality degree, indicating that the staff in these positions have more relationships in the corruption network, which become the chain of profit transmission and transaction. Among them, chief of the logistics department, finance department, infrastructure department and the president have a higher betweenness centrality at the same time, in fact, these four positions of personnel in their respective departments or schools play the role of “leader”, control the core power of the department or school, have significant influence on internal and external activities of the department or school, and these people are either the direct subject of corruption or the indispensable “bridge” between the two sides.
of corruption in the network of corruption. According to the measurement of the degree of proximity to the center, the grassroots staff in the department, the group of teachers, as well as some supervisory positions (such as secretary of discipline inspection) and deputy positions of some individual departments (such as deputy director of the industrial management department, deputy secretary of the party committee of the university) are usually close to the center and far from the central position of the network.

**Multidimensional Scaling Analysis of Corruption Network Based on Social Role**

Multidimensional scaling analysis shows that construction and engineering companies have a close relationship with as many as 38 positions in universities. The network of construction and engineering companies in universities not only involves departments of infrastructure, logistics, etc., but also penetrates into many related departments such as university-level leadership, finance and auditing. The instrument equipment, building materials company have a close relationship with 22 positions in the university. In the theory of social network analysis, the word “relationship” is synonymous with “connection”, indicating the transfer of funds and power among actors. However, in the specific context of China, this kind of “relationship” is more profound. “Chinese interpersonal relationship is also an exchange behavior”\[^{19}\]. Moreover, the goal of such exchange of relationship is to maintain (or not maintain) the relationship, rather than to acquire one-time equivalent interests generated by self-interests as in the west. Therefore, in the network of corrupt relationships, there are not only contractual relationships in business between universities and various social roles, but also human relations in different levels of the Chinese context. The former follows the principle of equal exchange while the latter is based on the principle of “plan for return”. The conflict between the two determines that human relationship often overcomes, tramples and replaces contractual relationship, which becomes an important inducement factor for power corruption in the context of China. As mentioned above, bribery is the most important corruption in universities, and the occurrence of bribery must be based on a certain human relationship between two people. Social organizations or individuals such as construction, engineering companies, instruments and equipment companies and building materials companies “embed” themselves into the formal structure of universities through such human relations, which breeds soil for corruption. This proves that infrastructure construction and procurement are the main corruption fields in universities.

**Faction Analysis Based on Job Relation Network**

In the network of corruption, if there is factional phenomenon between the staff in different positions, it means that they have a relatively hidden and stable network relationship, which can easily evolve into the “collusion” relationship in the real life. The results of factional analysis showed that in addition to the head nurse of the affiliated hospital, the head of the teaching and research office, the scientific research secretary and academic affairs officer of the school, 69 other positions were combined to form 15 different factions. The number of factional members was as high as 37, while as low as 4, with an average of 11 members for each faction.

In theory, members of the same faction are prone to corruption as a result of collusion due to their close ties. Of particular note, chief of the finance department appeared in nine factions and emerged as the most active faction member. There are 5 factions of chief of Finance Department, party secretary and President of the university; chief of Finance Department and Logistics Department exist in four factions; chief of Finance Department, party secretary, President of the university and chief of Logistics Department exist in four factions. Collusion between these positions is more likely to result in corruption than in other positions.

**Conclusions and Discussions**

Based on the 118 judgments related to college corruption published by China Judicial Document Network, through reading and sorting out corruption cases, the two types of actors of power subject and social role are extracted. By building a network of relations, this paper attempts to analyze the
corruption phenomenon in Chinese colleges and universities through the method and perspective of social network analysis. Through the analysis of corruption subject characteristics and case characteristics, the high-risk departments, positions and fields are identified, and the risk map of corruption within universities is formed, which is also the key object of corruption governance. Using UCINET software, central analysis, multidimensional scale analysis and faction analysis were carried out on the network of university corruption; the power size and resource control ability of different positions in colleges and universities in the corruption network, the relationship between campus personnel and social roles, and the factions of different positions in universities were investigated; the significance of corruption governance is to provide technical support for identifying posts with complex power relations and resource control capability in the network, sorting out the network of social roles and on-campus posts, and predicting the possible complicity of the factions and their members. From the perspective of social network analysis method, the governance and research of university corruption should be paid attention in at least three aspects.

First, the “relationship” in corrupt networks has a dual nature. On the one hand, “relationship” is a kind of connection between the actors investigated in the study of social network analysis. On the other hand, in the context of Chinese history and culture, the “relationship” of corruption network also has deep implications of human relations, which are the “special cause” of Chinese corruption, rooted in all corners of Chinese society and breeding corruption. Therefore, in the network of college corruption relations in China, the dual interpretation of business relations and human relations is needed, and the interpretation of business relations is insufficient to explain the internal causes of college corruption. The interpretation of the network of university corruption in the dimension of human relationship is an important prerequisite for the governance of university power operation environment.

Secondly, the social role is more and more embedded in the organization of colleges and universities, which has become an important inducement factor of college corruption. Social service is one of the three functions of modern universities. It is inevitable for universities to step out of the ivory tower, embrace society and integrate into society. However, the multidimensional analysis of the corruption network shows that social organizations or individuals such as architecture, engineering companies, instruments and equipment companies and building materials companies “embed” into the formal structure of universities through human relations, creating conditions for the breeding of corruption, which goes against the original intention of universities to serve the society. Paying close attention to the information disclosure of colleges and universities and introducing independent auditing information from third parties are powerful means to prevent the improper social role from being embedded into the organization of colleges and universities and to induce corruption.

Thirdly, relationship governance should be one of the important contents of corruption governance in Chinese universities. Most of the existing researches on corruption governance in colleges and universities are guided by the methodology of power governance, which, of course, captures the fact that power is the basis for corruption, but the stubborn destructive power of relationships as a breeding ground for corruption has not been seen. The factional analysis of positions on campus and multidimensional analysis based on social roles in this study show that the relationship between the subjects on campus and between the subjects on campus and the social roles has an important impact on the corruption of colleges and universities. Power governance solves the problem of “what causes corruption”, while relationship governance answers the problem of “how to cause corruption” to a certain extent. In the context of China, relationship governance may be no less difficult than power governance. The objects of university relationship management are divided into internal relations and external relations. The former refers to the relations between the internal subjects of the university, while the latter refers to the relations between the internal departments or individuals of the university and external enterprises or institutions. It is an important way to improve the breeding soil of corruption to form a contractual relationship model through the governance of the relationship between the subjects inside and outside the university.
References