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Do Personal Crises Change Attitudes to Corruption?

ANGELIKA SCHÄFFER,
Head of Staff Support at the Vienna Provincial Police Directorate.

This study deals with the issue of whether there is a connection between attitudes to corruption and personal mental/physical stress. In order to answer this question, 52 students of the Faculty of Law of the University of Vienna were interviewed online using the standardised questionnaires HKS 38 A (Hanover Corruption Scale 38 – Austria Version) and BSI 53 (Brief Symptom Inventory 53). Sociodemographic data were also collected. The findings show that a total of 21 percent was identified as noticeably mentally stressed. The evaluation of the HKS 38 A showed that the HKS 38 A PR (percentile rank) total value is above 50 per cent and the population is therefore presumably more susceptible to corruption. The covariates for gender and age had no influence on attitudes to corruption. The hypothesis that greater physical and/or mental stress of the students results in increased susceptibility to corruption can be accepted, but the contribution of the individual predictors must be differentiated for each criterion and the overall effect of the predictors studied is generally rather weak. It should also be noted that the sample is relatively small and probably quite homogeneous. It is therefore advisable to study additional samples from different faculties and at different stages of study.

1. INTRODUCTION

Defining the term corruption more precisely is just as difficult as quantifying corruption offences. Due to the large number of unknown cases, objective data are not available and the annual Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) only determines general perceptions of corruption (TI 2020) and does not provide any absolute or objective figures. Austria is currently ranked 12th place, suggesting that corruption is perceived as rather seldom in our region and that corruption prevention is therefore not given particular priority.

Knowledge of potential corruption risks is necessary to prevent corruption in a targeted manner. Measurements of attitudes represent a suitable methodological approach to the unknown areas of corruption, as these attitudes can have an effect on behaviour (Maio/Haddock 2010) and can be recorded in the general population. Probability statements on corrupt behaviour can at least be made on the basis of the attitudes measured (Heber/Schäffer 2017b). Besides the personal factor of "attitudes to corruption", situational factors must also be taken into account if behaviour is to be predicted in certain social situations. The author's experience in corruption prevention and corruption research, as well as her experience as a psychologist in crisis intervention, showed that personal crises or critical life events can play a significant

role in addition to the situational factors usually discussed, such as lack of supervision, lack of controls, etc. Personal priorities and values often change when people are in a crisis. This, in turn, can lead to a change in attitude and, consequently, in behaviour – including corrupt behaviour. These experiences were then used as the basis for this study. The fields of corruption research and crisis intervention should be combined for the first time and it should be empirically tested whether or not there is a correlation between personal crises and attitudes to corruption among students.

2. PERSONAL AND SITUATIONAL FACTORS

In general, a person's motivation to strive for a certain goal is shaped by personal and situational influences (Heckhausen/Heckhausen 2018). Studies conducted by the Hanover/Münster/Vienna corruption research group show that personal and situational factors also influence the perception of corruption (Heber 2014; Linssen et al. 2017; Litzcke et al. 2012; Schön 2016). This perception of corruption in turn influences behaviour, namely the willingness to report observed corruption (Heber/Schäffer 2017b). But it is not only motivational psychology that can make a contribution to research into the personal factors involved in corrupt behaviour. Differential psychology, for example, deals with the explanation of the differences between people and can thus explain why some people are more likely to display corrupt behaviour than others (Litzcke et al. 2012). In personality psychology, models attempt to clarify why a particular person exhibits corrupt behaviour (ibid.). This is only a short, illustrative excerpt of the various special fields of psychology that provide explanatory approaches and models for corruption research. Extensive intersituational consistency is described as a prominent feature of personal factors (Schön 2016). Rabl mentions personal factors that influence corruption and its perception, such as personality, attitudes, values and motives (Rabl 2008).

However, since the constructs behind the personal factors are often very complex, their operationalisation is not feasible in a single research study (consider, for example, the criteria of reasonableness for the test subjects). Thus, the personal factors studied are chosen according to the focus of the study. The findings of the Hanover/Münster/Vienna corruption research group show that personal factors seem to have a stronger impact than situational factors. However, it must be noted that the studies did not directly examine corrupt behaviour, only the assessment of corruption (Heber/Schäffer 2017a).

Predicting behaviour in social situations requires situational factors to be taken into account in addition to the personal factors that have just been described. The so-called expectation-times-value models offer a systematic integration of personal and situational factors in models which can be used to make behavioural predictions (Heckhausen/Heckhausen 2018). Consequently, the action that is most likely to lead to achievement of the goal (expectation of goal achievement) and that leads to a goal of high value (Litzcke et al. 2014) is chosen. Even in the case of corrupt behaviour, action is determined by subjectively perceived and shaped cost-benefit considerations. On the one hand, perpetrators must have certain powers in a company and, on the other hand, the companies must have the necessary structural conditions, whereby the likelihood of detection should be relatively low for the perpetrators (Neubauer 2018). Similar to the personal factors, only a selection of situational factors can be considered for each study due to their diversity. In the overview by

Litzcke et al. (Litzcke et al. 2014), a total of seven studies are presented that analysed the following situational factors: duration of the corruption relationship, amount of benefit, recipient of benefit, likelihood of detection, personal distress and situational uncertainty. As already reported, the situational factors examined here consistently proved to be of little or no relevance. In addition to these situational factors mentioned in Litzcke et al. (ibid.) – and the factors frequently mentioned in the literature, such as lack of official and specialist supervision and lack of controls (Mischkowitz et al. 2000) – critical life events or personal crises can also play a significant role. Economic offences, which are broader in scope than corruption, may be caused for example by failed investments or divorce involving substantial maintenance claims. Heißner (Heißner 2014) mentions personal distress as one of the numerous motives for white-collar crime. Heber (Heber 2014) used case vignettes to examine the effects of personal and situational factors on the assessment of corruption. Personal distress was one of the situational factors. The findings showed that the test subjects are more likely to accept a corrupt offer when there is personal distress than when there is no personal distress. In their empirical study, Weisburd and Waring (Weisburd/Waring 2001, 59) defined the type of "crisis responder". The delinquency in this case can be explained as a response to an existing crisis.

3. PSYCHOSOCIAL CRISES

Crises are part of every individual's life; every person can be affected at any age or phase of life (Stein 2015). Based on the considerations of Caplan (Caplan 1964) and Cullberg (Cullberg 1978), Sonneck defines psychosocial crises, for example, as "the loss of mental balance that a person experiences when confronted with events and life circumstances that they cannot currently cope with because they overwhelm the abilities and proven resources they have acquired through previous experience to achieve important goals in life or to cope with their life situation" (Sonneck et al. 2016, 32). Events, such as deaths or separation, can also become reasons for crises, as well as new life circumstances, such as leaving home or moving from school to work. There are multiple factors that determine whether or not a crisis develops in the end. Thus, it is not only the subjective assessment of the triggering situation, its nature and severity that is important, but also the reactions of the environment, personal resources and the personality of the person affected. Furthermore, these factors often interact in complex ways (Stein 2015). However, in contrast to other mental disorders, the triggering situation can be identified (Dross 2001). In the following, developmental crises and, according to the model of Sonneck et al., (Sonneck et al. 2016), traumatic crises and life-changing crises are briefly outlined.

3.1 Development crises

To this day, a model that can be traced back to Erikson's (Erikson 1998) concept of development as the successful or unsuccessful management of specific stages of development crises (Dross 2001) is used for understanding crises. Erikson describes the basic phase-specific conflict that needs to be resolved, using two poles, such as intimacy versus isolation during early adulthood. Successfully coping with these challenges will eventually enable a new stage of identity development to be reached (Stein 2015). The typical developmental tasks of young adulthood include the final separation from the parental home, starting work or studies and choosing a partner (Dross 2001). Moving away from home

now requires an independent organisation of everyday life, the range of services and the contact structure (ibid.).

3.2 Life-changing crises

Life-changing crises are caused by situations that are part of life in general and that are evaluated quite differently from person to person, and also at different stages of life (Stein 2015). These include, for example, marriage, pregnancy, moving house, leaving home and so on. These life changes represent something positive for many people (Sonneck et al. 2016), but fundamentally positive life changes can become a sudden threat or trigger a crisis for specific reasons. Life-changing crises often arise during transitions from one phase of life to the next, when habitual processes change, making new adjustments necessary, and when development tasks need to be solved (Stein 2015). This makes it clear that it is not always possible to distinguish clearly between developmental and life-changing crises. It is characteristic of life-changing crises that the critical state is only reached after a longer phase (Berger/Riecher-Rössler 2004).

3.3 Traumatic crises

Cullberg defines the traumatic crisis as "a situation of a generally painful nature suddenly emerging as a result of a crisis of subjective value that suddenly threatens the psychological existence, social identity and security and/or the fundamental possibilities of satisfaction" (Cullberg 1978, 27). The causes of crises are usually unforeseen tragedies, such as illness, sudden disability, experiences of loss, such as death, separation, dismissal, but also sexual violence and abuse (D'Amelio et al. 2006).

3.4 Crises and stress during studies

During the period of their studies, young adults have to cope with a number of specific developmental tasks and expectations. As described previously in more detail, the transition from school to university or the separation from the parental home and the resulting need to organise the daily routine independently represent a difficult and, at times, a critical period for many young adults. The stressors and mental/physical stress must be accurately identified so that appropriate prevention or counselling and support can be offered. In Austria, the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (formerly: Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economics) conducts a student social survey at regular intervals, which includes health aspects such as stress factors and mental/physical impairments. The results of the current project report on the Student Social Survey 2015, which are essential for this study, are briefly outlined below; a detailed presentation can be found in Zaussinger et al. (Zaussinger et al. 2016). Currently, 54 percent of the students (excluding doctoral and incoming exchange students) at Austrian higher education institutions are women and 46 percent are men. Stress factors (difficulties in the self-organisation of studies, work and concentration difficulties, stress-related health problems, lack of motivation to study) cause a total of 49 percent of students difficulties in their studies. In addition, 42 percent state that they suffer from mental complaints that make it difficult for them to study (lack of self-esteem, depressive moods, contact difficulties/social isolation, existential fears, fear of failure/exams). Almost 12 percent of all students report one or more health problems that make it difficult for them to study. According to a detailed breakdown of the types of impairment, one in three students with study-related impairments suffers from a mental illness, such as addiction or eating disorders (34 per-

cent) and one in four has a chronic somatic illness, such as diabetes or chronic pain (27 percent). 30 percent state that their impairment only occurred after they started their studies.

If these figures are now compared with other studies and surveys in the German-speaking countries, the percentage of students with mental stress fluctuates depending on the sample, survey modality and formulation of the questions (Hofman et al. 2017). However different the percentage of students under stress may be, appropriate counselling and support services specifically adjusted to the needs and problems of students are needed.

4. THE RESEARCH

This study deals with the question of whether and to what extent physical and/or mental stress among students influences attitudes to corruption. Since it can be assumed that physical and mental stress or the existence of personal crises tend to shift attitudes to corruption, increasing susceptibility to corruption (Heißner 2014; Heber 2014; Mischkowitz et al. 2000; Weisburd/Waring 2001, 59), the alternative hypothesis was formulated in a focused manner. The findings should contribute to the development of customised anti-corruption concepts which will ultimately result in a positive change in individual attitude components. In addition, it could prove useful to provide specific assistance to individuals during and after periods of particular personal stress – including for reasons of corruption prevention.

4.1 Conduct of research

The online data collection was carried out among students of the Vienna Faculty of Law during the 2018/2019 winter semester in the context of a criminology lecture; participation was voluntary for the students. The participants had approximately 45 minutes to complete the questionnaire via a link or QR code (using tablet, laptop or mobile phone) and for subsequent inputs on the topics of corruption and student stress. The students were also able to ask questions about the study and the content presented. The student mental counselling service in Vienna did not collect any data on site in order to preserve the anonymity of those seeking advice and not to disrupt the therapeutic setting. The link was therefore accessible online for three months on the homepage of the student mental counselling service in Vienna. Unfortunately, it is not known whether the staff of the student counselling service informed those seeking advice that they could take part in this survey. The total time required for completion was estimated to be approximately 15 minutes. The median time actually required for completion was 13:10 minutes. All full responses were stored anonymously and analysed using IBM SPSS®20.

4.2 Survey instruments

The HKS 38 A (Hanover Corruption Scale – Austrian Version) (Heber et al. 2018), which was conceived in 2017 as a measuring instrument and represents a further development of the HKS 38 (Hanover Corruption Scale), was used to operationalise attitudes to corruption. The HKS 38 A, which reliably records differences in attitudes to corruption at group level, takes into account the linguistic characteristics of the cultural area. Moreover, Austrian standard values are now also available (Heber et al. 2018). The HKS 38 A records explicit attitudes to corruption in self-evaluation, whereby the 38 items are theoretically based on the attitude model of Eagly and Chaiken (Eagly/Chaiken 1993) and can be divided into the three areas of cognitive, affective and conative. The cognitive attitude component includes beliefs, thoughts and

characteristics associated with a particular object. Affective attitude components are feelings and emotions associated with the object of attitude. The conative attitude component includes behaviour towards an object or attitude that a person has performed or could perform in the future (Haddock/Maio 2014). The 38 items can be answered using a five-level Likert scale from (1) "I strongly disagree" to (5) "I strongly agree". The nine subscales and the three global indices of BSI 53 (Brief Symptom Inventory 53) (Franke 2000) were used to record the current mental and/or physical stress (specifically, the symptoms of the last seven days). The BSI is a self-report inventory and comprises 53 items, also with a five-level Likert-scaled answer format from (0) "not at all" to (4) "very strongly". For the nine subscales, there are separate standard tables for students (ibid.). In addition to the nine scales (somatisation, obsessive-compulsion, social insecurity, depression, anxiety, aggressiveness/hostility, phobic fear, paranoid ideation, psychoticism), there are three "global indices" which are evaluated: GSI (measures the intensity of the perceived psychological stress), PSDI (measures the intensity of the responses) and PST (provides information on the number of items for which stress is present). The two questionnaires were programmed online using the LimeSurvey of the Carinthian University of Applied Sciences and supplemented by a query on sociodemographic characteristics.

4.3 The sample

Eventually, 52 participants from the Faculty of Law took part in the study. During the online data collection via the homepage of the student mental counselling service in Vienna only two complete data sets could be saved, which, however, were not used for further calculations as this would have led to interpretation problems. Of the 52 participants, 39 (75 percent) were female and 13 (25 percent) male. The median age at the time of the survey was 21 years, and the male subjects were older. Table 1 shows the age distribution of the test subjects.

The median duration of studies for both genders was five semesters.

5. THE MOST IMPORTANT FINDINGS

5.1 BSI

First of all, the raw values were converted into corresponding T-norms based on the nine subscales, taking gender into account (Franke 2000). According to the manual, a test subject is considered to be noticeably mentally stressed if either the GSI T-value is ≥ 63 or if the T-values are ≥ 63 in at least two subscales. Taking into account the global GSI value and the corresponding T-norms for students, separated according to gender, nine (17 percent) test subjects were exposed to noticeable mental stress. A further two test subjects met the criterion of having reached or exceeded the tolerance value in at least two subscales, so that a total of eleven participants (21 percent) were classified as noticeably mentally stressed.

These values are consistent with the findings of Bailer et al. (Bailer et al. 2008), Heilmann et al. (Heilmann et al. 2015) and

Source: Schäffer

Gender	n	M	SD	min	max	Mdn	middle ranking
female	39	22.7	5.4	18	44	21.0	23.55
male	13	26.9	8.3	19	51	26.0	35.35
Total	52	23.8	6.4	18	51	21.0	

Table 1: Age indices taking into account the participants' gender

Holm-Hadulla et al. (Holm-Hadulla et al. 2009), who reported a percentage of mentally stressed students of approximately 20 to 25 percent. In contrast, Zaussinger et al. (Zaussinger et al. 2016) in the project report on the Student Social Survey 2015 stated that 42 percent of students report mental health problems that make it difficult for them to study and almost twelve percent of all students report one or more health problems that may affect their studies. However, it should be noted that the parameters used for the Student Social Survey do not correspond to the BSI scales and therefore the results cannot be compared on the same basis. Furthermore, no ICD (International Classification of Disease) -10 diagnoses can be made with the BSI (Franke 2000).

5.2 HKS 38 A

The attitudes to corruption were calculated according to the manual (Heber et al. 2018) as raw values for the three subscales (cognitive, affective and conative) and also for the total value. In addition, these raw values were converted into percentile rankings (see Table 2). Stronger agreement with the items corresponds to higher percentile rankings, which in turn means a more positive attitude to corruption.

Taking into account the 95 percent confidence intervals, it could be shown that the total HKS 38 A PR value and the PR value for the conative subscale are above 50 percent and thus there is a tendency towards susceptibility to corruption.

These results can only be currently compared with a study on the use of the HKS 38 in Austria, as no published data is yet available on the first study with the HKS 38 A. In Linssen et al. (Linssen et al. 2017), whose data was collected from police students, law students and psychology students, the total PR value and the total PR value of law students were 63 and 71, respectively. The conative subscale is also the subscale with the highest PR value of 89 among the group of law students. One possible interpretation of the results of the present study is that at the cognitive and affective level corruption is rejected, but at the behavioural level there is a willingness to act in a corrupt manner contrary to these thoughts and feelings.

5.3 Sociodemographic characteristics

In the following, the most important findings regarding the correlation and differences in mental stress as well as attitudes to corruption are presented with sociodemographic characteristics, such as age, gender, duration of studies and occupation.

Using product-moment correlation, the extent of mental stress (GSI) was correlated with the age of the test subjects. Overall, the coefficient r (52) = -.35 (p = .010, two-sided) indicates a moderately high and significantly negative correlation. It can be assumed that stress decreases in proportion to age. In the calculations of whether women and men differ on the three global scales of BSI 53 in terms of the extent or intensity of stress, the PST (number of items

Source: Schäffer

	Total raw value of HKS 38	HKS 38 PR	cognitive raw value	cognitive PR	affective raw value	affective PR	conative raw value	conative PR
M	88.81	58.4	31.52	49.0	29.75	51.7	27.54	70.8
SD	18.08	24.2	7.77	23.5	8.74	28.0	6.76	23.5
Mdn	88.0	61.5	31.0	47.0	29.0	54.0	27.0	75.0
95% KI	[51.7; 65.1]		[42.5; 55.6]		[43.9; 59.5]		[64.3; 77,4]	
min	44	3	15	3	14	5	10	2
max	145	99	55	97	57	99	42	99

Table 2: Indices of the HKS 38 A total scale and subscales for raw values and corresponding PR (n=52)

for which stress was reported) with r = .26 was found to be the scale that shows the comparatively greatest difference between genders when the effect sizes r determined were compared. The connection between the duration of studies in semesters and the intensity of the perceived stress (GSI T-value) was calculated using the coefficient of the product-moment correlation. r (52) = -.41 (p = .003, two-sided), 95 percent CI [-.60; -.18] and showed a medium-high negative, significant correlation. The intensity of stress was estimated to be lower as the duration of study increased. There is no coincidence regarding the stress reported for the duration of employment. The correlation between age and attitudes to corruption was calculated using the coefficient of the product-moment correlation. r (52) = -.23 (p = .106, two-sided) and showed a slightly negative, non-significant correlation. With regard to the age of the participants, a decreasing trend in susceptibility to corruption in older age can thus be assumed on the basis of the sample. Comparable results can be found in Heber et al. (Heber et al. 2018). However, it should be noted that the present sample, representing a median age of 21 years, is very young overall and the trend is therefore difficult to interpret. It is conceivable, however, that knowledge about corruption gained during everyday life, studies or professional activity leads to increased rejection with age.

An examination of the differences between the genders with regard to attitudes to corruption was carried out using Welch tests based on the percentile rankings, which were converted from the raw values according to the manual (ibid.). The findings showed that in all three subscales (see Figure 1), as well as in the overall scale of HKS 38 A, there were no significant differences between female and male subjects. Thus, there is no correlation between gender and attitudes to corruption.

Source: Schäffer

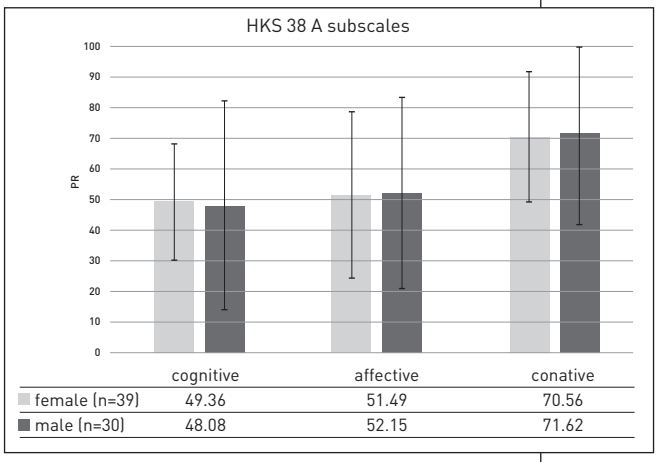

Figure 1: Indices [M ± 1 SD) of the HKS 38 A subscales relating to the gender of the test subjects

These results are consistent with those of Heber et al (ibid.), Litzcke et al. (Litzcke et al. 2012) and Rabl (Rabl 2008). Other authors (Linssen et al. 2017; Schön 2016) make references in turn to gender differences and the limited amount of data from reported cases suggests that the majority of perpetrators are male (Bannenberg 2002; Cleff et al. 2008). The findings on gender differences in corruption offences can therefore still be described as diffuse and conclusions therefore seem somewhat premature.

The correlation between the duration of studies in semesters and attitudes to corruption was found to be as insignificant as the correlation between employment (full-time/part-time versus no employment; duration in months) and attitudes to corruption. In their attitude to corruption, those in employment show comparable characteristics to students who are not in employment.

5.4 Hypothesis testing

It was assumed as a hypothesis to be tested that greater physical and/or mental stress of students leads to increased susceptibility to corruption. It was examined whether and to what extent the manifestations in the three attitude components can be predicted

by sociodemographic variables (gender and age) and, on the other hand, by the self-reported stress assessments. The study duration and employment variables were excluded from the model test, as they have already been shown not to be related to the criteria for attitudes to corruption. The predictors were subjected to the stepwise backward method of exploratory model testing. The course of the model steps was terminated as soon as no further indicators meeting the exclusion criteria were available (Bühl 2012). It should be noted that ≤.10 is used as the significance range for the assessment of a predictor for multiple regressions with explanatory value (ibid.). Table 3 shows the standardised regression coefficients ß, which represent the weight of the predictors in relation to the three sub-criteria and the total value of HKS 38 A with the corresponding assessment of significance. A small effect is interpreted for ß-values ≥.10, a medium effect for ß-values ≥.30 and a large effect for ß-values ≥.50.

For the cognitive attitude component, obsession-compulsion was identified as the sole predictor variable with a positive, tendentious explanatory value (ß = .26), whereby the explanatory value for this model was 6.8 percent. In contrast, no predictors for predicting the affective attitude component could be found, so this model must be rejected. Social insecurity could be determined as a clear, significant predictor (ß = .65) for predicting the conative attitude component. The more socially insecure an individual is, the stronger their susceptibility is to corruption. Psychoticism was also found to have a further, albeit negative, weighting (ß = -.39). Accordingly, susceptibility to corruption decreases in the conative attitude component as psychoticism increases. The model adjustment reached 17.1 percent. A significant predictor with a moderate weight (ß = .30) could be identified for the overall model of the HKS 38 A with obsession-compulsion, whereby the model adjustment reached

Source: Schäffer

Criterion of attitude to corruption (HKS 38 A)				
Predictor	cognitive	affective	conative	Total
Gender	.06 (.645)	.12 (.379)	.12 (.365)	.15 (.266)
Age	-.09 (.549)	-.18 (.216)	-.07 (.596)	-.13 (.370)
BSI 53				
1 Somatisation	.01 (.946)	-.01 (.925)	-.20 (.234)	-.03 (.837)
2 Obsession-compulsion	.26 (.062°)	.15 (.290)	.30 (.128)	.30 (.030*)
3 Social insecurity	-.06 (.744)	.11 (.446)	.65 (.004**)	.07 (.717)
4 Depression	-.06 (.776)	.10 (.482)	.47 (.153)	.03 (.883)
5 Anxiety	-.10 (.554)	.04 (.767)	-.10 (636)	-.07 (.682)
6 Aggressiveness/hostility	.01 (.949)	.13 (.375)	.18 (.400)	.09 (.611)
7 Phobic anxiety	.09 (.553)	.07 (.849)	.09 (.588)	.05 (.732)
8 Paranoid ideation	-.04 (.802)	-.04 (.791)	-.11 (.559)	-.11 (.513)
9 Psychoticism	-.26 (.187)	.08 (.573)	-.39 (.082°)	-.20 (.299)
Constant B (p)	29.15 (< 001)	29.75 (< 001)	25.17 (< 001)	82.47 (< 001)
R^2 explained proportion of variance (R^2corr)	6,8% (4.9%)	-	17.1% (13.7%)	9.0% (7.2%)
F (df1, df2)	3.645 (1.50)	-	5.049 (2.49)	4.961 (1.50)
p	.062°		.010**	.030*
Durbin-Watson coefficient	2.39	-	2.06	2.34
**p ≤.01, *p ≤.05, °p ≤.10 (trend)				

Table 3: ß-weights (with significance rating) of predictors and covariates in the model for predicting criteria for attitudes to corruption (n=52)

nine percent. The covariates for gender and age had no influence on attitudes to corruption. The hypothesis that greater physical and/or mental stress of the students results in increased susceptibility to corruption can be accepted, but the contribution of the individual predictors must be differentiated for each criterion and the overall effect of the predictors studied is generally rather weak.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study show that a total of 21 percent of the participants could be identified as noticeably mentally stressed. Although no ICD-10 diagnoses can be made using the BSI 53 (Franke 2000), the results with regard to stressed students suggest that the existence and development of counselling centres in the university context appears to make sense in any case. Particularly at the beginning of studies, or at a younger age, there seems to be more stress in terms of a developmental or life-changing crisis, which should be taken into account when offering counselling.

The HKS 38 A analyses have shown that the total PR value and the PR value for the conative subscale are above 50 percent, suggesting that it is highly probable that more than half of the population is susceptible to corruption. However, since the present sample size is comparatively small and was only surveyed in a single course at the Faculty of Law, the results can only be assessed as significant for possible corruption prevention programmes after further research and confirmation of the findings. The same applies to the findings on gender differences. The findings of the three subscales of HKS 38 A did not show any significant differences between female and male subjects, which means that conclusions regarding gender-specific differences, which ultimately also have relevance for prevention measures, still seem somewhat premature.

For the overall model of the HKS 38 A, a relevant predictor with a moderate weight could be identified with the subscale of obsession-compulsion: The more compulsive someone is, the more susceptible they are to corruption. Even though the hypothesis to be tested – that greater physical and/or mental stress of the students leads to increased susceptibility to corruption – can thus be assumed, the effect can be characterised as rather weak. In order to be able to make more far-reaching statements regarding students, it is advisable to examine additional samples from different faculties and at different stages of study – especially with a higher percentage of persons under stress. A differentiated consideration of students at the beginning, compared to students towards the end of their studies, could clarify the results with regard to personally reported stress and make a valuable contribution to the implementation of specific counselling services at universities and the design of corruption prevention measures in the university context.

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