

Corruption in the Durkheimian perspective: a case study of the Operation Car Wash

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In Brazil, Operation Car Wash has been occupying the main news pages as the largest anti-corruption operation ever carried out in the country. The importance of the study lies in the possibility of interpreting and understanding the investigations of the operation, using Durkheimian concepts and reasoning, to analyze the phenomenon focusing not only the concrete case but also looking at the whole public administration. The corruption discovered by Operation Car Wash is a pathological social fact present in the structure of different agencies and institutions. It affects the social order and is fruit of a state of anomie, in which individuals do not adhere to social norms and moral values.

Keywords: corruption; social fact; Operation Car Wash.

A corrupção na perspectiva durkheimiana: um estudo de caso da Operação Lava Jato

A Operação Lava Jato vem ocupando as principais páginas de notícias como a maior operação de combate à corrupção já realizada no Brasil. A importância deste estudo reside na possibilidade de interpretar e compreender a maior investigação de crimes de corrupção no país utilizando conceitos e raciocínios durkheimianos, com vistas a contribuir para a análise do fenômeno no caso concreto e na administração pública como um todo. Verificou-se que a corrupção descoberta pela Operação Lava Jato é um fato social patológico presente na estrutura de diferentes órgãos e instituições que afeta a ordem social, decorrente de um estado de anomia no qual os indivíduos não aderem às normas sociais e morais vigentes.

Palavras-chave: corrupção; fato social; Operação Lava Jato.

La corrupción en la perspectiva Durkheimiana: un estudio de caso de la Operación “Lava Jato”


En Brasil, la Operación “Lava Jato” viene ocupando las principales páginas de noticias como la mayor operación de combate a la corrupción ya realizada en el país. La importancia del estudio reside en la posibilidad de interpretar y comprender la mayor investigación de crímenes de corrupción ya realizada en Brasil, utilizando conceptos y razonamientos Durkheimianos, en la perspectiva de contribuir a la comprensión del fenómeno en el caso concreto y en toda la administración pública. Se verificó que la corrupción descubierta por la Operación “Lava Jato” es un hecho social patológico presente en la estructura de diferentes órganos e instituciones y que afecta el orden social, proveniente de un estado de anomia, en el cual los individuos no se adhieren a las normas sociales y morales vigentes.

Palabras clave: corrupción; hecho social; Operación “Lava Jato”.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Because corruption is a phenomenon that occurs throughout the world (Ioris, 2016; Tuyen, Huong, Tinh, & Hiep, 2016), it has attracted the attention of researchers and political agents in various countries (Dreher, Kotsogiannis & McCorrison, 2007). Corruption is a nonpublic phenomenon, in that it occurs in a hidden and disguised fashion, making it impossible to exactly measure its scope (Bland, 2014; Boylan & Long, 2003; Chabova, 2016; Dreher et al., 2007; Mondo, 2016; Shan, Chan, Le, Xia, & Hu, 2015).

Despite the difficulty of defining the term (Chabova, 2016; Li, 2016; Rodriguez, 2016), corruption has been defined by international organizations as the misuse of public power for private benefit (Organização das Nações Unidas [ONU], 2003; World Bank, 2000). In the same sense, Filgueiras (2006) mentions that corruption means putting private interests ahead of the public interest, representing the antithesis of good government.

Corruption affects contemporary societies, especially those with marked social inequality, interfering with the provision of essential public services to citizens, influencing international business and creating obstacles to investors due to distortions in societies' rules (Lambsdorff, 2006). However, countries with an underdeveloped or developing economy have the highest rates of perceived corruption (Transparency International, 2017).

In Brazil, corruption has been noted since the country's founding, stretching from colonial times through the imperial phase and surviving to modern times in the republic (Habib, 1994). This corruption can be observed with Operation Car Wash, which began in 2014 (Polícia Federal [PF], 2017) and constitutes the farthest reaching investigation of corruption in the country's history (Ministério Público Federal [MPF], 2017).

In this context, this article aims to apply a theoretical model for the study of corruption as a social, coercive, external and widespread fact to analyze and understand the case of Operation Car Wash through a Durkheimian concept of the social sciences. Specifically, it aims to describe Operation Car Wash and apply the theoretical model to the case of Operation Car Wash, conducting a dialogue between the phenomenon of corruption described in this case and Durkheimian theory.

The results of the theoretical interpretation applied to the specific case through Durkheimian theory will provide support for studies about the largest corruption investigation in Brazil's history, helping to understand and combat this phenomenon, which can cause irreparable harm to society, whether through the embezzlement of funds intended for public health, education and social infrastructure, or through the accentuation of social inequality through the illicit enrichment of those who engage in it.

2. DURKHEIMIAN THEORY OF THE SOCIAL FACT

Emile Durkheim was a functional sociologist responsible for raising sociology to the status of a science through the use of rigid methodological criteria for research, seeking an objective analysis of the facts (Bialakowsky, Molina & Vedia, 2016; Cabral, 2004; De Vares, 2013; Durkheim, 2000; Fernandes, 1996; Giddens, 2001; Lester, 2001). According to the sociologist, there are phenomena that occur in society and are not studied by other sciences, and these phenomena are called social facts. According to Durkheim (2007, p. 13):

A social fact is any way of acting, whether fixed or not, capable of exerting over the individual an external constraint; or which is general over the whole of a given society whilst having an existence of its own, independent of its individual manifestations.

Social facts are surrounded by generality, as they consist of the beliefs and practices of a particular group or society. This feature defines these facts as being those that occur in a widespread manner, ruling out events that do not reach a certain level of social commonality and mere coincidences or phenomena that have nothing to do with sociology's field of study (Durkheim, 2007). Exteriority is a feature of a social fact meaning a manifestation that transcends the scope of the individual. Collective consciousness acts on the individual's consciousness, shaping his way of acting. The social fact antecedes the individual, meaning it is not created by him (Mousse, 2011). The imperative force of the social fact represents its feature of coercion. Coercion may occur externally through the direct reaction of society, making it easier to perceive, or indirectly through the imposition of certain behaviors as a requirement for achieving a desired outcome (Mousse, 2011).

According to his theory, Durkheim (2007) classified social facts as normal or pathological. Normal social facts are those that serve a social purpose, contribute to the regular development of society and help social beings adapt to changes as primitive societies evolve into modern ones. The division of labor (cause) gives rise to social solidarity (effect), which serves the purpose of maintaining a cohesive society and contributes to the maintenance of the division of labor.

Pathological social facts are those related to the destabilization of the social order. Crime, which may appear pathological, is in fact a normal social fact, as it is impossible to find a society without crime. Crime is necessary and useful, as it is inherent in the conditions of social life and leads to the evolution of moral consciousness and society's rights. However, when crime reaches levels capable of destabilizing the social order, it becomes pathological (Durkheim, 2007). Under normal circumstances in a healthy social organism, the division of labor can give rise to organic solidarity. However, in exceptional situations, the division of labor may lead to social disintegration, when it is not able to establish contact and appropriate relations among individuals, causing anomia in the society (Durkheim, 2010).

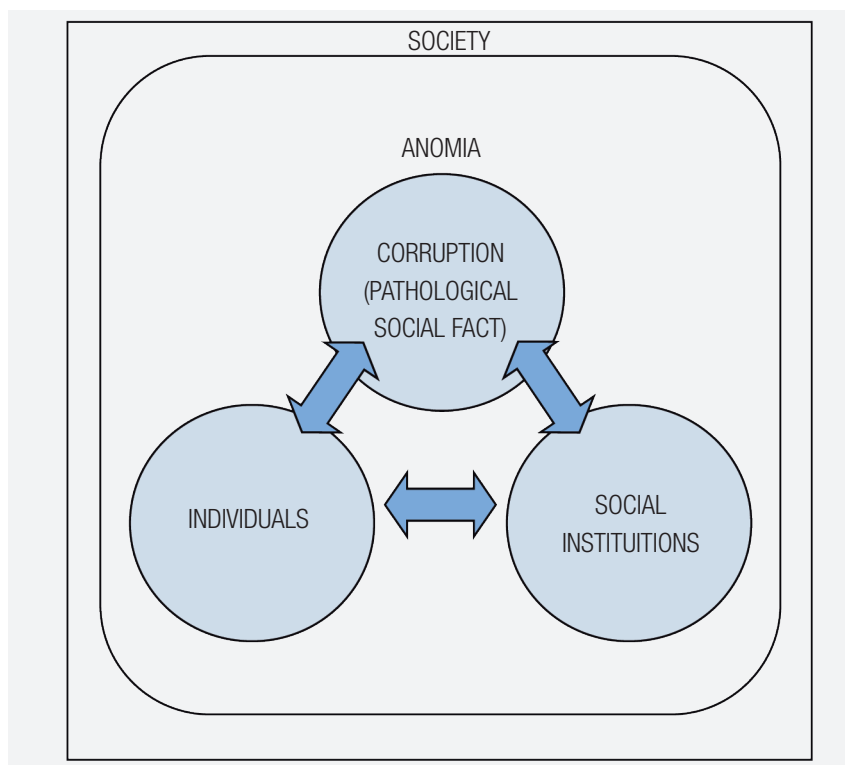
Anomia is a condition of modern society caused by economic development in which values and morality are shaped by capital and social solidarity is shaken by the prevalence of individual passions over the collective good; in other words, people live without adhering to or obeying social rules (Agnew, 1997; McClosky, 1976). According to Durkheim (2000, p. 322), "the state of lawlessness or anomia is therefore further reinforced by the fact that passions are less disciplined at the very moment when more vigorous discipline is needed". When industrialization occurs suddenly, economic and moral regulations cannot adapt at the same speed as changes in social behaviors, leaving society destabilized (Durkheim, 2000, 2007).

Anomia is therefore a condition characterized by the absence of social norms capable of regulating interpersonal relations among individuals in a particular society, rendering control by institutions impossible. It is the result of industrial and commercial crises during the process of transition from

traditional to modern societies. When industrialization occurs suddenly, economic and moral regulations cannot adapt at the same speed as changes in social behaviors, leaving society destabilized (Durkheim, 2000, 2007).

Based on this discussion and considering the Durkheimian theoretical basis presented regarding social facts, a model is presented to analyze corruption (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1 ANALYTICAL THEORETICAL MODEL OF CORRUPTION AS A DURKHEIMIAN PATHOLOGICAL SOCIAL FACT



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

According to Figure 1, an increase in material and moral density, that is, the development of society, may lead to a state of anomia, in which social and moral rules are confused or absent and individual passions prevail. In this scenario, corruption develops as a pathological social fact, in that it destabilizes the social order (Durkheim, 2000, 2007), affecting institutions, groups and individuals and shaping behaviors that benefit private interests to the detriment of the public interest (Huntington, 1975).

Having established this study's theoretical parameters, it is necessary to stipulate the methodological path that will underlie the proposed study.

3. METHODOLOGY

An explanatory study was conducted with a qualitative approach. This study fits the case study method. The object of this study is Operation Car Wash, which consists of a set of investigations conducted by the Federal Police (PF), who discovered corruption crimes involving political agents, civil servants, contractors, financial operators and others responsible for embezzling billions of Brazilian reais from the public coffers (MPF, 2017).

The study was conducted using secondary sources from official agencies responsible for conducting Operation Car Wash, obtained from the operation's webpage located on the website of the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office (MPF, 2017), as well as on the webpage set up by the Federal Police (2017), both containing data produced from the start of the operation in March 2014 to December 2017. The data were verified through the use of content analysis, in which the researcher interprets and explains the results using relevant theories (Weber, 1990).

Considering the complexity of the operation and the general nature of the information obtained through the official agencies mentioned, data were also drawn in a supplemental and secondary way from digital media, specifically from the websites of *Folha de São Paulo* (n.d.), *O Globo* (n.d.), and *O Estado de São Paulo* (n.d.), due to these media organizations' extensive coverage and well-organized data on the case, as well as the notoriety of the media. It should be emphasized that only information based on the investigations and judicial proceedings from March 2014 to December 2017 were considered, with any editorial opinions disregarded.

The criteria used for data collection were the assumptions inherent in each of the categories of the analytical model of corruption. The category *anomia* lists the crimes committed and the procedures undertaken by the investigators to verify the delinquent agents' failure to comply with social norms, and the number of individuals who were accused by the judiciary but not convicted, insofar as impunity represents the failure of the State's own judicial institutions to comply with social and moral norms. In the category of *pathological social fact*, information was sought about the extent to which the corruption preceded the individuals involved to determine its externality, as well as data about the illicit enrichment of the agents to verify the coercive power of the social fact, in view of behavior engaged in for the purpose of attaining social success; furthermore, the economic and political impacts capable of affecting the social order were identified. In the category of *institutions*, a survey was conducted of the institutions (companies, political parties and public agencies) involved in the case and how corruption influenced the way they were organized to commit crimes. To verify the category of individuals, data were used regarding the location of the agents involved, as well as where on the political spectrum they fall in the case of politicians.

4. RESULTS

4.1 The case of Operation Car Wash

Operation Car Wash, covered by the media on a daily basis, constitutes the farthest-reaching investigation of corruption ever undertaken in Brazil (MPF, 2017). It began on March 17, 2014, when the Federal Police consolidated investigations into financial crimes involving the embezzlement of public funds (PF, 2017).

The investigation initially identified the activity of prominent individuals involved in the clandestine currency exchange market in Brazil. These individuals, also known as “doleiros” (currency exchange operators), were responsible for financial transactions of firms and people related to the practice of various crimes such as international drug trafficking, corruption of public agents, fraud in the public bidding process, tax evasion and misappropriation of public funds (PF, 2017).

The progress of the investigation by the Federal Police, as well as their search and seizure procedures, led to the discovery that politicians and other public agents were involved in criminal practices (PF, 2017). Petrobrás, the country’s largest state-run company, became the focus of investigations into organized bid-rigging and fraud in the process of awarding public contracts to contractors. It is estimated that the amount embezzled from the public company runs into the billions (MPF, 2017).

The following subpoints of this article will apply the theoretical model for the analysis of corruption as a Durkheimian pathological social fact to the case of Operation Car Wash through the use of analytical categories, their respective assumptions and observations.

4.2 Anomia

Anomia is a condition in which social and moral norms appear confused, hazy or absent. Under these circumstances, individuals do not adhere to social and moral norms. This forms a context ripe for corrupt practices, in view of the blurred distinction between public and private spheres. Therefore, the following assumptions were used to verify the occurrence of this category: namely, the occurrence of various types of illegal behavior and the absence of punishment for the corrupt agents.

4.2.1 Occurrence of various types of illegal behaviors

The occurrence of various types of illegal behavior shows that individuals act contrary to social and moral norms, constituting a state of anomia in society, according to Durkheim’s reasoning (2000, 2010) in his studies of social solidarity and suicide.

Operation Car Wash reported the occurrence of various types of illegal behavior: active corruption (soliciting or offering bribes), passive corruption (receiving bribes), crimes against the economic order (formation of cartels), crimes against the international financial system, obstruction of justice, hindering the investigation of criminal organization, tax evasion, false testimony, criminal conspiracy, bid rigging, assets laundering, money laundering, international drug trafficking, and divulging confidential information (MPF, 2017). Considering the absence of data on the amount of illegal behavior performed by corrupt agents due to the complexity of the events discovered by Operation Car Wash, Table 1 contains data showing the scale of the crimes committed.

According to Table 1, data from the operation reported by the MPF (2017) in the jurisdictions of Paraná, Rio de Janeiro, Brasilia and the Supreme Court also confirm the scale of the criminal behavior. The practice of a variety of crimes as well as the number of other police and judicial actions found in Operation Car Wash reveal the magnitude of the facts investigated, exposing the existence of a situation in which the subjects of the investigations do not respect social norms.

TABLE 1 POLICE AND JUDICIAL PROCEDURES IN OPERATION CAR WASH BETWEEN MARCH 2014 AND DECEMBER 2017

Procedures	Quantity
Procedures instituted	1.767
Complaints (criminal charges)	127
Denounced	511
Preventive prisons	154
Temporary prisons	124
Coercive leases	256
Searches and seizures	1.277
Condemned	125
Convictions	208
Award-winning collaboration agreement	158
Leniency agreement	10
Requests for international cooperation (assets)	176
Requests for international cooperation (liabilities)	127
Tax secrecy breach	191
Phone secrecy breach	225
Bank secrecy breach	314
Telematic secrecy breach	121
Seizure of property	30
Award Winning Collaboration	120

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

4.2.2 Impunity of the corrupt agents

Researchers have pointed to the lack of punishment for those involved in corruption as a factor that directly influences corrupt practices (Ear, 2016; Neacsu, Dumitrescu, & Debelka, 2009; Pathak, 2013). Nevertheless, this impunity may be a sign of social anomia, in that it represents the failure of the State’s own judicial apparatus to comply with social and moral norms.

Thus, the number of convictions obtained may be a sign of anomia in the case under analysis. According to the MPF (2017), Table 2 shows the data regarding judicial convictions of individuals involved in the crimes investigated by Operation Car Wash.

TABLE 2 CONVICTIONS AND NONCONVICTIONS IN THE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS STEMMING FROM OPERATION CAR WASH BETWEEN MARCH 2014 AND DECEMBER 2017

Judicial Bodies	Denounced	Condemned	Uncondemned	Percentage of uncondemned
First Instance – Paraná	282	177	105	37,2%
First Instance – Rio de Janeiro	134	31	103	76,9%
STJ and STF	95	0	95	100%
Total/average	511	208	303	59,3%

Source: Elaborated by the authors.
 STJ = Superior Tribunal de Justiça; STF = Supremo Tribunal Federal.

According to Table 2, of the 511 individuals against whom indictments were brought in connection with crimes, 303 were not convicted. This number represents 59.3% of those accused. The sum total of sentences handed down to those found guilty is 2,131 years (MPF, 2017), with corrupt agents often able to take advantage of the legal practice of turning state’s witness to reduce or escape punishment.

It is worth emphasizing that the presumption of innocence is maintained in the Brazilian legal system, meaning that a person cannot be considered guilty until the case has run its full legal course. However, the many indictments brought by the Federal Public Prosecutor’s Office (2017) based on evidence gathered by the Federal Police (2017) represent, for the purpose of this article, data to be interpreted in light of Durkheimian theory.

Cases of corruption are often hidden, with the results being reflected only in the judicial decisions (Li, 2016). However, faced with the prospect of not being punished, or receiving only a light sentence, individuals will have a greater incentive to commit an illegal act (Ear, 2016; Neacsu et al., 2009; Pathak, 2013), especially in view of the large reward if they are able to carry it off.

The number of illegal acts against the public interest discovered by the operation, combined with the impunity of the criminals who committed them, indicates a state of anomia in the case under consideration. Despite the country’s extensive legislation, private desires prevail over the public interest, with individual passions finding no legal and moral limits strong enough to protect the public good from private ambitions.

Having proven the scenario of anomia involving the facts investigated by Operation Car Wash, the next item will be to investigate whether this phenomenon constitutes a pathological social fact arising from the anomic state society is experiencing.

4.3 Pathological social fact

A pathological social fact is a widespread way of acting that has its own existence, coercing the individual and adversely affecting the social order (Durkheim, 2007). Corruption takes the form of a pathological fact when it reaches levels capable of destabilizing the social organism. The following assumptions were used to verify this category: corruption is an external and coercive fact and corruption has affected the social order.

4.3.1 Corruption is an external and coercive social fact

A social fact is external because it precedes an individual, as it is not created by the individual (Durkheim, 2007). Based on a prior analysis of Brazilian society, cases of corruption involving politicians and large businessmen have been present in the social scenario since the formation of the national State, even in the early stages of colonial public administration (Habib, 1994). Therefore, although this study focuses on the analysis of corruption uncovered by Operation Car Wash from the perspective of a functionalist sociological theory, it bears mentioning that this is by no means the first corruption case of its kind. Corruption, as a social fact has been practiced for centuries through patrimonialist practices rooted in the traditions and routines of the political system and Brazilian public administration.

According to the plea bargaining of the agents involved, the crimes investigated in Operation Car Wash had been practiced since the 1990s (Talento, 2016). It is apparent that not all those involved had participated in the case since the beginning. Some only came to occupy their positions years after the first crimes investigated by the operation, which confirms the condition of externality. Individuals come and go, but corruption remains an integral part of Brazilian society.

The coercive feature of the social fact may manifest itself in two ways. The first is shaming or direct sanction against anyone who fails to follow the standard behavior. The second, indirect form involves the necessity of following certain procedures to achieve success in an undertaking (Mousse, 2011).

Insofar as coercion may take the form of engaging in certain behavior to be successful in society, the illegal enrichment of the corrupt agents is a fact that may indicate the existence of this variable in the case. Next, Table 3 shows the monetary values involved in the cases of corruption investigated in the operation, which were therefore the subject of illegal enrichment by the criminal agents (Antunez, 2017).

TABLE 3 VALUES INVOLVED IN THE OPERATION CAR WASH CORRUPTION INVESTIGATION

	Performance in First Instância		Performance in STF	Total
	Paraná	Rio de Janeiro		
Missing	4 billion	451,5 million	-	4,4 billion
Claim for compensation (including fines)	38,1 billion	2,28 billion	-	40,3 billion
Blocked assets	3,2 billion	1 billion	-	4,2 billion
Returnees	756,9 million	-	79 million	835,9 million

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

STF = Supremo Tribunal Federal.

One can see from Table 3 that the values embezzled by corrupt agents amount to billions of Brazilian reais. Of the 40.3 billion Brazilian reais requested by the Public Prosecutor’s Office as restitution, only 4.4 billion were actually recovered, meaning approximately 10% of the embezzled funds have been recovered at present.

Nevertheless, to confirm the feature of coercion, it was determined that 6.4 billion Brazilian reais were paid in bribes, that is, to induce someone to commit an illegal act. The payment of bribes is an incentive for a corrupt agent to engage in a certain behavior for personal and illicit enrichment. If the individual did not engage in the act of corruption proposed in the political system, he would not be able to increase his wealth as easily through legal and moral procedures.

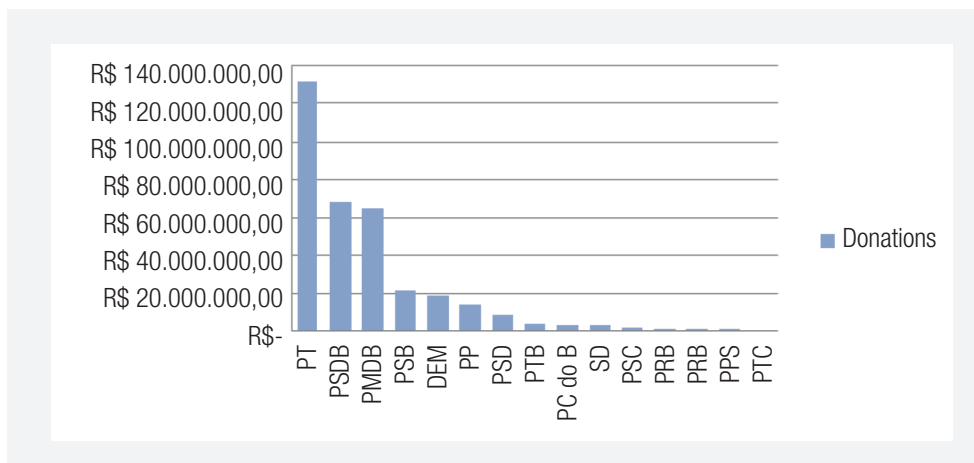
4.3.2 Corruption affects the social order

Corruption is found in all countries (Alencar & Gico, 2011; Ioris, 2016; Tuyen et al., 2016) and may be considered a normal social fact such as crime, but when it reaches levels capable of destabilizing the social order, it can be considered pathological (Durkheim, 2007). To determine whether corruption is pathological in this case, one must assess whether its economic and political effects are capable of influencing the social order.

The ten largest companies involved in the investigation, including direct employees and subcontractors, eliminated more than 600,000 jobs after the investigation began in March 2014 (Scheller, 2017), due to the cutting off of bank credit and the resulting sale of assets to maintain liquidity (Alvarenga, 2017). This does not take into account the jobs generated indirectly by the company’s business transactions. Therefore, it is undeniable that corruption directly influenced the economy, considering the job cuts and large values mentioned. Moreover, funds that should be used in the public interest were channeled to private use.

In addition to the economic impact, it can be seen that the crimes also directly influenced the political system and therefore the social order. Some of the funds embezzled in these crimes were funneled by the companies into political parties’ election campaign funds, as shown in Graph 1.

GRAPH 1 DONATIONS BY COMPANIES INVOLVED IN OPERATION CAR WASH TO POLITICAL PARTIES IN THE 2014 ELECTIONS



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

According to Graph 1 (Tribunal Superior Eleitoral [TSE], 2014), the companies involved in the Operation Car Wash corruption investigations funneled millions of Brazilian reais to the political parties as campaign donations. One can see that the values were decisive for determining the election outcomes, as the three parties that received the most are those with the most representatives in the national congress. Thus, the corruption cases also have an undeniable influence on politics, seeking to keep the corrupt politicians in office, feeding the cycle of corruption composed of reciprocal and unfairly advantageous relations among politicians, contractors and others involved.

Nevertheless, the crimes investigated in Operation Car Wash also affected the political system because of the involvement of politicians in high-ranking offices, such as former presidents, senators, members of congress, governors and even the current president. The corruption scandals uncovered by the investigations contributed to political instability that culminated in President Dilma Rousseff's impeachment (Boito, 2017; Pinto, 2015). Moreover, politicians and companies saw their reputations damaged, and the country's largest state-run company is no longer trusted by the Brazilian people (Ciocari, 2015).

Therefore, Operation Car Wash affected the Brazilian social order through the economic and political ramifications of the events discovered (MPF, 2017). The involvement of politicians creates political instability, which in turn negatively affects the country's economy, as it creates uncertainty and insecurity about the country's future, thereby driving away investors and capital. The economic shock directly affects social issues, as it can bring about extremely damaging social consequences such as an increase in unemployment and poverty. The money embezzled from the public coffers also contributes to the fragility of public policies and government services.

Having established the existence of a state of anomia and a pathological social fact of corruption in Operation Car Wash, we now turn our attention to how the phenomenon affects Brazil's social institutions.

4.4 Social institutions

According to Durkheim (2007, p. XXX), *social institutions* are "all beliefs and all forms of behavior created by the collective; sociology can then be defined as the science of institutions, of their genesis and of their functioning". This is the same understanding adopted by Fauconnet and Mauss (1981). From this perspective, government agencies, political parties, public and private companies are examples of institutions, as they constitute formal structures of society that regulate individuals' behavior. To verify the occurrence of this category, the following assumptions will be used: the corruption case involves members of different agencies or institutions and institutions' norms are shaped to allow the pathological social fact of corruption.

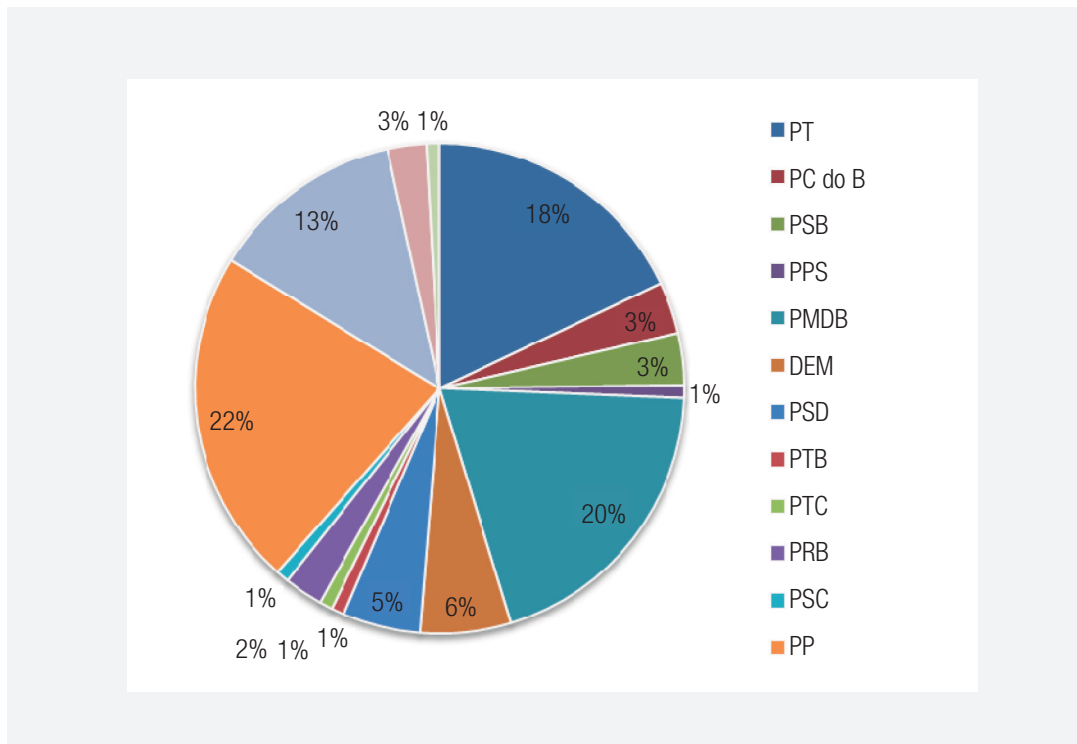
4.4.1 The corruption case involves members of different agencies or institutions

Corruption is a phenomenon that occurs repeatedly and throughout institutions (Arellano Gault, Hernández Galicia, & Lepore, 2015). Corruption cases lead to behaviors that show a lack of interest in public life, distrust of democratic institutions and cynicism with regard to civic duties, such as political participation (Mesquita, Moisés, & Rico, 2014).

The investigation turned up evidence of the involvement of public and private agents, including individuals who were convicted and absolved, individuals awaiting trial, and accused individuals who may or may not be indicted at the conclusion of the investigation, including the current and former national presidents, current and former federal ministers, current and former members of the national congress, current and former national senators, current and former governors, former aides to politicians, lobbyists, current and former business leaders, current and former company heads, former managers and staff of private companies, currency exchangers, relatives of politicians and business leaders, and a former federal police agent. The list also includes people who occupied no formal positions in the companies and are not politicians (*O Globo*, n.d.).

Graph 2 shows which parties have political agents in the executive power and legislative power at the end of 2018 under investigation by Operation Car Wash, including senators, members of congress, governors and ministers.

GRAPH 2 PARTIES WITH POLITICIANS UNDER INVESTIGATION BY OPERATION CAR WASH



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

In addition to the parties with current office-holders shown in Graph 2, 26 of the 35 formally registered political parties had members cited in the testimony provided by current and former executives of Odebrecht, a company that was one of the primary targets of the Operation Car Wash investigations. These figures do not include the spreadsheets bearing the names of more than a thousand politicians who allegedly benefited from the group of companies involved (*O Globo*, n.d.).

The involvement of representatives of the executive branch, legislative branch and large companies, as well as the slow pace or complete absence of punishment by the judicial branch, is an indicator that in the case under consideration, political institutions are influenced by the social fact of corruption.

Operation Car Wash also uncovered the involvement of politicians' relatives in crimes of corruption, showing that corruption is also found within the family as a social institution. The investigation found that family members of politicians, including spouses and children, were also involved.

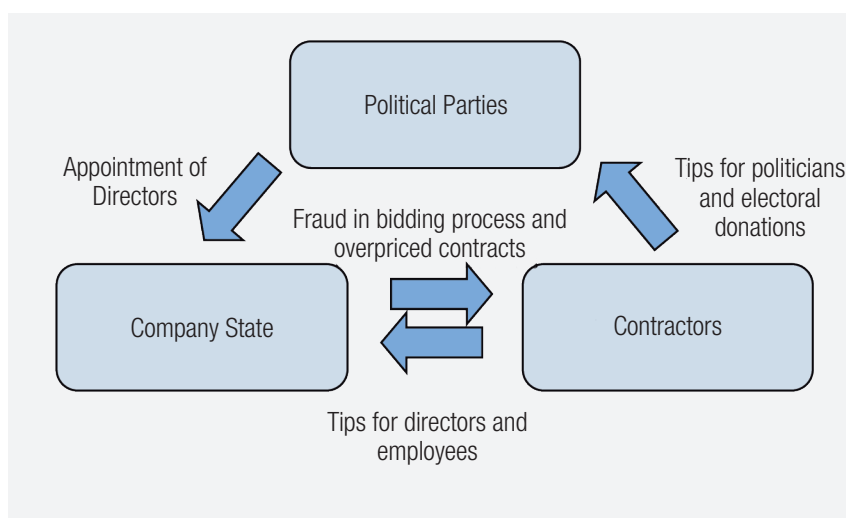
The corruption investigated by Operation Car Wash identified involvement by individuals involved in different social institutions, such as political parties across the ideological spectrum, the legislative and executive branches, public and private companies and even the family. This finding is evidence that corruption influences a variety of important political, economic and social institutions.

4.4.2 Institutional norms are shaped to allow the pathological social fact of corruption

The social fact of corruption affects the *modus operandi* of institutions. Understanding Operation Car Wash requires a knowledge of the institutions in the Brazilian state that run on capital (Boito, 2017). According to Faoro (2001), patrimonialist practices prevail in Brazilian public administration institutions, even when they are based on neutral, abstract or anti-particularist principles.

The way institutions are organized to allow corrupt practices is an indicator of how the social fact of corruption affects institutions. Figure 2 shows how the corruption scheme uncovered by Operation Car Wash involving institutions worked.

FIGURE 2 CORRUPTION SCHEME INVOLVING INSTITUTIONS



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

As shown in Figure 2, political parties appointed the directors of the state company. The directors, together with public officials, conducted bidding processes and signed overpriced contracts with large contractors, who used currency exchange operators to funnel bribes to the directors, public officials and politicians, as well as made sizable donations to their election campaign funds.

According to the MPF (2017), the contractors organized themselves into cartels to rig the bidding process. Decisions about the bid amounts and who would win them were made in secret meetings that simulated the rules of a soccer tournament, rotating among the companies to conceal the fraud. One company even had a “bribes department” to manage the illicit payments.

Some of the funds embezzled from the public coffers were kicked back to politicians or political parties, and some even went to fund election campaigns. Thus, one can see that the political system was organized to perpetuate corruption, from the commission of the crimes to the maintenance of the criminals in power to the perpetuation of the corrupt system.

Some of the funds obtained from the crimes discovered were used to fund political campaigns. The Brazilian political system requires a candidate for office to spend heavily on campaign advertising. Electoral success therefore depends on the amount of money invested, and corruption is a major fund-raising mechanism. Through cartels and political connections, major contractors receive funds and pass a large portion on to politicians and political parties. These funds are, in turn, used for lavish campaign spending and to fulfill politicians’ personal desires (MPF, 2017).

It is obvious that the pathological social fact of corruption affects various agencies and institutions, shaping their structures to facilitate these crimes. These institutions influence individuals in a general manner, persuading them to engage in illegal behavior to benefit themselves and minimizing the risk of any punishment.

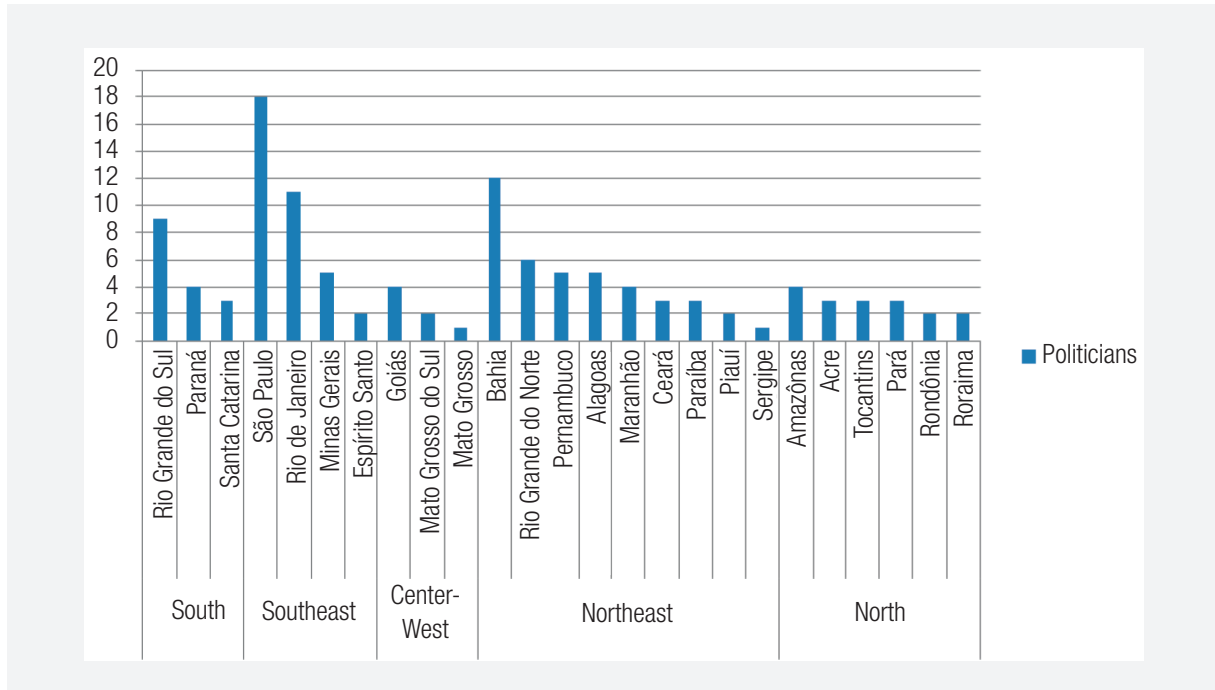
4.5 Individuals

Individuals are agents who exteriorize the social fact through their behavior. According to Durkheim (2007), social facts are characterized by their widespread nature. This feature can be observed in that social facts are common behaviors among individuals in a certain society. To determine whether this case of corruption meets that standard, several assumptions were developed: the actors represent a variety of agencies or institutions, the political actors represent parties from across the political spectrum, and the actors involved are from different locations or regions.

4.5.1 *The actors involved are from different locations or regions*

A social fact is a group feature that manifests itself in individuals, that is, it is common to the entire society (Durkheim, 2007). Graph 3 below shows the home states and regions for the politicians involved in the Operation Car Wash investigation, including senators, members of congress, governors and ministers.

GRAPH 3 HOME STATES AND REGIONS OF POLITICIANS (HOLDING OFFICE 2014-2018) INVOLVED IN THE OPERATION CAR WASH INVESTIGATION



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Graph 3 shows that the politicians represent states in all five regions of the country: 17 politicians from the South, 36 from the Southeast, seven from the Center-West, 41 from the Northeast, and seven from the North. Taking into account the former politicians also involved, all 26 of the Brazilian states and the Federal District of Brasilia are represented.

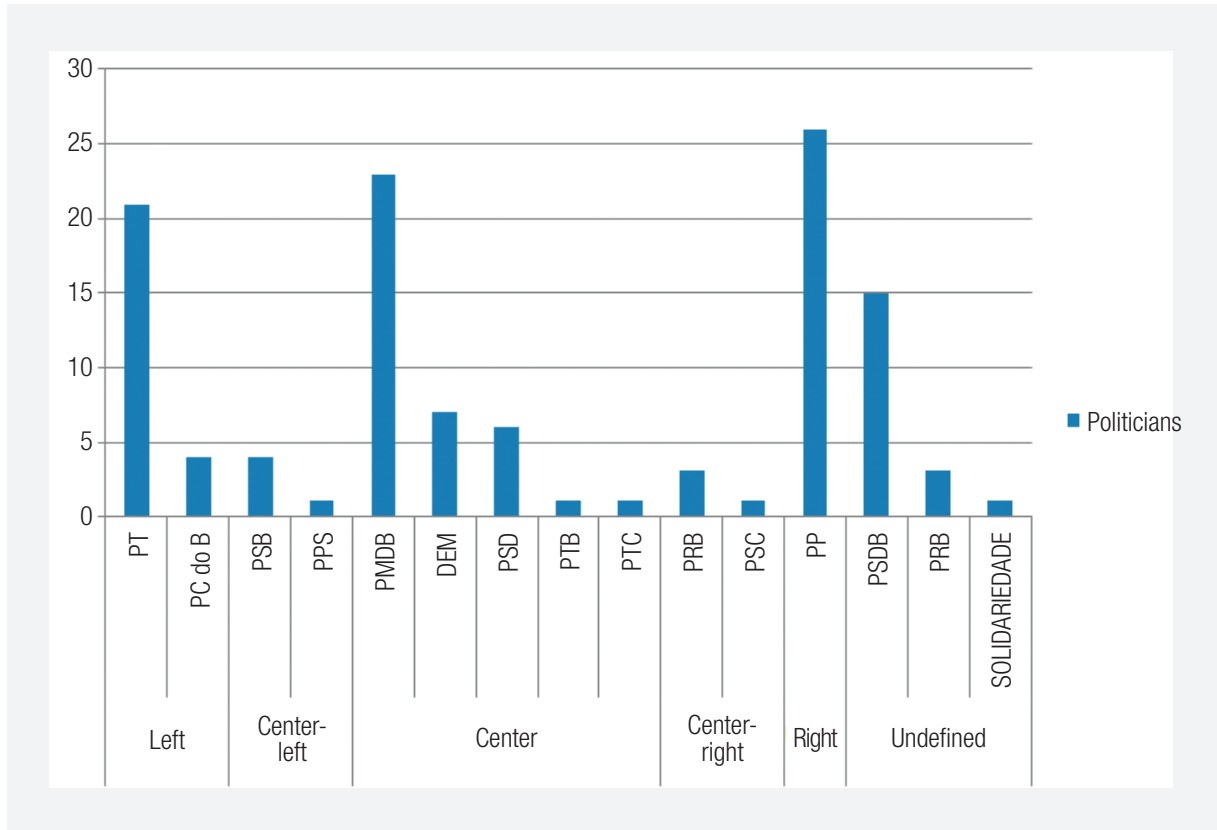
Operation Car Wash therefore has investigated politicians, businessmen, public officials and citizens who directly or indirectly participated in the crimes. These agents occupied or occupy high-ranking positions in the political realm, were partners or company employees, or had some connection with politicians, businessmen, lobbyists and currency exchange operators. The agents involved come from a variety of locations in the country and occupy a variety of positions within companies, with some being private citizens with neither political office nor formal ties to the companies (MPF, 2017).

Corrupt practices, therefore, were not limited to individuals from specific locations. Agents from all the country’s regions were involved, leading to the conclusion that corruption is a generalized pathological social fact of Brazilian society, influencing individuals who occupy positions in government and private companies.

4.5.2 Political actors are from the entire political spectrum

Another factor that can confirm corruption’s influence as a general social fact among individuals is that it draws no political distinctions, involving parties and agents from all parts of the political spectrum, as shown below.

GRAPH 4 POLITICAL SPECTRUM OF AGENTS AND POLITICAL PARTIES (HOLDING OFFICE 2014-2018) INVOLVED IN OPERATION CAR WASH



Fonte: Elaborated by the authors.

According to Graph 4, the politicians involved came from all parts of the political spectrum, including left, center-left, center, center-right and right. Corruption in this case is widespread among politicians, regardless of ideology or government situation (MPF, 2017). Rather than being limited to certain parties, corruption is a widespread practice among politicians of all stripes, confirming its generalized character.

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Corruption is a social fact with very damaging consequences for society, as it directly affects the democratic system, favoring private gains to the detriment of the public interest. The findings of the present article indicate that the corruption uncovered by the most extensive investigation in Brazil's history involves both public and private actors. It is therefore possible to confirm the occurrence of corruption through the Durkheimian perspective, in which corruption acts as a pathological social fact arising from a state of social anomia and reproduced by the structure of social institutions and individuals' behaviors, which in turn promotes this situation of disregard for social norms.

Corruption appears in Operation Car Wash as a pathological social fact in the Durkheimian sense, according to four criteria: *anomia*, *pathological social fact*, *social institutions* and *individuals*. The state of *anomia* was evidenced by the many crimes committed and by the impunity of 59.3% of the agents accused, proving that individuals and institutions do not comply with standards. Corruption as a *pathological social fact* was evidenced by its coercive nature, in view of the billions embezzled from the public coffers for illicit enrichment, and by its exteriority, in that corruption antecedes the current agents involved. Moreover, the pathological nature of corruption was evidenced by the fact that it affected the social order through the economic impact of thousands of lay-offs at the companies involved, the blow to investors' trust and the billions embezzled from the public coffers, as well as the political implications of financing campaigns with illicit funds, the collapse of the population's trust in politicians, and even the impeachment of President Dilma Rousseff. Public and private *institutions* are influenced by the social fact of corruption, both in allowing it to occur and in ensuring the impunity of the lawbreakers, extending even to the creation of specific departments to manage the payment of bribes. Moreover, the extent and number of *individuals* involved in this case indicate that the social fact is widespread, involving individuals from a broad range of social ranks, locations, regions, parties and companies.

This study's limitations are related to the complexity of the investigation being studied. The corruption cases involve dozens of crimes and hundreds of investigations, which present a challenge even to the official agencies charged with the investigations. The Federal Public Prosecutor's Office and the Federal Police lack a robust database containing the names of all those being investigated and other detailed information about the operations, displaying only the general figures on the corruption cases. This made it necessary to obtain some data from the press. It is also worth emphasizing that the operation is still ongoing.

For future studies, the model should be applied to some specific phases of the investigation or specific instances of corruption in Operation Car Wash. The model can also be applied to corruption cases through the use of primary data and the application of questionnaires or interviews with attorneys, prosecutors, judges, public servants, politicians and others involved in or close to the events, providing insight into the direct perceptions of the actors.

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