



Corruption Among Financially Privileged Actors: A Critical Reappraisal of Maslow's Theory of Needs

Abderrezak Iddir

*Department of Psychology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Mouloud
Mammeri University Tizi-Ouzou, Algeria*

Abstract

Maslow's hierarchy of needs has frequently been used to explain human motivation through the progressive satisfaction of fundamental needs. However, the involvement of financially privileged actors in corrupt practices raises a major theoretical question regarding the explanatory power of this model. This article offers a critical reappraisal of Maslow's theory of needs in order to examine the psychological and psychosocial mechanisms that may account the persistence of corrupt behaviors beyond the satisfaction of material and security needs. Drawing on the distinction between objective and subjective security, the analysis suggests that corruption may function as a symbolic strategy aimed at reinforcing perceived security, self-esteem and power. The paper also highlights a possible distortion of higher-order needs- particularly esteem and self-actualization- when they operate within institutional contexts characterized by the normalization of corruption. In conclusion, this contribution emphasizes the limits of a strictly hierarchical interpretation of human needs and argues for an integrative approach that articulates psychological needs, power dynamics and social norms in the analysis of corruption.

Keywords: corruption; financially privileged actors; theory of needs; Maslow; subjective security; power and social norms