

Nepotism in Post-Soviet States: The Quantitative Assessment on Socio-Demographic Factors and the Corruption Perceptions Index

Bibigul Byulegenova
Eurasian National University, Astana, Kazakhstan

Valeriy Prasolov¹
Financial University, Moscow, Russian Federation

Gulmira Sheryazdanova
Astana IT University, Astana, Kazakhstan

Sergey Bratanovsky
Plekhanov Russian University of Economics, Moscow, Russian Federation

Lilya Sabirova
Yelabuga Institute of Kazan Federal University, Yelabuga, Russian Federation

Abstract: Nepotism has long been one of the global problems of modern society. In many countries, including the post-Soviet space, this phenomenon is firmly historically rooted. Granting privileges to relatives or friends, regardless of their professional qualities, destroys the institutional foundations of the state, causing significant harm to public administration and the economy. The purpose of the study is to examine the influence of cultural and ethnographic factors in form of socio-demographic factors and the level of acceptability of corruption on the development of nepotism against the background of corruption as an aggregate indicator of its manifestation. The research methodology was based on studying the socio-economic development indicators of 12 countries of the former Soviet Union according to the official data presented by the World Bank and the Transparency International organization. This research holds the view that the Corruption Perceptions Index can serve as an indirect indicator of the level of nepotism in the post-Soviet space. A study based on a regression model of the correlation of the described values of a quantitative model for assessing the level of penetration of nepotism in developing countries, including post-Soviet ones. The practical application of the results may make it possible to more deeply assess the features of the development of society and the state on the basis of generally recognized international indicators and available demographic data.

Keywords: authority, favoritism, institutional conditions, patronage, power.

Despite significant global changes in social and economic development at the beginning of the 21st century, the problem of nepotism and the associated corruption and monopolization of power remains unresolved in many countries. In these modern times, nepotism exists in both

¹ Corresponding Author: An Associate Professor of the Department of Economic Security and Risk Management at the Financial University, Moscow, Russia. E-Mail: prasolov_valeriy@rambler.ru; Valeriy.prasolov@yandex.ru

developed and developing states. Genuinely, the very notion *nepotism* is of Latin origin. Etymologically, it is close to the word *nepotis* and is translated into English as *nephew* or *grandchild*.

Nepotism is defined as a preference for relatives and friends by granting social position or economic privileges. This approach typically involves employment, career advancement, and training based on a preference for so-called loyal behavior rather than merit (Serfraz et al., 2022). Nepotism is also a technology that helps politicians monetize benefits from office (Gagliarducci & Manacorda, 2020).

Such notions as nepotism, clientelism, patronage, and corruption should be distinguished because they are not interchangeable. Each of these concepts has its own definition and meaning. Nepotism is the focus of this study, while favoritism, clientelism, or some form of corruption is considered only in connection with nepotism when necessary. It should be realized that it is a mistake to confuse or identify all these phenomena, since they all have different historical origins, different socio-economic origins and implementation (Ekemen, 2023; Kaushal et al., 2021).

In the context of the study, clientelism is considered in the meaning of the exchange of services or benefits in the explicit or implicit form of mutual offset of such services, which implies asymmetric relationships between social groups or individuals. Patronage involves the provision of support, privileges, and financial or organizational benefits by an individual, organization or group (Tytko et al., 2020). All these forms of relations are used in one form or another within the framework of corruption relations. Corruption is interpreted as dishonest and criminal behavior of a person or organization using a position of authority to obtain illegal benefits or abuse power for personal gain (Luna-Pla & Nicolás-Carlock, 2020).

Nepotism is a narrower type of patron-client relationship where the main distinguishing element is the family and close friendship ties between patron and client. The exchange here follows the same pattern: the client offers the patron loyalty and submission in exchange for the opportunity to gain favor in a certain field of activity and for protection. It is a widespread practice for a patron to appoint a family member to an executive position in the public or private sector so that the latter benefits not for themselves but for the patron (Buscaneanu & Stefes, 2020).

The traditional historical roots of nepotism in most post-Soviet countries stem from patriarchal societies and networks of trust that were formed based on either consanguinity and family ties or long-standing and proven friendships (Dauda, 2020). The experience of anthropology demonstrates that this is a relic of the social protection mechanisms of an older period in the era of the developed state. The social mechanisms of the state take over the functions of protection and court, which previously belonged to the clan community. On the other hand, nepotism and some other forms of trust networks, for example, localism, continue to be a form of protection from the pressure of state mechanisms on ethnic, religious or central administrative authorities on local and regional communities (Strebkov et al., 2018; Ternovaya, 2019). Similar connections are typical for European countries of the 16th–18th centuries, and in aristocratic circles, they persist much longer (Berger, 2023). In the countries of Central Asia and Transcaucasia, nepotism remained more widespread and large-scale than in other more socially developed regions of the USSR (Shchankina, 2019; Steenberg, 2021).

Nepotism can also manifest itself in a completely capitalist society, for example, to achieve successful career results in the labor market (Jain et al, 2022). Depending on the strength of socioeconomic stratification of society, the presence of ethnic conflicts, and the characteristics of internal migration, nepotism acts as a means of survival and ensuring social status in conditions of increased competition or an unfair social structure (Dauda, 2020; Tytko et al., 2020). In the form of favoritism, many people ubiquitously use their social connections

to get jobs, and how they use them depends on the relationship between employer and potential employee (Akcinar, 2015).

In the former Soviet Union, nepotism has traditionally been considered more of a moral obligation to relatives, friends, and family than an illegal act (Kupatadze, 2012). The post-Soviet space, where concern about the considered problem arose in connection with the collapse of the USSR and the transformation of cultural, political, and social landscapes, is of particular interest in this context. The peculiarities of the formation of nepotism in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), as well as its impact on the economic, social, and cultural development of society, remain insufficiently studied (Yu et al., 2023; Yurak et al., 2020;).

Currently, nepotism is referred to as favoring family members in the process of filling vacancies and granting privileges, regardless of the competencies these family members possess (Popczyk, 2017). It is commonly associated with public sector corruption and the abuse of public resources. Researchers admit that nepotism is usually accompanied by the negative public image of post-Soviet and developing countries. However, one may observe the manifestations of nepotism in different sectors of the private economy (Sroka & Weinhardt, 2018).

Patronage and preferential treatment of family, friends, professional, and political connections, regardless of merit, are pervasive in every culture, nation, industry, or organization. Nepotism and cronyism can be seen as a form of corruption in that they concern the abuse of power and trust for purposes other than for which that power or trust was given (Tytko et al., 2020). All over the world, *nepots* use their position and status to favor themselves and their close ones, often to the detriment of the organization or institution that endowed them with that power (Hudson & Claasen, 2017).

The present study strives to understand the nature of nepotism and discover whether there are dissimilarities in its development in various states. Special attention in this connection was given to CIS members as they differ significantly in terms of socio-economic development and political culture, allowing one to study this issue to the fullest degree possible. The purpose of this research is to study the spread of nepotism in post-Soviet countries in connection with the influence of cultural and ethnographic factors and the possibility of its assessment through recognized international indicators. The contribution of the study is to propose a new method for indirectly quantifying nepotism based on a recognized international corruption index, which may be useful for advancing research on the prevalence of nepotism and other forms of corruption in developing countries. The study attempts to propose a quantitative method for studying the penetration of nepotism in developing countries like the CIS based on the correlation of socio-demographic values and the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI).

Literature Review

Recent years have witnessed a significant increase in interest in nepotism insofar as it is one of the least studied problems having a meaningful impact on labor force efficiency and the development of companies and public institutions (Kaushal et al., 2021). Although nepotism in the public sector represents a long-standing problem, there is little research on this phenomenon, primarily because of the inability to systematically measure it and obtain more or less reliable data at the country level. Besides, while studying nepotism, it is also necessary to determine the networks of relatives, which is a challenging task as it requires access to confidential information (Ragauskas & Valeškaitė, 2020).

Nepotism in post-Soviet countries has the character of political dualism: it is widespread throughout society, but in reality, it is condemned and associated with corruption only in the form of political nepotism (Morini, 2023). Distrust and condemnation of society is caused by

the concentration of power within one family or several families and the restriction of access to public power for other members of society. At the same time, hiring relatives and friends or promoting relatives and friends in one's own organization is commonplace in ensuring survival and mutual support (Kaushal et al., 2021).

Even though a number of researchers consider nepotism on par with favoritism, this is not entirely correct. Favoritism is a phenomenon characteristic of authoritarianism and monarchy, any form of concentration of influence and power on one hand (Im & Chen, 2020; Tytko et al., 2020; Yates, 2023). Whereas nepotism should be considered exclusively as a social phenomenon that reflects the problems of the structure of society and the level of its development (Pramujianingtyas & Rusminingsih, 2021; Ragauskas & Valeškaitė, 2020). Favoritism reflects the promotion of someone who will be able to please or be useful to the highest authority, that is, it reflects a very strong centralized power. Whereas nepotism can be seen as a public reaction to a weak state system and a survival mechanism in the face of instability in social relations (Perez-Alvarez & Strulik, 2021; Posukhova & Klimenko, 2019).

It is wrong to perceive nepotism only as a negative phenomenon that counteracts free competition and the possibility of self-realization of the individual. Some forms of nepotism can be seen as a manifestation of social networks of trust that ensure survival in a multicultural and multiethnic society in the absence or restriction of legal freedoms (Gagliarducci & Manacorda, 2020; George, 2019). In this case, nepotism becomes a means of providing access to work, resources, and public power for representatives of one's group, and not necessarily family (Morini, 2023; Sroka & Weinhardt, 2018). Within networks of trust, family, and kinship ties are a means of determining belonging to a larger group (ethnos, religion, professional craft community, or others). The early feudal mode of production involves the transfer of social capital to the closest relatives as a means of maintaining access to this capital and counteracting its erosion (Ledeneva, 2018; Maczak, 2017).

Nepotism, from the point of view of many researchers, is a reflection of the patriarchal organization of society. The more highly valued the family and family relationships are, the importance of honoring parents and older relatives, helping the younger ones, etc., the more difficult it is to refuse them support in hiring or granting preferences (Akcinar, 2015). Refusal of a relative is perceived as a violation of more important and more respected social principles than formal legislation or equality (Tazhibekova et al., 2020). A person who does not arrange a relative or friend for a high position when he himself received a high position will be ostracized and endure a public death. This, in turn, leads to the fact that he will not be effective as a manager because in such a patriarchal traditional society, in most cases, it is possible to "solve issues" only through personal connections and personal agreements. If a politician, official, or businessman does not follow the path of nepotism, he quickly becomes ineffective and is thrown out of the system (Boateng et al., 2020; Vakhnina & Vakhnin, 2019; Zaloznaya, 2022).

Nepotism has psychological roots in the lack of trust in society, and a high level of expectation of negative or dangerous actions on the part of other members of society. In this situation, trust is possible to a greater extent in people related to blood ties or trusted friends (Yates, 2023). High crime rates, lack of courts, and the rule of law are predictors of the above situation.

Based on all of the above, the elimination of nepotism requires the presence of several important features of socio-political organization. This is primarily the dominance of the state and corporate rules over networks of trust and a system of personal ties (Burhan, 2020; Fetahu, 2017). The dominance of the state provides any individual with the opportunity to solve most of the most important problems relying only on official and legal channels, which makes him independent of formal family and friendship ties. This means that the individual can ensure his own survival and prosperity without the involvement of relatives, friends, support networks,

etc. The second condition is also the dominance of the free market and free competition, which guarantee the victory and survival of the best and not “relatives” (Gjinovci, 2016a; Karpov, 2018; Kawo & Torun, 2020). Nepotism, by its nature, is a reflection of the feudal type of production and the guild system, which does not imply the existence of a free capitalist market and competition. In the presence of market competition, hiring and promoting friends and relatives becomes critical politically disadvantageous and leads to ruin and loss of socio-political status due to inefficient management (Pramujianingtyas & Rusminingsih, 2021). The third factor is the development of technology, which requires a high level of education and training. These requirements provide jobs and advancement primarily to those who effectively master and apply technology (Hudson & Claasen, 2017; Jain et al., 2022). The fourth factor, researchers consider the real rule of law, which ensures the protection of property, life, personality, social status and public reputation to any member of society, regardless of his social status (Kaushal et al., 2021).

However, when all these conditions are met, there is no nepotism at the level of most of the strata of society, but political and financial nepotism cannot be defeated (Kupatadze, 2012; Ragauskas & Valeškaitė, 2020; Ternovaya, 2019). These last two relate to the concentration of capital and power in the hands of families and kinship ties, from which they cannot be taken away and where capital and social position (human capital in its various manifestations) will be steadily transmitted over many generations (Popczyk, 2017; Pramujianingtyas & Rusminingsih, 2021). It is political nepotism that causes the greatest fear and rejection in public discourse and public opinion in most post-Soviet countries. That is why nepotism can be considered in this situation as a synonym for corruption and its most important component. Political nepotism is the most important feature of almost all post-Soviet countries, in which power tends to be concentrated in the hands of one family or a small group of people connected by marriages, friendships and various family relations (this is how the concept of “family” existed in Russia during the Yeltsin era to refer to the ruling elite associated with President Yeltsin) (Knott, 2018). A relative exception to this rule is only Ukraine and the Baltic countries (Bekesiene et al., 2021; Sarotte, 2021). In many countries of Central Asia, nepotism has actually led to feudal authoritarian rule, when a country with formally existing attributes of democracy is headed by a virtually unlimited ruler who plans to inherit power (Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan have recently changed this situation) (Samuratova, 2015).

In the process of gaining independence, post-Soviet Central Asian countries formed a president-centered governance structure dominated by familial influence. As a result, presidents’ families gained substantial control over regional economies and firmly consolidated the power of presidential family groups. Political nepotism and corruption caused by patronage and clientelism substantially undermined governance and became a source of political instability (Costa Buranelli, 2020). Paternalistic societies are typically characterized by strong personal friendships and family ties, weak rule of law, pervasive corruption, low social capital, extensive patron-client relationships, widespread nepotism, and what sociologists would recognize as “patrimonial” or “neo-patrimonial” forms of domination (Sarotte, 2021).

Material and Methods

Theoretical Background and Hypothesis

Nepotism is closely related to the idea of accepting any necessary actions for one's relatives, friends and inner circle and loyalty to their actions if they lead to the advancement, enrichment and strengthening of the conventional family as a whole. As a valid hypothesis, it can be argued that nepotism is closely related to traditional patriarchal and tribal ways, which should be reflected primarily in the behavior and choices that older people make. Young people

are more likely to change and violate established norms to achieve their own goals outside the restrictive framework of the family to a greater extent than the elderly. On the other hand, the index of acceptance of corruption indicates, first of all, the willingness to tolerate facts of corruption.

Based on the previously mentioned studies, it can be reasonably assumed that a higher level of nepotism in society implies a higher tolerance for corruption in its various forms, not only in the form of nepotism. In fact, nepotism presupposes permission for any beneficial actions for representatives of “one’s own family,” and, therefore tolerance or calm acceptance of similar behavior of other “families.” The opposite should also be true: a high level of tolerance for corruption indicates a high level of nepotism.

We suggest that both of these factors (the number of older people presenting the old pattern of nepotism and the level of tolerance for corrupt practices) are predictors of nepotism. One cannot expect a large number of older people in society to strive to reform it and improve the conditions for competition, depending on the level of education and development of public state bodies. These factors are negative for older people who are more dependent on others and insecure, who can no longer compete on an equal footing, and they will be expected to reject them. On the other hand, nepotism provides older people with the opportunity to protect their interests through personal connections, which they have much more than younger people, and thus remain competitive.

The need for the proposed approach and the need for the proposed hypothesis are due to how difficult it is to quantitatively measure nepotism as a social phenomenon. Simple, widely used methods such as identifying namesakes and related family members in the top management of corporations and state or local administrations are good at identifying phenomena at higher levels of public authority. However, this method is completely unable to reflect nepotism as a widely practiced social phenomenon that permeates all levels of society, starting from the social bottom (Burhan et al., 2020; Lazić, 2020). Therefore, an indirect estimation method is proposed here that can show good results for post-Soviet countries. The content of the index primarily indicates the tendency of a statistically significant part of the country's population to ignore the rule of law in order to be able to realize their interests or the interests of their relatives. From the point of view of institutional theory and social psychology, the willingness to put up with other people's violations implies the hope of being able to break the law with impunity if it is beneficial. The connection with a high level of nepotism is directly visible here. If the method of identical surnames makes it possible to reveal political and corporate nepotism to some extent, then it is almost impossible to assess the depth of penetration of nepotism into the structure of society and its significance for the organizational structure of society in this way. Nepotism is practiced in post-Soviet countries at all levels of society, starting with the poorest, and therefore, it is extremely difficult to define it or evaluate it using quantitative methods. In this case, at the level of a hypothesis, it is proposed to base a quantitative assessment of nepotism in post-Soviet countries on a model of the relationship between the number of older people in the age structure in relation to the Corruption Perceptions Index for a given country. In order to recognize such a hypothesis as valid, it is necessary to find out whether there is a correlation between these two quantities at all. If it is, then this significantly confirms the proposed hypothesis. If both of these values change in correlation, then we can assume that the level of penetration of nepotism changes approximately in the same range as these two values.

Research Design

The present work is built on the premise that studying characteristic features of the manifestation of nepotism in post-Soviet countries requires the application of methodological approaches of institutional theory. Such a stipulation is due to the fact that under the current institutional collapse in the former Soviet Union, informal institutions, including patron-client relations, played the role of the so-called lifeline, which helped preserve the local political elite in the process of its transformation.

Since there is no clearly recognized criterion for measuring nepotism worldwide, it is fair to use the level of corruption as a supplementary one. Thus wise, the present study turned to the Corruption Perceptions Index calculated by Transparency International experts and World Development Indicators from The World Bank Group's information data bank.

The Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) for over 200 countries and territories over the period 1996–2020 were also used. These aggregate indicators combine the views of a large number of enterprise, citizen, and expert survey respondents in industrial and developing countries. They are based on over 30 individual data sources produced by a variety of survey institutes, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and private sector firms. The Pearson correlation study and regression model building method are used to establish the relationship between the investigated variables of the number of the elderly population and the Corruption Perceptions Index for the corresponding country. If there is a close connection and correlation between these values, the hypothesis can be accepted for further research and more detailed study in subsequent studies as a quantitative indicator of nepotism in developing countries.

Only as an additional tool for assessing the impact of nepotism, only in the Russian Federation, as the largest country among those considered, was the survey conducted in the Russian Federation used. Data necessary for this study were taken from the all-Russian telephone survey of citizens of the Russian Federation aged 18 and above. The survey was conducted on October 23–25, 2020, and included 1,000 respondents. The statistical error of its results did not exceed 3.8%.

Research Limitations

Talking about research limitations, the study of nepotism in the post-Soviet countries was limited to an indirect assessment of its development since none of the CIS countries has yet the direct, officially approved statistical indicators needed to analyze it. Also, the paper focused on 12 former Soviet states and did not cover the Baltic countries due to the rather significant institutional differences between them. Statistical analysis and research results processing was carried out via the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The same tool was also used for correlation and regression analysis.

Results

For many years, the post-Soviet space continues to be a territory with a relatively complex configuration of social, political, cultural, and inter-state relations, which are prone to instability and conflict. The emergence of new independent states on the territory of the former Soviet Union took place under almost identical initial conditions. However, after several decades, the trajectories of their development diverged significantly. Not the least role here was played by the cultural and mental factors. By the time the former Soviet republics gained their independence, they already had their own internal culture, on which the matrix of the all-union culture of the Soviet person was superimposed. Though, after the collapse of the USSR, the

common cultural past gradually began to be supplanted, and a new national identity was formed in its place. This is conditioned to numerous differences in the level of nepotism in the post-Soviet space, which is most clearly demonstrated by the corruption ranks of its ex-members.

As was already mentioned in the previous section, the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) was used within the framework of the current investigation to indirectly assess the level of nepotism in some members of the former Soviet Union (Kaufmann et al., 2011). CPI includes data from 180 countries and territories of the world ranked by the level of perception of corruption in the public sector based on expert assessments and opinion surveys. For this, the CPI uses a scale of 0-100, where 0 means that a country is perceived as highly corrupt, and 100 means that a country is perceived as very clean. A country's rank indicates its position relative to the other states analyzed (Table 1).

Table 1

CPI Dynamics for Post-Soviet Countries (Negative Ranking Means an Improvement)

Country	Rank 2012	Rank 2013	Rank 2014	Rank 2015	Rank 2016	Rank 2017	Rank 2018	Rank 2019	Rank 2020	2012 % to 2020
Armenia	49	44	43	44	51	107	105	77	60	122.4
Azerbaijan	56	52	51	50	54	122	152	126	129	230.4
Belarus	52	51	49	47	44	68	70	66	63	121.2
Georgia	32	31	29	29	28	46	41	44	45	140.6
Kazakhstan	55	54	51	51	55	122	124	113	94	170.9
Kyrgyzstan	59	56	53	51	56	135	132	126	124	210.2
Moldova	47	45	45	46	54	122	117	120	115	244.7
Russian Federation	55	52	53	50	55	135	138	137	129	234.5
Tajikistan	61	58	57	53	59	161	152	153	149	244.3
Turkmenistan	66	63	63	60	61	167	161	165	165	250.0
Ukraine	57	55	54	52	55	130	120	126	117	205.3
Uzbekistan	66	63	62	59	62	157	158	153	146	221.2

Note. Source: developed by the authors based on data retrieved from the Corruption Perceptions Index (Transparency International, 2021).

As can be seen, almost all CIS countries except Georgia and Turkmenistan improved their corruption rankings throughout 2012–2020. At the same time, the highest improvement rates were observed for Armenia and Georgia. This is largely the result of the previous institutional reforms in these countries associated with the deregulation of business and changes in the law enforcement system. A relatively low level of corruption was also observed in the Republic of Belarus and Kazakhstan. In the other CIS countries, their ranking in terms of the level of corruption more than doubled between 2012 and 2020, which was due, on the one hand, to the preservation and strengthening of autocratic regimes and, on the other hand, to the preservation of institutional conditions conducive to nepotism.

From the ethnographic point of view of studying this issue, the highest level of corruption has been characteristic of the countries and peoples inhabiting Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan) and the European part of the CIS (Moldova, Ukraine), where such a phenomenon as nepotism has also spread. At the same time, nepotism for the

peoples of these countries is not something illegal but has become a firmly entrenched informal institution for the preservation of power and the well-being of local elites.

In general, the analysis of the main indicators of socio-economic development of 12 CIS countries revealed quite complex correlations with corruption levels. Nevertheless, the correlation between the considered indicators was not always confirmed (Table 2).

Table 2

Key Corruption, Demographic, and Socio-Economic Development Indicators of 12 CIS Countries for 2020

	CPI score 2020	GDP per capita (in current USD)	Urban population (% of the total population)	Population aged 65 and above (% of the total population)	Labor force participation rate (% of the total population aged 15+, ILO modeled estimate)	Unemployment (% of total labor force, ILO modeled estimate)	General government final consumption expenditure (% of GDP)	Human capital index (scale 0-1)
Armenia	49	4267.5	63.3	11.8	50.1	20.21	16.0	0.579
Azerbaijan	30	4214.3	56.4	6.7	63.1	6.27	15.9	0.578
Belarus	47	6411.2	79.5	15.6	63.1	5.28	16.9	0.700
Georgia	56	4278.9	59.5	15.3	63.9	12.05	14.4	0.569
Kazakhstan	38	9055.7	57.7	7.9	66.1	6.05	..	0.629
Kyrgyzstan	31	1173.6	36.9	4.7	55.0	7.89	17.6	0.597
Moldova	34	4551.1	42.8	12.5	39.6	4.71	15.5	0.584
Russian Federation	30	10126.7	74.8	15.5	61.1	5.73	20.7	0.681
Tajikistan	25	859.1	27.5	3.2	38.9	7.5	11.3	0.504
Turkmenistan	19	..	52.5	4.8	56.6	4.38
Ukraine	33	3726.9	69.6	16.9	52.5	9.48	19.3	0.631
Uzbekistan	26	1685.8	50.4	4.8	59.3	5.97	17.6	0.623

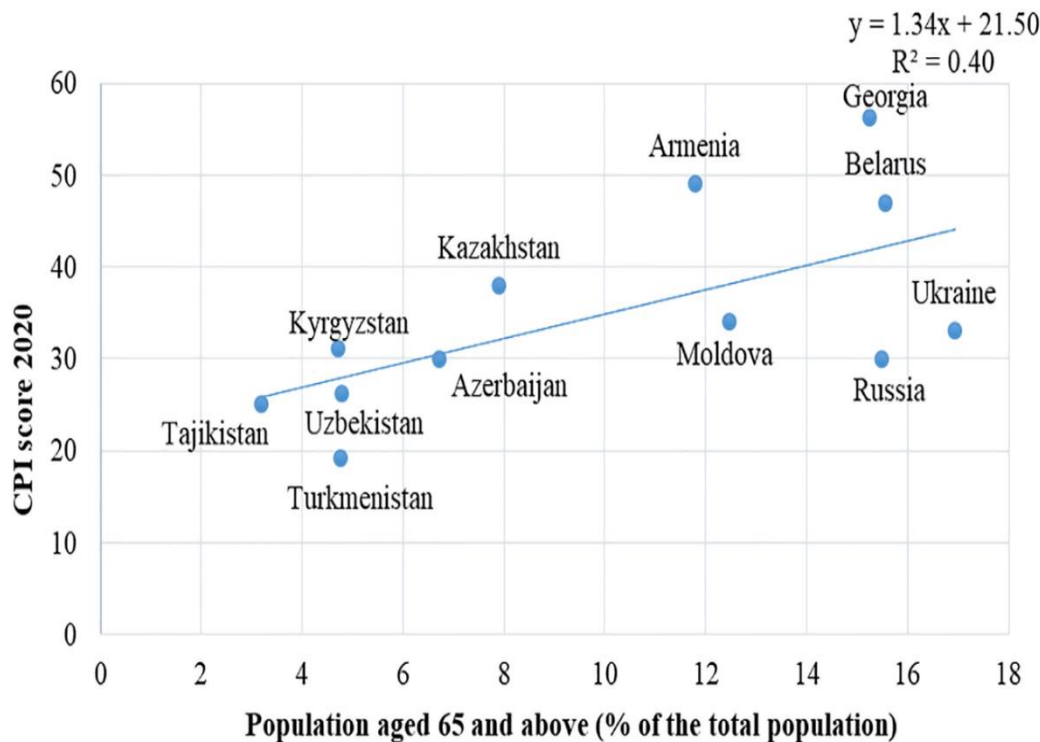
Note. Source: developed by the authors based on data retrieved from the Corruption Perceptions Index (Transparency International, 2021) and World Development Indicators (Data Bank, 2021).

As evidenced from the above, there is a pronounced difference in the level of corruption between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus (their CPI equals 30 and 47) and a little less marked one in the shares of the urban population as a percentage of its total number (74.8% and 79.5%, respectively). The explanation for this may be in differing structures of economic sectors. In the Russian Federation, corruption is traditionally associated with extractive industries, while in Belarus, the highest corruption rates are observed in the processing industry.

Another interesting aspect of the problem under consideration is the relationship between the level of corruption and the demographic structure of the population. While studying the factors that may influence the manifestation of nepotism, a strong correlation between the share of the population aged 65 and above (as a percentage of the total population) and the CPI was found (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Regression Analysis of the Relationship between the Share of the Population Aged 65 and Above (% of the Total Population) and Corruption in CIS Countries for 2020



Source: developed by the authors based on data retrieved from World Development Indicators (Data Bank, 2021).

The presence of a strong relationship between the studied indicators is confirmed by the coefficient of determination ($R=0.40$) and the correlation coefficient ($r=0.63$) at high confidence level of <0.05 and low statistical error (Table 3).

This fact can be explained both from the socio-cultural point of view and from the standpoint of institutional theory. On the one hand, the senior generation is a stable carrier of cultural traditions and law-abidance. On the other, the institutional environment in the CIS countries with a high percentage of the population aged over 65 differs significantly from similar environments in other former Soviet states, first of all, by the presence of distinct norms, rules, and attitudes toward corruption. Besides, giving gifts as a form of gratitude expression is not considered something reprehensible among the population of Central Asian countries, which cannot be said about Belarus, Ukraine, or the Russian Federation, where it sparks a negative attitude.

Here it is important to understand that in Central Asia and the Caucasus nepotism is institutionally ingrained in the minds of the population based on informal norms and rules supporting kinship relations. This is one of the main reasons why this phenomenon has not yet been effectively addressed.

Table 3

Population aged 65 and above (% of total population) and CPI Dynamics for Post-Soviet Countries

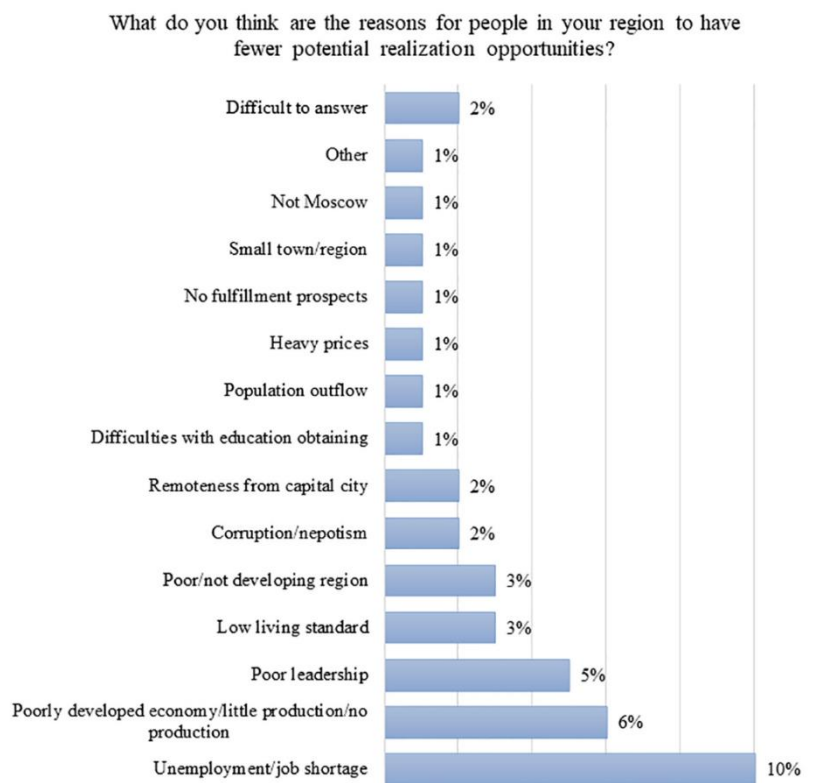
	Population aged 65 and above (% of total population)									
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
Armenia	10.8	10.8	10.8	10.9	11.0	11.1	11.3	11.5	11.8	
Azerbaijan	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.8	6.0	6.2	6.4	6.7	
Belarus	14.0	14.1	14.2	14.3	14.4	14.6	14.8	15.2	15.6	
Georgia	14.2	14.2	14.3	14.3	14.5	14.7	14.9	15.1	15.3	
Kazakhstan	6.8	6.8	6.8	6.8	6.9	7.1	7.4	7.7	7.9	
Kyrgyzstan	4.4	4.3	4.3	4.3	4.4	4.4	4.5	4.6	4.7	
Moldova	10.1	10.0	10.0	10.0	10.4	10.9	11.5	12.0	12.5	
Russian Federation	13.1	13.2	13.4	13.6	13.9	14.3	14.7	15.1	15.5	
Tajikistan	3.1	3.0	3.0	2.9	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.1	3.2	
Turkmenistan	4.1	4.0	4.0	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.6	4.8	
Ukraine	15.6	15.6	15.6	15.7	15.9	16.2	16.4	16.7	16.9	
Uzbekistan	4.3	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.3	4.4	4.6	4.8	
Corruption Perceptions Index										
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	
Armenia	34	36	37	35	33	35	35	42	49	
Azerbaijan	27	28	29	29	30	31	25	30	30	
Belarus	31	29	31	32	40	44	44	45	47	
Georgia	52	49	52	52	57	56	58	56	56	
Kazakhstan	28	26	29	28	29	31	31	34	38	
Kyrgyzstan	24	24	27	28	28	29	29	30	31	
Moldova	36	35	35	33	30	31	33	32	34	
Russian Federation	28	28	27	29	29	29	28	28	30	
Tajikistan	22	22	23	26	25	21	25	25	25	
Turkmenistan	17	17	17	18	22	19	20	19	19	
Ukraine	26	25	26	27	29	30	32	30	33	
Uzbekistan	17	17	18	19	21	22	23	25	26	
Correlation coefficient	0.645	0.622	0.587	0.598	0.632	0.678	0.674	0.607	0.632	
Determination coefficient	0.417	0.387	0.345	0.358	0.400	0.460	0.454	0.369	0.400	
Coefficients of the equation										
Y-intersection	16.84	17.58	19.02	20.01	19.78	18.49	18.67	21.19	21.50	
Variable X	8	6	2	7	7	1	6	3	4	
Standard error	1.317	1.179	1.157	1.085	1.250	1.410	1.400	1.216	1.336	
Y-intersection	4.878	4.643	5.009	4.594	4.914	5.000	5.142	5.460	5.757	
Variable X	0.493	0.469	0.504	0.460	0.484	0.483	0.485	0.503	0.518	
t-statistics										
Y-intersection	3.454	3.788	3.798	4.357	4.027	3.698	3.632	3.881	3.736	
Variable X	2.672	2.514	2.293	2.360	2.582	2.918	2.884	2.417	2.582	
P-value										
Y-intersection	0.006	0.004	0.003	0.001	0.002	0.004	0.005	0.003	0.004	
Variable X	0.023	0.031	0.045	0.040	0.027	0.015	0.016	0.036	0.027	

Note. Source: developed by the authors based on data retrieved from the Corruption Perceptions Index (Transparency International, 2021) and World Development Indicators (Data Bank, 2021).

To better understand the real characteristics, causes, and role of nepotism, one should use the method of interviewing respondents on the example of one of the CIS countries. For this purpose, this study took advantage of the results of a survey of Russian citizens conducted in 2020 by the Public Opinion Foundation (POF), who were asked about the reasons why people in their region have fewer potential realization opportunities (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Answers to the Question ‘What Do You Think Are the Reasons for People in Your Region to Have Fewer Potential Realization Opportunities?’ (the Question Was Addressed to Only 27% of Those Who Thought that People in Their Region Had Fewer Self-Realization Opportunities)



Source: developed by the authors based on data of the ‘Self-Realization Opportunities in Russia’ survey (FOM, 2020).

As it turned out, only 2% of the respondents recognized corruption and nepotism as factors that reduce opportunities for self-fulfillment in professional life. However, it should be kept in mind that, at a fundamental level, this 2% must be supplemented by 10% of respondents who consider unemployment and job shortage to be obstacles for self-realization, 6% of those who drew attention to a poorly developed economy and insufficient production, as well as 5% of those who see the problem in poor management. The data presented in Figure 2 characterize Russia and cannot be fully extrapolated to other countries of the post-Soviet space. However, the closeness of the corruption perception index indicators in these countries makes it possible to perceive the proposed data as model data, which may be very close to similar ones in other post-Soviet countries. This assumption is partly confirmed by a number of studies (Pyankova, 2020; Steenberg, 2021; Zaloznaya, 2022).

Assessment of public administration effectiveness in controlling corruption in the post-Soviet space using Worldwide Governance Indicators revealed an improving trend from 2012 to 2020 (Table 4). To calculate the indices, advanced mathematical models are used, which are regularly updated and improved (Kaufmann et al., 2011).

Table 4
Control of Corruption Dynamics for Post-Soviet Countries

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2012 % to 2020
Armenia	33.6	36.0	36.1	35.1	32.7	32.7	42.8	50.0	63.5	188.6
Azerbaijan	11.8	16.6	14.4	16.8	19.2	17.3	21.2	21.2	23.1	194.8
Belarus	36.5	39.8	48.1	46.6	48.6	47.6	49.0	55.3	59.6	163.4
Georgia	68.7	69.7	76.4	74.0	74.0	77.4	76.4	75.0	80.3	116.8
Kazakhstan	19.0	19.0	22.6	19.7	20.7	20.2	36.1	44.2	48.1	253.6
Kyrgyzstan	11.4	10.4	12.0	11.1	12.5	13.0	16.3	17.3	20.2	177.5
Moldova	31.8	23.2	20.7	18.3	14.9	21.2	26.0	28.8	44.2	139.3
Russian Federation	14.7	15.6	17.3	15.4	19.7	16.8	20.2	23.1	26.9	183.3
Tajikistan	6.6	7.1	12.5	11.5	12.0	7.7	6.7	9.1	15.4	231.9
Turkmenistan	1.9	2.8	6.7	5.8	4.3	4.8	4.3	3.8	10.6	557.9
Ukraine	12.8	11.4	14.9	14.9	21.2	22.1	18.3	25.5	30.8	240.5
Uzbekistan	4.7	8.1	9.6	8.7	11.1	12.0	13.0	14.9	23.1	486.9

Note. Source: developed by the authors based on data retrieved from The Worldwide Governance Indicators (2022).

This indicator reflects the perception of the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both minor and major forms of corruption, as well as the “capture” of the state by elites and private interests. The best indicator in 2020 was in Georgia (80.3), Armenia (63.5), and the worst in Turkmenistan (10.6).

Having decided on the data, it can be noted that the societies of the CIS countries do not fix the problem of nepotism as critical for institutional development. Apart from the processes in Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and, to some extent, Armenia, the processes of formation of “horizontal ties” take place gradually as the outlook of society develops and their reaction to events from outside and internal reforms. In the future, for all countries of the region, further analysis and study of the institutional factors of nepotism and the determination of further actions aimed at reducing its negative impact on social and economic relations will be updated. In some countries, this is already being done as part of improving anti-corruption legislation, albeit under both public pressure and pressure from external partners, such as international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Bosse, 2019). Here, the assessment should be carried out rather individually in order to form a more detailed picture.

Discussion

The analysis of the available academic literature on the matter and the findings obtained suggest that nepotism in the form of patronage and cronyism is a rather stable phenomenon in the post-Soviet space. The nepotism in the distribution of government positions traditionally existed both in the Russian Empire and in the Soviet period of history. The influence of older people and the traditional patriarchal structure on post-Soviet countries presented in this study is confirmed in other studies. Most of the post-Soviet countries have retained a patriarchal way of life, a significant degree of influence of networks of informal social interaction, and the precaution of the population in relation to the state. All these factors form the conditions for the persistence of nepotism at all levels and in all strata of society (Ekemen, 2023; Strebkov et al., 2018; Yurak et al., 2020). Other researchers confirm the practical results of the presented

research for post-Soviet countries: despite the introduction of competitive procedures and state attestation, clannishness, nepotism, and poorly developed institutional conditions for the turnover of leaders in state institutions and companies persist in many CIS nations.

Research stress that the collapse of the Soviet Union, newly emerged countries lacked political and democratic traditions of electing representative power, which would form a legal basis for its legitimization and replacement (Steenberg, 2021; Zaloznaya, 2022). The reason for this was that the post-Soviet leaders of the states that replaced the former republics derived directly from the Soviet ‘nomenklatura’ system (Czerewacz-Filipowicz & Konopelko, 2017; Samuratova, 2019).

Considering the methodology and results of current research, it is important for researchers to assess the reasons for the increased perception of corruption and the spread of nepotism in post-Soviet countries after the collapse of the USSR. During the period of democratic change, nomenklatura and clientelistic networks, especially at the highest levels, were the subject of severe social criticism. As a result, many people were brought into the system through elections rather than through personal contacts, which ensured transparency in the political system. On the flip side, the lack of strong institutional support contributed to a proliferation of decision-makers in parliamentary groups based on personal loyalty or group solidarity, giving them a patronizing character. In different countries of the CIS, a patronalistic and more pluralistic system of relations and more traditional nepotism or various forms of parochialism associated with it are mixed in various proportions (Tytko et al., 2020; Zaloznaya, 2022). Accordingly, group solidarity, lack of political experience, corruption, and mixing public service with individual entrepreneurship continued to work at this level (Maczak, 2017).

A sociological assessment of nepotism is impossible without assessing its penetration into all levels and strata of society. The examination showed that particular scholarly interest in the problem of nepotism is drawn to the role of professional and political dynasties in it. In contrast to nepotism at the highest levels of public administration or corporations, the presence of dynasties demonstrates the depth of nepotism in society at all levels (Burhan et al., 2020; Yates, 2023). It was noted that attitudes toward professional and political dynasties in public discourse are ambiguous. The analysis of the perception of professional dynasties by various Russian population subgroups revealed that among Russian citizens, the attitude toward professional continuity in the family is not popular, although the very phenomenon of professional dynasties is generally assessed positively. Such dynasties often bear certain features of the traditional medieval guild and depend heavily on the will of the most senior members (Posukhova & Klimenko, 2019; Yates, 2023). A similar attitude towards dynasties is recorded by researchers in other regions of the former USSR (Ivanova, 2020; Steenberg, 2021). This, to some extent, also confirms the results obtained in our study.

Researchers argue that against this background, a subgroup of the population appears who indicate their desire or the desire of their parents to inherit professional status. Most often, they share the attitude toward the continuation of family traditions in the professional sphere by representatives of higher-paid professional groups (lawyers, programmers, representatives of the extraction and processing of raw materials, telecommunications and communications, construction, and real estate) (Posukhova & Klimenko, 2019).

As of this date, political dynasties remain ubiquitous in democratic societies, even though many countries attempt to back off from hereditary rule. Scholars investigating the influence of dynastic politics on India’s economic development state that it exacerbates poverty and worsens the distribution of public goods (Pyankova, 2020). Apart from this, numerous adverse effects of dynasties arise because the descendants of first-generation politicians enter politics and inherit their parents’ constituencies (George, 2019). At the same time, in some cases, politicians can always have plans in store to withdraw from public activity in the event

of a crisis, while maintaining assets in the form of control over private businesses, as is the case in many Eastern European countries (Gjinovci, 2016b; Knott, 2018).

An important aspect of systemic corruption is favoritism, which often occurs together or for similar reasons to nepotism. From some point of view, favoritism, as the provision of preferences to individuals chosen for their proximity to the leader, and not for their professional qualities, is the next step after nepotism (Tytko et al., 2020; Yurak et al., 2020). While researchers view nepotism as a relic of a form of social protection, favoritism is a reflection of unchecked power, which is often provided by family ties (Im & Chen, 2020). A study of the relationship between cultural aspects of favoritism and the influence of trust in 97 countries using a bivariate correlation calculation method showed that collectivism, familism, uncertainty avoidance, and distance from power are positive correlates of both favoritism and nepotism. Institutional collectivism, future orientation, and trust, on the other hand, were negative correlates of favoritism and nepotism. Uncertainty avoidance and trust were key correlates of favoritism, while familism and future orientation were key correlates of nepotism. The presence of trust fully confirmed the relationship between culture and favoritism but did not mediate the relation between culture and nepotism. Researchers' findings regarding different key cultural correlates in relation to favoritism and nepotism provide valuable implications for expanding the understanding of the psychological and social nuances of nepotism. Specifically, favoritism in transactions and interactions with those not bound by social commitment relationships may be explained by beliefs, while interactions with those with social relationships (e.g., family and friends) may be explained by preferences (Im & Chen, 2020).

Nepotism is increasingly blamed for hampering fair competition for managerial positions and impeding the career advancement of high-performing employees. This phenomenon is viewed as a form of discrimination through which friends or family members are recruited or promoted not because of their qualifications but because they have blood ties or other relationships with the leadership. As evidenced by a survey of 255 respondents in 26 public and private institutions in Ethiopia, nepotism, as a part of the societal culture, has become widespread in organizations of many developing collective societies (Kawo & Torun, 2020; Shchankina, 2019).

Studies covering large samples of countries conclude that there is a close connection between the traditional foundations of society and the spread of various forms of corruption. Moreover, it is nepotism that accompanies traditional society almost everywhere (Burhan et al., 2020; Lazić, 2020). An investigation of the institutional impact of corporate governance on corruption conducted by means of the analysis of this issue on the example of 149 countries confirmed that corruption is reduced by good corporate governance practices (Boateng et al., 2020). At the same time, three cultural dimensions, namely, distance from power, individualism, and indulgence, moderate the governance-corruption link. Researchers assume that differences between corporate governance and national culture explain the level of corruption in societies. Very often researchers, as in this case, by national culture actually mean traditional informal support networks, which are the ground for nepotism, as was shown in this study. Thus, corruption in corporate governance can, to a large extent, depend on the willingness of society to accept corruption, which depends on the penetration of nepotism.

Conclusions

Nepotism can be rightfully called one of the causes of worsening post-Soviet economies' investment appeal and incompetent managerial decisions in state and private companies of different levels. The main danger of nepotism is that it promotes and maintains corruption in society, as family and friendly relations often help to conceal corruption-related crimes.

The present research holds the view that the Corruption Perceptions Index, in correlation with the number of older people who are carriers of traditional nepotistic relationships, can be viewed as an indirect indicator of the level of nepotism in the post-Soviet space. A thorough analysis of its indicators enabled the inference that during 2018-2020, the phenomenon of corruption was marked by an upward trend across almost all CIS countries except Georgia and Turkmenistan. At the same time, the highest rate of improvement in the situation with the corruption cases was observed for Armenia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and the Russian Federation.

The investigation uncovered that the achieved level of urbanization of the population in different CIS countries and the level of corruption are in a moderate but stable relationship with each other (this was confirmed by the correlation coefficient of 0.45). Besides, it was noted that the higher the level of urbanization, the lower the PCI, which can be explained by the presence of a well-developed manufacturing industry compared to the agrarian-industrial economic growth model in which corruption is an indispensable political culture element. Another feature of the problem under study is the link between the level of corruption and the demographic structure of the population. While studying the factors that may affect the manifestation of nepotism, a high correlation between the share of the population aged 65 and above (as a percentage of the total population) and the PCI was found ($r=0.63$). Such a result is attributed to the socio-cultural and institutional peculiarities of the development of individual CIS countries.

The general view is that the nature of nepotism in the post-Soviet space is a complex combination of a cultural phenomenon and the result of a specific demographic structure, as well as ineffective enforcement of laws due to weak legal and public democratic institutions. Future research on the matter might extend the available knowledge by studying institutional factors of nepotism and developing a set of measures directed at reducing its negative impact on social and economic relations. The effective implementation of the research results presupposes their integration into the international corruption combating practice.

Acknowledgements

Lilya Sabirova has been supported by the Kazan Federal University Strategic Academic Leadership Program.

References

- Akcinar, E. (2015). *Using social connections for employment purposes: A U.S./Middle East comparison of networking and nepotism* (Publication No. 28120098) [Doctoral dissertation, Stanford University]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.
- Bekesiene, S., Petrauskaite, A., & Kazlauskaite Markeliene, R. (2021). Nepotism and related threats to security and sustainability of the country: The case of Lithuanian organizations. *Sustainability*, 13(3), Article 1536. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13031536>
- Berger, J. (2023). *Mediterranean nepotism, avunculate kinship, siblings and matrimony: Function and role in religious and public affairs (3rd–18th Centuries)* (Publication No. 04181363) [Doctoral dissertation, Saint Louis University]. HAL Open Science.
- Boateng, A., Wang, Y., Ntim, C., & Glaister, K. W. (2020). National culture, corporate governance and corruption: A cross-country analysis. *International Journal of Finance & Economics*, 26(3), 3852–3874. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ijfe.1991>
- Bosse, G. (2019). Ten years of the Eastern Partnership: What role for the EU as a promoter of democracy? *European View*, 18(2), 220–232. <https://www.martenscentre.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/13.pdf>

- Burhan, O. K. (2020). *Nepotism* [Doctoral dissertation, Leiden University]. <https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/access/item%3A2968798/view>
- Burhan, O. K., van Leeuwen, E., & Scheepers, D. (2020). On the hiring of kin in organizations: Perceived nepotism and its implications for fairness perceptions and the willingness to join an organization. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 161, 34–48. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2020.03.012>
- Buscaneanu, C., & Stefes, C. H. (2020). ‘One hand washes the other’ in EU’s Eastern neighbourhood: What policy response? *Global Policy*, 11(5), 578–587. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1758-5899.12886>
- Costa Buranelli, F. (2020). Authoritarianism as an institution? The case of Central Asia. *International Studies Quarterly*, 64(4), 1005–1016. <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqaa058>
- Czerewacz-Filipowicz, K., & Konopelko, A. (Eds.) (2017). Concepts of political leadership in the CIS region. In *Regional integration processes in the commonwealth of independent States* (pp. 229–248). Springer.
- Data Bank (2021). *World development indicators*. The World Bank Group. <https://databank.worldbank.org/home>
- Dauda, B. (2020). Corruption, nepotism, and anti-bureaucratic behaviors. In N. Wariboko & T. Falola (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of African social ethics* (pp. 317–338). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-36490-8_19
- Ekemen, M. A. (2023). Nepotism. In H. C. Sözen & H. N. Basım (Eds.), *Dark sides of organizational life* (pp. 1–19). Routledge.
- Fetahu, D. (2017). The importance of nepotism and corruption management in institutions and the economy of the country. *European Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*, 2(7), 133–143. <https://doi.org/10.26417/ejms.v6i2.p133-143>
- FOM (2020). *Self-Realization Opportunities in Russia*. Public Opinion Foundation Survey, <https://fom.ru/TSennosti/14492>
- Gagliarducci, S., & Manacorda, M. (2020). Politics in the family: Nepotism and the hiring decisions of Italian firms. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 12(2), 67–95. <https://doi.org/10.1257/app.20170778>
- George, S. E. (2019). *Like father, like son? The effect of political dynasties on economic development* [Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University]. Harvard University. https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/siddharthgeorge/files/sid_dynasties_draft_14jan2019.pdf
- Gjinovci, A. (2016a). The impact of nepotism and corruption in the economy. *Knowledge Horizons. Economics*, 8(2), 133–139.
- Gjinovci, A. (2016b). The impact of nepotism and corruption on the economy and HR. *Economic and Environmental Studies*, 16(3), 421–434.
- Hudson, S., & Claasen, C. (2017). Nepotism and cronyism as a cultural phenomenon? In M. S. Aßländer & S. Hudson (Eds.), *The handbook of business and corruption* (pp. 95–118). Emerald Publishing Limited. <https://doi.org/10.1108/978-1-78635-445-720161006>
- Im, H., & Chen, C. (2020). Cultural dimensions as correlates of favoritism and the mediating role of trust. *Cross Cultural & Strategic Management*, 27(3), 417–445. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CCSM-09-2019-0165>
- Ivanova, Y. Y. (2020). Nepotism as a destructive form of professional dynasties: State policy and social opinion. *Theory and Practice of Social Development*, 5(147), 42–50.
- Jain, L., Gál, É., & Orosz, G. (2022). Nepotistic hiring and poverty from cultural, social class, and situational perspectives. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, Article 780629. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.780629>
- Karpov, I. V. (2018). Political culture of post-Soviet countries: Expert reflection. *Great Eurasia: Development, Security, Cooperation*, 1, 90–91.

- Kaufmann, D., Kraay, A., & Mastruzzi, M. (2011). The worldwide governance indicators: Methodology and analytical issues. *Hague Journal on the Rule of Law*, 3, 220–246. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1876404511200046>
- Kaushal, N., Ghalawat, S., & Kaurav, R. P. S. (2021). Nepotism concept evaluation: A systematic review and bibliometric analysis. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 1, Article 4896.
- Kawo, J. W., & Torun, A. (2020). The relationship between nepotism and disengagement: The case of institutions in Ethiopia. *Journal of Management Marketing and Logistics*, 7(1), 53–65. <http://doi.org/10.17261/Pressacademia.2020.119>
- Knott, E. (2018). Perpetually “partly free”: Lessons from post-Soviet hybrid regimes on backsliding in Central and Eastern Europe. *East European Politics*, 34(3), 355–376. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21599165.2018.1493993>
- Kupatadze, A. (2012). *Organized crime, political transitions and state formation in post-Soviet Eurasia*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230361393>
- Lazić, U. A. (2020). Mapping of nepotism based on surname homonymity: The case of the University of Novi Sad. *Socioloski Pregled*, 54(2), 302–337. <https://doi.org/10.5937/socpreg54-25051>
- Ledeneva, A. (2018). Future challenges of corruption studies. *Südosteuropa*, 66(3), 418–425. <https://doi.org/10.1515/soeu-2018-0031>
- Luna-Pla, I., & Nicolás-Carlock, J. R. (2020). Corruption and complexity: A scientific framework for the analysis of corruption networks. *Applied Network Science*, 5, Article 13. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41109-020-00258-2>
- Maczak, A. (2017). *Unequal friendship: The patron-client relationship in historical perspective*. Peter Lang Edition.
- Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Russian Federation (2017). Letter from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Russian Federation of 16.05.2017 N 18-2/B-297 ‘On the Application of Certain Provisions of the Decree of the Government of the Russian Federation of 05.07.2013 No. 568’. <http://www.consultant.ru/law/hotdocs/51079.html/>
- Morini, M. (2023). The presidentialization and the party of power in post-Soviet states. In M. Glaser, I. Krivushin, & M. Morini (Eds.), *The presidentialization of political parties in Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus* (pp. 1–19). Springer Nature Switzerland.
- Perez-Alvarez, M., & Strulik, H. (2021). Nepotism, human capital and economic development. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 181, 211–240. <http://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2020.11.034>
- Popczyk, W. (2017). Family social capital versus nepotism in family businesses. In *5th RSEP Social Sciences Conference, 7-10 November, 2017, Barcelona* (pp. 47–52). BC GRUP INC.
- Posukhova, O., & Klimenko, L. (2019). Professional dynasties in the public consciousness of Russians. In *SHS Web of Conferences* (Vol. 72, Article 03041). EDP Sciences. <https://doi.org/10.1051/shsconf/20197203041>
- Pramujaningtyas, A., & Rusminingsih, D. (2021). Human capital, economic development, and nepotism. *Splash Magazine*, 1(1), 22–24.
- Pyankova, V. M. (2020). Corruption as one of the directions of combating crime in the period of formation of the Soviet State: Legislation and judicial practice. *Issues of Russian Justice*, 6, 54–71.
- Ragauskas, R., & Valeškaitė, I. (2020). Nepotism, political competition and overemployment. *Political Research Exchange*, 2(1), Article 1781542. <http://doi.org/10.1080/2474736x.2020.1781542>

- Samuratova, T., Kaliyeva, Z., Makhanov, M., & Yermekova, Z. (2019). Energy efficient environment in architecture. In *E3S Web of Conferences* (Vol. 116, Article 00031). EDP Sciences. <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/201911600031>
- Samuratova, T., Musalimov, T., Albytova, N., Makhanov, M., & Omarbekova, N. (2015) Space and time as the fundamental elements of Kazakh World Image. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(5), 127–132. <https://doi.org/10.5901/mjss.2015.v6n5s2p127>
- Sarotte, M. E. (2021). *Not one inch: America, Russia, and the making of post-Cold War stalemate*. Yale University Press.
- Serfraz, A., Munir, Z., Muneeb, A. M., & Qamruzzaman, M. (2022). Nepotism effects on job satisfaction and withdrawal behavior: An empirical analysis of social, ethical and economic factors from Pakistan. *Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business*, 9(3), 311–318. <http://doi.org/10.13106/jafeb.2022.vol9.no3.0311>
- Shchankina, L. N. (2019). Anti-corruption legislation during the Soviet Era. *Economics, Law, Society*, 4, 72–79.
- Sroka, W., & Weinhardt, J. (2018). Nepotism and favouritism in the steel industry: A case study analysis. *Forum Scientiae Oeconomia*, 6(1), 31–45. http://doi.org/10.23762/FSO_VOL6NO1_18_4
- Steenberg, R. (2021). Legitimate corruption: Ethics of bureaucracy and kinship in Central Asia. *Studies of Transition States and Societies*, 13(1), 3–20. <https://doi.org/10.58036/stss.v13i1.931>
- Strebkov, A. I., Vakhnin, N. A., & Rukavishnikov, A. B. (2018). Intermediary relations and conflict in the sociological paradigm of the society analysis. *Conflictology*, 13(1), 40–57.
- Tazhibekova, K., Shametova, A., Urazbekov, A., Akhmetzhanov, B., Akenov, S., & Tulupova, S. (2020). Enhancing eco-economic efficiency of mineral deposit exploration to achieve sustainable development in the mining industry of Kazakhstan. *Progress in Industrial Ecology, an International Journal*, 14(3-4), 212–228. <https://doi.org/10.1504/PIE.2020.113425>
- Ternovaya, L. O. (2019). Political nepotism in the national and global dimensions. *Etnosotsium and International Culture*, 9, 107–116.
- The Georgia (2017). *On the incompatibility of interest and corruption in a public institution*. <https://matsne.gov.ge/ru/document/view/33550?publication=79>
- The Republic of Armenia (2003). *Criminal code of the Republic of Armenia*. <https://www.arlis.am/DocumentView.aspx?docid=63312>
- The Republic of Belarus (2021). *Labor code of the Republic of Belarus*. https://kodeksy-by.com/trudovoj_kodeks_rb/27.htm
- The Republic of Kazakhstan (2015). *Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan on Combating Corruption*. Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated November 18, 2015 No. 410-V LRK. https://kodeksy-kz.com/ka/o_protivodejstvii_korruptsii/14.htm
- The Republic of Kyrgyzstan (2017). *About conflict of interest*. <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gogSNfwDV2adYo3RKIV9jmoNy5GUxxtH/edit>
- The Republic of Moldova (2008). *On preventing and combating corruption*. https://publicofficialsfinancialdisclosure.worldbank.org/sites/fdl/files/assets/law-library-files/Moldova_Anti-Corruption%20Law%202008_amended%202012_RU.pdf
- The Republic of Tajikistan (2011). *Law of the Republic of Tajikistan on combating corruption*. <https://www.mfa.tj/ru/main/view/2590/zakon-respubliki-tadzhikistan-o-borbe-s-korruptsiei>

- The Republic of Turkmenistan (2014). *Turkmenistan Law on counteracting corruption*. <http://www.turkmenbusiness.org/content/zakon-turkmenistana-o-protivodeistvii-korruptsii>
- The Republic of Uzbekistan (2017). *The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan on combating corruption*. https://nbu.uz/upload/iblock/aea/ZRU_419-03.01.2017.pdf
- The Worldwide Governance Indicators (2022). *Control of corruption*. <https://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/>
- Transparency International (2021). *Corruption Perceptions Index*. <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2020/index/nzl#>
- Tytko, A., Smokovych, M., Dorokhina, Y., Chernenchenko, O., & Stremenovskyi, S. (2020). Nepotism, favoritism and cronyism as a source of conflict of interest: Corruption or not? *Amazonia Investiga*, 9(29), 163–169. <https://doi.org/10.34069/AI/2020.29.05.19>
- Ukraine (2014). *Prevention and settlement of conflicts of interest*. https://urst.com.ua/ru/o_predotvraschenii_korruptsii/st-28
- Vakhnina, E. G., & Vakhnin, N. A. (2019). The conflict-generating potential of political culture in the context of globalization. In *Actual problems of the development of modern society* (pp. 42–49). Saint Petersburg Mining University.
- Yates, D. A. (2023). Dynastic diplomacy: Soft suzerainty, transdynastic relations, nepotism. In F. Onditi, K. McLarren, G. Ben-Nun, Y. A. Stivachtis, & P. Okoth (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of diplomatic thought and practice in the digital age* (pp. 265–285). Springer International Publishing.
- Yu, J., De Klerk, S., & Hess, M. (2023). The influence of cronyism on entrepreneurial resource acquisition. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, 40, 121–150. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10490-021-09769-7>
- Yurak, V. V., Dushin, A. V., & Mochalova, L. A. (2020). Against sustainable development: Scenarios of the future. *Notes of the Mining Institute*, 242, 242–247. <https://doi.org/10.31897/PMI.2020.2.242>
- Zaloznaya, M. (2022). The civic crime of corruption: Citizen networks and public sector bribery in the non-democracies. *Theoretical Criminology*, 26(4), 641–663. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13624806221099105>

Notes on Contributors

Bibigul Byulegenova is a Professor of the Department of Political Science at the Eurasian National University named after L.N. Gumilyov, Astana, Kazakhstan. She holds Ph.D. in Political Science, Associate Professor, Best Teacher of the Year 2023. Published over 50 works. Authored monographs, educational materials with the imprint of the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Certificate of Inclusion of Data in the State Register of Copyrights, 9 electronic educational materials, holder of 30 certificates. Participated with international experts in the international conference “Interethnic Harmony in the Modern Period: Experience and Future Challenges.” Member of the Scientific-Expert Council of the National Expert Council.

Valeriy Prasolov is an Associate Professor of the Department of Economic Security and Risk Management at the University of Finance, Moscow. He holds Ph.D. in Political Sciences, Associate Professor, has been lecturing on ensuring the security of the state, society, and the individual for more than 12 years in teaching. He is a recognized expert in the assessment and implementation of technical means and security systems by the professional community. Currently, his research interests are related to the development of the non-governmental security sector as a structural element of the state security system.

Gulmira Sheryazdanova holds PhD in Political Science. She is an Associate Professor of the Department of General Education Discipline at the Astana IT University, Kazakhstan. My research interests include studying the issues of national building in Post-Soviet countries, administrative and petty corruption, and e-government. Currently, I am a visiting scholar at Minnesota University Twin Cities, USA. Her papers have been published in such journals as Journal of Information Technology & Politics, Indian Journal of Science and Technology, Opción, Utopia y Praxis Latinoamericana.

Sergey Bratanovsky holds Ph.D. in Law. He is a Professor, Academician, and Vice-President of the Eurasian Academy of Administrative Sciences, full member of the International Academy of Pedagogical Sciences. Honorary Worker of higher professional education, three times winner of the All-Russian Competition of the Russian Education Foundation for the best scientific book, Chief Researcher of the Department of State and Municipal Administration of Plekhanov Russian University of Economics. In the field of scientific research of Professor Bratanovsky S. N., the problems of public administration in the field of socio-cultural life in Russia prevail.

Lilya Sabirova holds Ph.D. in Philosophy. She is an Associate Professor of the Department of Philosophy and Sociology at the Elabuga Institute of Kazan Federal University. She is responsible for scientific research work of students, expert of the competition "My Country - My Russia". Scientific interests: technologies for developing the scientific worldview of future teachers in the digital era. The latest publication appeared in the journal Information Sciences Letters: Mambetalina, A., Karkulova, A., & Lebedeva, M. (2023). Preschool education and its impact on the scientific and research potential of rising schoolchildren: In favor or against? *Information Sciences Letters*, 12(9), 2923-2936.

ORCID

Bibigul Byulegenova, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7810-9653>

Valeriy Prasolov, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0321-4111>

Gulmira Sheryazdanova, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8896-0396>

Sergey Bratanovsky, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6507-4439>

Lilya Sabirova, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5573-3509>

Appendix 1

A systematic review of common characteristics and differences in the legal assessment of nepotism in CIS countries

Country	Common Features	Distinguishing Features
Armenia	Article 308 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Armenia. Abuse of Official Powers. 1. The use by an official of his or her official position contrary to the interests of the service or non-performance of official duties out of self-interest, other personal interest, or group interests, which has caused substantial harm to the rights and lawful interests of persons, organizations, the lawful interests of society or the state... (The Republic of Armenia 2003).	Emphasis on abuse of power
Azerbaijan	Nepotism is considered as abuse of power. Paragraph 11.3. of the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan of May 31, 2017, No. 686-VQD. A civil servant must not allow his/her interests or the interests of concerned persons to influence the performance of his/her official duties and must not create conditions for such influence (The Azerbaijan 2017).	Emphasis on the ethical side of nepotism
Belarus	In Belarus, Article 27 of the Labor Code of the Republic of Belarus regulates the aspect of nepotism. According to this article, it is prohibited for persons related to each other (parents, children, adoptive parents, adopted children, siblings, grandparents, grandchildren, spouses, and the same relatives of the spouse) to work together in the same state organization (its separate subdivision) in the position of the head (or his/her deputy), chief accountant (or his/her deputy), and cashier, if their work is related to direct subordination or control of one of them over the other. The prohibition stipulated by this article can also be established in non-governmental organizations by the owner's decision (The Republic of Belarus 2021).	Emphasis on the prohibition on holding positions based on family ties
Georgia	Article 13. Paragraph 13: No close relatives of an official may be appointed under an administrative contract or employment contract (except by competitive appointment) to a position under the official's supervision (The Georgia 2017).	Emphasis on the prohibition on holding positions based on family ties
Kazakhstan	Paragraph 1 of Article 14 of the Law stands for the inadmissibility of joint service (work) of close relatives, spouses, or cousins. More precisely, it states that persons holding a responsible civil service position, persons authorized to perform public functions (except for deputies of maslikhats conducting their activity not on a permanent or full-time basis), persons equated to persons authorized to perform public functions (except for presidential candidates of the Republic of Kazakhstan, members of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan or deputies of maslikhats, akims of towns of district significance, rural settlements, villages, rural districts, as well as members of local self-government elected bodies), and other officials	Emphasis on the inadmissibility of close relatives serving (working) together

	shall be prohibited from holding positions that are directly subordinate to positions held by their close relatives, spouse, and (or) in-laws, as well as have close relatives, spouse, and (or) in-laws in direct subordination (The Republic of Kazakhstan 2015).	
Kyrgyzstan	Article 16. Identification of conflicts of interest 1. A conflict of interest shall be identified by examining the presence of kinship with the employer and subordinates when employing the persons referred to in Article 6 of this Law, including when accepting documents by authorized bodies to participate in elections (The Republic of Kyrgyzstan 2017).	The focus is on identifying conflicts of interest
Moldova	Article 15. Facts of corrupt behavior. Participation with the right to vote or decision-making in the consideration and resolution of issues relating to personal interests or the interests of persons with whom they are related shall be deemed a fact of corrupt behavior of persons subject to this law (The Republic of Moldova 2008).	The focus is on identifying conflicts of interest
Russian Federation	The joint work of relatives and in-laws filling positions included in the list provided in Paragraph 1 of the resolution in state institutions, state unitary enterprises, or state-owned enterprises is prohibited (Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Russian Federation 2017).	Emphasis on the prohibition on holding positions based on family ties
Tajikistan	Article 4. Basic principles of combating corruption. Non-admission of nepotism and patronage as a manifestation of corruption (as amended by Law No. 772 of 2011-12-26 of Tajikistan) (The Republic of Tajikistan 2011).	Emphasis on favoritism and the corrupt problem of nepotism
Turkmenistan	Article 3. Paragraph 8. The personal interest of a public servant is the possibility that in the performance of official duties s/he may receive a benefit in the form of money, valuables, other property or property services or other property rights for him/herself or for third parties, which affects or may affect the proper performance of his/her official duties (The Republic of Turkmenistan 2014).	The focus is on identifying conflicts of interest
Ukraine	Article 28 of the Law of Ukraine on Prevention of Corruption. Prevention and Settlement of Conflict of Interest. Paragraph 2: Persons authorized to perform state or local government functions may not directly or indirectly induce in any way subordinates to take decisions, perform actions or omissions contrary to the law in favor of their private interests or private interests of third parties (Ukraine 2014).	The focus is on identifying conflicts of interest
Uzbekistan	Article 19. Measures to prevent corruption in public administration. Measures to prevent corruption in public administration are: determining the legal status of employees of state bodies, establishing a transparent procedure for service, introducing a system of competitive selection and promotion based on personal and professional qualities, the principles of openness, impartiality, fairness and objectivity (The Republic of Uzbekistan 2017).	Emphasis on legal issues of combating nepotism and corruption