



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***CORRUPTION AND BRIBE-GIVING FACTORS AMONG YOUNG ADULTS  
IN MALAYSIA***

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**FEM 2022 26**



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MALAYSIA**

By

**LIM MENG ZHEN**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra  
Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy**

**April 2022**

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

## **CORRUPTION AND BRIBE-GIVING FACTORS AMONG YOUNG ADULTS IN MALAYSIA**

By

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**April 2022**

**Chair: Wan Munira Binti Wan Jaafar, PhD**  
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Bribe-giving is a type of corruption / white-collar crime that hurts people and jeopardizes the social fabric. Many efforts to curb corruption were done based on the macro level consideration such as regulating the law, however, it is yet to produce a desirable outcome. Experts have suggested that corrupt behavior must be examined at micro-level. Corruption studies tend to focus only on bribe recipients. Despite playing a crucial role, bribe givers are often ignored. Hence, the aim of this dissertation is to explore the micro-determinants of bribe giving intention and understand the common sense definition (social representation) of bribery and corruption among young adults in Malaysia. Concurrent mixed-method study using two social psychology theories, Theory of Social Representation (TSR) and Reasoned Action Approach (RAA) have been incorporated as the underlying framework to understand the issues.

The qualitative (QUAL) and quantitative (QUAN) inquiries are carried out concurrently and triangulated to form an overall interpretation about bribe giving intention. Both studies used survey methods to gather data among Malaysian youths using opportunity sampling methods. For QUAL,  $n=253$  ( $M_{age} = 21.32$ ) respondents participated to express their opinions about corruption and prototypical analysis was carried out using IRAMUTEQ software to explore social representation. In QUAN,  $n=345$  ( $M_{age} = 20.68$ ) respondents participated by answering self-administered questionnaires about all RAA variables. The RAA instruments used were modified and developed for this study. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was carried out using smartPLS3.0 to analyze the result.

The QUAL inquiry revealed that (i) The core social representation for corruption and bribery are "money"; (ii) The actor for corruption are "government", while bribery are "police"; (iii) "Corruption" was evaluated with the negative adjectives

such as “bad” and “dishonest” in the core system but not “bribery”; and (iv) Respondents socially represent bribery as corruption and vice versa. For QUAN inquiry, PLS-SEM analysis revealed that the main predictors of bribe giving intention included (i) Instrumental Attitudes (IA), (ii) Experiential Attitudes (EA), (iii) Parents’ descriptive norms (DNP) and (iv) Capacity. The 4 factors explain 74 percent of the variance in bribe giving intention. The study also found that females as compared to males and those who attended the national primary school as compared to those who have attended Chinese vernacular school showed lower bribe giving intention. No significant differences were found between those who attended different types of secondary schools.

As a result of triangulating both inquiries, the social representation study shed light on young adults’ understanding of the phenomena and provided clear directions for shaping desired IA, EA, DNP, and Capacity to curb bribe giving. For example, according to the QUAL inquiry, bribery is not negatively evaluated, so in order to shape negative IA towards bribery, young adults need to be taught to use negative evaluation to describe the behavior. This dissertation expanded the usage of both social psychology theory, TSR and RAA to understand bribe giving intention. All findings from this dissertation could be used by stakeholders who want to curb bribe giving behavior among young adults in Malaysia.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia  
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

## **KORUPSI DAN FAKTOR MENGENAI GEJALA MEMBERI RASUAH DALAM KALANGAN DEWASA MUDA DI MALAYSIA**

Oleh

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Rasuah adalah sejenis jenayah kolar putih yang mencabul hak orang ramai dan menjejaskan struktur sosial. Banyak usaha membanteras rasuah dilakukan berdasarkan pertimbangan di peringkat makro seperti mengawal selia undang-undang; namun ia masih belum berkesan. Pakar telah mencadangkan bahawa tingkah laku rasuah mesti difahami di peringkat mikro dalam aspek pemberi rasuah. Oleh itu, kajian ini dijalankan untuk memahami aspek penentu mikro terhadap kecenderungan memberi rasuah dan memahami perwakilan sosial rasuah dalam kalangan golongan dewasa muda di Malaysia. Kajian kaedah campuran menggunakan dua teori psikologi sosial, Teori Representasi Sosial (TSR) dan Pendekatan Tindakan Beralasan (RAA) akan digabungkan sebagai rangka kerja asas untuk memahami isu tersebut.

Kajian kualitatif (QUAL) dan kuantitatif (QUAN) dijalankan secara berasingan pada masa yang sama dan kaedah triangulasi digunakan bagi tujuan membentuk tafsiran keseluruhan tentang niat memberi rasuah. Kedua-dua kajian menggunakan kaedah tinjauan untuk mengumpul data dalam kalangan dewasa muda di Malaysia menggunakan kaedah persampelan peluang. Bagi QUAL,  $n=253$  ( $M_{umur} = 21.32$ ) responden mengambil bahagian untuk menyatakan pendapat mereka tentang rasuah dalam kaedah deskriptif; analisis prototaip telah dijalankan menggunakan perisian IRAMUTEQ untuk meneroka representasi sosial. Dalam Kajian QUAN,  $n=345$  ( $M_{umur} = 20.68$ ) responden mengambil bahagian dengan menjawab soal selidik tentang semua pembolehubah RAA. Instrumen RAA yang digunakan telah diubah suai untuk kajian ini. Kaedah PLS-SEM digunakan untuk analisis data dengan menggunakan aplikasi SmartPLS 3.0.

Hasil daripada analisis prototaip untuk kajian QUAL mendapati bahawa mendedahkan bahawa (i) representasi sosial utama untuk kedua-dua istilah "*corruption atau korupsi*" dan "*bribery*" adalah wang, (ii) orang yang terlibat dalam korupsi adalah "kerajaan" dan *bribery* adalah "polis", (iii) responden menilai korupsi dengan kata sifat negatif seperti "buruk" dan "tidak jujur" sebagai unsur teras. Untuk kajian QUAN, analisis PLS-SEM mendedahkan bahawa peramal utama kecenderungan niat memberi rasuah termasuk sikap instrumental (IA) dan pengalaman (EA), norma deskriptif ibubapa (DNP) dan dan kapasiti. 4 faktor tersebut menjelaskan 74 peratus varians dalam kecenderungan niat memberi rasuah. Selain itu, kajian juga mendapati wanita mempunyai niat memberi rasuah yang lebih rendah berbanding lelaki. Golongan muda yang pernah bersekolah di sekolah rendah kebangsaan menunjukkan niat memberi rasuah yang lebih rendah berbanding mereka yang pernah bersekolah di sekolah vernakular Cina. Tiada perbezaan ditemui untuk pemboleh ubah jenis-jenis sekolah menengah.

Triangulasi kajian QUAL dan QUAN menunjukkan bahawa kajian perwakilan sosial menjelaskan pemahaman orang dewasa muda tentang fenomena rasuah dan memberikan petunjuk yang jelas dalam membentuk IA, EA, DNP dan Kapasiti golongan muda dewasa yang dikehendaki untuk mengekang amalan memberi rasuah. Sebagai contoh, kajian QUAL mendedahkan bahawa rasuah tidak dinilai secara negatif, jadi untuk membentuk sikap instrumental negatif terhadap rasuah, orang dewasa muda perlu diajar menggunakan penilaian negatif untuk menggambarkan tingkah laku memberi rasuah. Kajian ini memperluaskan penggunaan kedua-dua teori psikologi sosial, TSR dan RAA untuk memahami niat memberi rasuah. Hasil kajian ini boleh digunakan oleh pihak berkepentingan yang ingin membantu dalam membendung tingkah laku memberi rasuah dalam kalangan dewasa muda di Malaysia.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To all my students, who have inspired and making research meaningful and fun.

To my supervisory team, Dr. Munira, Dr. Azlina, Dr. Hanina and Dr. Yong, for guidance, encouragement, and advice.

To more than 1000 respondents who have taken part in this study, you are the engine of this study and I am deeply thankful for your voluntary participation.

To my family, Hisae, Nao, the Waldrons, Michael, John, Camen and Eliza thank you for always being there for me, listening and supporting me through this journey.

To all my mentors and colleagues, thank you for encouragement and criticism.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the following individual for their kindness in helping and advising me along the journey while working on this research.

### **Proposal Development**

- Dr. Nor Diana Binti Mohd. Mahudin
- Ms. Nur Aini Alegrea Suner
- Dr. Mohd Ferdaus Bin Harun
- Mr. Adnan Omar
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### **Theory of Social Representation**

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- Professor Hew Gill

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### **Data Collection & Proofreading**

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- Aisyah Mohd Farid
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- Nava Waheed
- Che Wan Danish Hilman Bin Che Wan Khairul Anuar
- Amanda See Pei Yee
- Yungqi Khoo
- Bilvashri Seyon
- Mariyam Aroofa Arif

### **Encouragement & Inspiration**

- Professor Dr. Abhimanyu Veerakumarasivam
- Professor Dr. Alvin Ng
- Professor Dr. Mohd. Tajuddin Bin Mohd. Rasdi
- Dr. Grace Yap
- Professor Dr. Haslinda Abdullah
- Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mohammad Rahim Kamaluddin
- Assoc. Prof. Dr Lin Mei-Hua
- Dr. Odsson Ferreira
- Dr. Lara Warmelink

### **Malaysia Anti-Corruption Commission**

- PKPJ Abd Malek Bin Mohd Yusof- Ketua Cawangan Laporan
- PPJ Mohd Azmir Bin Aziz - Ketua Cawangan Fomia
- PPJ Nur Haryati Binti Abdul Hamid - Cawangan Perundangan Dan Penyelidikan
- Nor Azmi Karim - Pengarah Bahagian Dasar, Perancangan dan Penyelidikan
- Nor Azah Binti Ahmad - Penolong Penguasa Unit Statistik Cawangan Rekod Operasi dan Statistik (CAROS)
- Hazwani Binti Md Shamsi - Penolong Penguasa Cawangan Pengurusan Dasar Bahagian Dasar, Perancangan dan Penyelidikan

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Date: 13 October 2022

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CPI	Corruption Perception Index by Transparency International
DNF	Descriptive Norms Towards Bribery For Close Friends
DNP	Descriptive Norms Towards Bribery For Parents
EA	Experiential Attitude towards bribery
H	Hypothesis
IA	Instrumental Attitude towards bribery
INF	Injunctive Norms Towards Bribery For Close Friends
INP	Injunctive Norms Towards Bribery For Parents
IRAMUTEQ	Interface de R pour les Analyses Multidimensionnelles de Textes et de Questionnaires
MACC	Malaysia anti-corruption commision
PLS	Partial Least Squares
QUAL	The qualitative inquiry
QUAN	The quantitative inquiry
RAA	Reasoned Action Approach
RAA Variables	8 Sub-variables: EA , IA, DNF, DNP, INF, INP, Capacity & Autonomy
RQ	Research Question
SEM	Structural equation model
SJT	Situational Judgement Technique
TPB	Theory of Planned Behaviour
TSR	Theory of Social Representation

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

The first chapter of this dissertation aims to introduce the readers with the background of the study, problem statements, research questions, objectives and hypotheses, study plan, significance of the study, theoretical and conceptual framework, definitions, scope of the study and dissertation organization.

### 1.2 Background of the Study

The United Nations' sustainable development goal (SDG) 16.5 targets to substantially reduce corruption and bribery in all their forms (United Nations, 2021). Corruption is a type of white-collar crime that happens everywhere around the world (Sultanovna, 2021). Yet, Asian countries in particular, suffered from it the most. In the Asia Pacific region, Transparency International (2017) revealed that 1 out of 4 people had to pay bribes for a public service. It is estimated that the developing countries lost about USD1.26 trillion per year due to corruption practice (Fleming, 2019). For the second cleanest countries in SouthEast Asia, Malaysia, lost approximately USD 56 billion, or about 4% of GDP, to corruption from 2013-2017 (Bradbury & Yuvaraj, 2019) and involved in one of the largest world corruption scandals where around USD4 billion was embezzled from 1MDB development fund for private gains (Nazmi & Rahim, 2016). In 2020, Malaysia Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) reported less corruption investigations (857 cases) as compared to 2019 (1039 cases). However, although all types of corrupt related offenses have decreased, bribe-giving has increased by 9.2% (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2021).

Leff (1964) and Huntington (1968) argued that corruption such as bribes has its advantages for society (Gneezy et al., 2019), but corrupt behavior must be curbed because it hurts people and jeopardizes the social fabric (Robertson & Nichols, 2017). To give a few examples of how corruption hurts people: it creates unfair situations (Chang, 2021), increases income inequality and poverty (Dimant & Tosato, 2018), increases child mortality rate (Mouneer & Khan, 2019), reduces child birth weight & increases dropout rates in primary school (Tiongson et al., 2000), jeopardizes the health care system (Fazilov, 2021), and decreases education quality (Boly et al., 2021). Social fabric is described as the social attributes which explain the fundamentals of relationships between people in a collective (Avital, et al., 2021). To give a few examples of how corruption jeopardizes social fabric: it destroys trust in business (Bu et al., 2021), government and institutions (Andriani & Escudero Loaiza, 2021).

Effort to curb corruption is often done based on the macro level consideration such as regulating the law or economy (see Othman et al., 2014; Yahya et al., 2015; Joseph et al., 2016; Chong & Narayanan, 2017; Mahmoud, 2018; Ahmad Khair et al., 2019; Kapeli & Mohamed, 2019; Joseph et al., 2019; Muhamad & Gani, 2020; Yusof & Arshad, 2020). The economic perspective assumes that people are selfish and would make rational decisions based on the cost-benefit analysis (Becker, 1968). On the basis of this theory, Malaysia established its own Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) in 2009 and also introduced the National Anti-Corruption Plan (Muhamad & Gani, 2020). However, all of these efforts do not show the desirable result for Malaysia to be one of the cleanest countries in the world. Although corruption became a major national political issue in a general election, it appears to have remained intractable (Siddiquee & Zafarullah, 2020). It should come as no surprise as Mazar et al. (2008), Zaloznaya (2014) and Quah (2010) have refuted the idea of solely using macro perspective to reduce corruption. Hence, the pervasiveness of corruption in Malaysia is apparent and thus worth investigating the factors that resist the measures that the Malaysian government has taken against it.

Corruption is often described as a difficult destructive social phenomena (Burukin et al., 2021), however, in reality individuals have full authority to decide whether to involve or not to involve in corruption. In another word, corruption is a planned and reasoned action. In 2018, The Goldman Sachs Group, Inc's Malaysia subsidiary took part in a scheme to pay a \$1 billion bribe to foreign officials. This criminal offense has led the company to pay a \$2.3 billion fine (Goldstein & Flitter, 2020). The bank's general counsel, Karen Seymour admitted that their company staff "knowingly and willingly" violated the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. If it is a planned action, this raised the question of what factors would deter the person from paying the bribe.

There are two important considerations that need attention in fighting corruption and bribery. Firstly, although bribery is a specific type of corruption, it may not be communicated in a layman term in such a manner. Imagine that you are stopped by traffic police for a speed violation (see Sekaran, 2020). What would influence your decision to pay a bribe or not to resolve the law violation? As a student, would you consider buying flowers for a lecturer during teachers' day considered a bribe? What about buying a flight ticket for a boss? Where is the borderline that differentiates what is corruption and what is not? These are all examples of everyday corruption scenarios where thousands of the general public are faced and they are expected to make a "right" decision. Despite good practical reasons for answering those questions (Zaloznaya, 2014; Othman et al., 2014; Köbis et al, 2015), little is known about the micro-level determinants of corruption.

People may understand corrupt acts very differently. Before the 2013 election in Malaysia, Mr. Najib Razak, the fifth Prime Minister of Malaysia, received approximately \$681 million into his private bank account (Wright & Hope, 2018). If you suspected potential corruption might happen here, Mr. Najib Razak explained that it was a "donation" from Saudi Arabia's royal family (Ngui & Wright,

2016). Despite involving in the scandal, he secured 43,854 votes and won the parliament seat with 24,859 majority in the 2018 general election (Suruhanjaya Pilihan Raya, 2021). If having such a big sum of money could be communicated to be either corruption or donation, how about the vague situation that we face on a daily basis such as buying flowers for our beloved lecturer? This suggests that we must first explore how people understand corruption before working on curbing this dishonesty.

Secondly, there are two ways that bribery could happen, either by receiving or giving. However, the attention often targeted the receiver such as traffic police or government servants rather than both (Case, 2008, Kapeli & Mohamed, 2015, Kapeli & Mohamed, 2019). Corruption news often focuses on (i) a few big corrupt leaders such as politicians (Ngu & Wright, 2016) and (ii) individuals who ask or receive bribes such as traffic police (see Sekaran, 2020). However, the problem does not only lie within a few “big cheaters” and the bribe receiver. Ariely (2013) found that the minor dishonest acts done by the thousands were found to be substantially more detrimental to society. Ariely’s (2013) experiment with more than 30,000 participants found 12 “aggressive cheaters” who stole USD150 from the experiment team; while 18,000 “little cheaters” stole a total of USD36,000. Besides that, individuals who pay bribes are often left out in research about corruption although their action is also considered as a corrupt act. Bribery would not happen if the giver refused to pay. This suggests that a micro-level understanding of bribe-giving behavior is necessary.

Therefore, this dissertation aims to explore the micro-determinant of bribe-giving by investigating how people understand bribery and what factors would deter the person from this act. To achieve this goal, mixed-method study using two social psychology theories, (i) Theory of Social Representation (TSR) (Moscovici, 2008) and (ii) Reasoned Action Approach (RAA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011) would be incorporated as underlying framework to understand the issues. These two theories do not only allow us to understand the social and cognitive processes, but also suggest various ways to reduce individual propensity of engagement in corruption (Bicchieri & Ganegoda, 2017). This research is expected to provide us with a deeper understanding on bribe-giving behaviour among young adults in Malaysia. With this understanding, hopefully we could discover some ways to curb or limit this dishonesty.

### **1.3 Statement of the problem**

The 2020 Corruption Perception Index (CPI) ranked Malaysia in the place of 57th among 179 countries. Although Malaysia is still listed as the top 30% cleanest country in the world, the rank has dropped 6 points as compared to 2019 and it is the worst indication Malaysia has ever had since 2010. Globally, it is often attributed to its collective culture. Less individualistic societies tend to show higher levels of involvement in corruption (Kittova & Steinhauser, 2018), however this is not true across situations. Many Asian countries such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore are often considered as clean

countries on par with many developed nations. Hence, this suggests that Malaysia can also be successful in reducing corruption despite upholding collective values.

The following three subsections (knowledge gaps, practical gaps and theoretical gaps) will be presented to help the reader to understand the current situation about corruption and how this research could help to address the missing part, or “close the gaps” in the body of knowledge.

### **1.3.1 Knowledge gaps**

#### **1.3.1.1 Lack of understanding about bribe giving**

Bribery is the abuse or misuse of power or trust in a quid pro quo exchange (Robertson & Nichols, 2017). Quid pro quo exchange involves two parties that are commonly known as bribe receiver and giver. This means for a bribery act to happen, there must be at least two parties involved, that is, those who ask or receive bribes and those who give or pay bribes. The actors who are or have received bribes are usually those who hold authority such as politicians, police, immigration, customs, town council officers (see Sekaran, 2020). The givers could be general public such as students, factory workers, businessmen, construction workers, clerks, salespeople, laborers, professional people, white-collar workers, barbers and telephone workers. It is understandable that efforts to curb bribery need to focus on the receiver, as there are only a few of them (people with authority) as compared to givers (general public). But, Moldovan and Van de Walle (2013) found that it is more acceptable for government servants to accept payments being offered than payments being asked for. However, studies often focused on the receiver such as police or politicians e.g. (Case, 2008); (Kapeli & Mohamed, 2015); (Kapeli & Mohamed, 2019) than the giver, forgetting that bribery would not happen without the giver. The study about bribe givers in Malaysia focused only on exploring the relationship between amount of bribe and length of punishment (Chong & Narayanan, 2017). This dissertation closes the knowledge gap by exploring the roles of bribe-giver and their intention to give bribes.

#### **1.3.1.2 Differences between formal definition and common sense definition**

Study about bribe giving would not be completed without the understanding of corruption and bribery in broader terms where past research has shown the possible relationship. Our action is influenced by the way we understand the world through shared images and attitude (Potter, 1996). The image and attitude can be communicated through stories. Laszlo (1997) explained that the way we tell stories about an issue would shape our representation of that issue; and the stories helped us to communicate about the issue with others. This means the

way we understand and communicate about corruption and bribery could determine the behavior (see Westerberg's (2015) research about how social representation affects HIV patient's lives).

However, corruption is not only difficult to define (Rothstein, 2014) but its formal or scientific definition might be different from everyday ways of thinking (Orosz, 2010). SDG's goal 16.5 uses both the terms "corruption" and "bribery" to reflect that these are two different problems to solve. From the layman perspective, it is not easy to clearly distinguish the differences between these two terms. Corruption is formally defined as a type of dishonest behavior that involves the abuse or misuse of power or trust for self-interested purposes rather than the purpose for which that power or trust was given while bribery is defined as the abuse or misuse of power or trust in a quid pro quo<sup>1</sup> exchange (Robertson & Nichols, 2017). The obvious difference is the definition of bribery involves quid pro quo nature.

Past research that tried to differentiate "corruption" and "bribery" argued that there are seven types of corruption such as transactive and extortive (Alatas, 1991). However, when scholars and policymakers use the term "corruption", most of the time, they are referring to bribery (Johnston, 2005; Robertson & Nichols, 2017) or the transactive types. In other words, bribery is a specific type of corruption. At the same time, bribery was found to outgrow a deeper culture of corruption (Zhang, 2015).

The corrupt behavior that is made known to us on a daily basis ranged from high profile cases by politicians to police officers demanding bribes from our friends who violate the traffic rules (Joseph & Smith, 2021). Students' perception of corruption surveys also suggests that we may have a different understanding of what exactly is called corruption (Malay Mail, 2017). The formal definitions of corruption are different from what the general public perceives as corruption. For example, gift-giving during festival season, where there is no direct link to any particular favour at the particular moment, but in anticipation of future occasions when the favour will be required. According to the formal definition, this is called investive corruption (Alatas, 1991). Mr. Najib Razak refers to the money transferred to his account as a donation (Ngui & Wright, 2016). If it is a donation, it should be promoted instead of prosecuted.

To have an in-depth understanding about bribe giving, we must also understand how people communicate about bribery and corruption. However, very little is known about if people are clear about what is corruption or bribery in the first place. Knowledge about corruption could help in behavioral change if it is understood in an appropriate manner (Prabowo et. al., 2018; Agerberg, 2019).

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<sup>1</sup> Quid pro quo is defined as something that is given to a person or done for the person in return for something the person has given to or done for someone else.

Hence, this dissertation intends to close the knowledge gaps by exploring what are young adults' common sense definitions (social representation) of corruption and bribery.

### **1.3.1.3 Micro determinants of bribe giving in Malaysia**

Corrupt behaviour studies in Malaysia are often examined from the macro-perspective. For example, study in Malaysia have explored corrupt behaviour from the construction perspective (Nordin et al., 2011; Hassan, 2011; Baskran, 2013; Nordin et al., 2013; Nordin, 2015; Nordin et al., 2018; Yap et al., 2020), business and economic perspective (Othman et al., 2014; Yahya et al., 2015; Joseph et al., 2016; Chong & Narayanan, 2017; Mahmoud, 2018; Ahmad Khair et al., 2019; Kapeli & Mohamed, 2019; Joseph et al., 2019; Muhamad & Gani, 2020; Yusof & Arshad, 2020), politic and government perspective (Siddiquee, 2010; Azimi, 2013; Yusof, 2014; Kapeli & Mohamed, 2015; Lee, 2015; Budhi, 2018; Franck, 2018); and environment perspective (Azam & Khan, 2017).

The macro level research has attributed the failure in curbing corrupt behaviour to the inability to understand the root cause of corruption (Kapeli & Mohamed, 2019); low public support towards government efforts (Kapeli & Mohamed, 2015); inadequate study to understand individual factors such as personality on corrupt behaviour (Muhamad & Gani, 2020) and lack of integrity practices and understanding among government servants (Muhamad & Gani 2020). Fishbein & Ajzen (2011) argued that we cannot design an effective intervention to address social problems if we do not first try to understand the factors that determine that behaviour. This indicates a need to understand corrupt behaviour from micro-level or individual context. The future study to curb corrupt behaviour must focus on the micro-level understanding (Othman et al., 2014, Budiman et al., 2013, Durairaja et al., 2019; Zaloznaya, 2014), hence this dissertation will focus on exploring the micro-level understanding of corruption.

Psychology theories can be applied to explain corrupt behaviour from a micro-level perspective. We often perceive that human social behaviour is complex and various factors for instance, cost-benefit analysis, environment and cultural background would determine one's bribe giving intention. However, Fishbein & Ajzen (2011) found that people approach various behaviours in a similar way, and we can predict and understand behaviour of interest using the same basic set of determinants. Yet, currently available psychology research focus on explaining the effects of corruption (e.g. Dimant and Tosato (2018), how to corrupt (e.g. Zaloznaya et al., 2018) and types of corruption (e.g. Vu et al., 2018) and studies on personality and corruption (see Zaloznaya, 2014). Most of these researches are retroactive in nature rather than preventative. In terms of prevention, current available research focuses on creating a more transparent environment (Silverman, 2013) such as enforcing no gift policy (Adil, 2021). This dissertation can close the knowledge gap by exploring the basic determinants of cognitive and social processes of young adults' bribe giving intention.

### 1.3.1.4 Young adults' involvement in corruption in Malaysia

Young adults are the future of a nation, but what will happen to our society if “the future” of our society relies on people who think corruption is the norm? The statistics show that more and more young adults are involved in corruption. MACC reported that there were 52 convicted cases involving young adults aged 18-30 in 2018 as compared to only 29 cases in 2014 (Ahmad, 2019). Please refer to Table 1.1.

**Table 1.1: Young adults conviction cases from 2014-2018 according to ethnicity**

Year	Ethnicity				Total
	Malays	Malaysian Chinese	Indian	Others	
2014	13	7	5	4	29
2015	20	3	1	19	43
2016	30	3	6	9	48
2017	28	8	2	16	54
2018	25	5	3	19	52

(Source: Ahmad, personal communication, May 7, 2019)

Survey about Corruption Prevention Action Effectiveness Perception by MACC revealed that the percentage of university students who are willing to accept bribe has increased from 11.3% to 16% in 2016 while willingness to report corruption has decreased from 74.9% in 2014 to 66.3% in 2016 (The Star Online, 2017). The summary of this survey was presented in Table 1.2.

**Table 1.2: Corruption Prevention Action Effectiveness Perception Study by MACC**

Year	Willingness to accept bribe (%)	Willingness to accept bribe to avoid consequences (%)	Willingness to report corruption (%)
2016	16	18.2	66.3
2015	10.7	17.4	74.1
2014	11.3	-	74.9

Note: The study is based on a survey with 1,000 university students  
(Source: The Star Online, 2017)



A study on students' perception of corruption carried out by the Integrity Institute of Malaysia (IIM) in 2017 revealed university students' attitudes towards corruption is worrying (Malay Mail, 2017). In contrast to the academic definition of corruption, out of 402 university students who participated in the survey, 35.8% believe that receiving gifts in the form of money, goods or services in exchange for services is not considered as corruption. For nepotism or direct involvement in the process of appointing family members for job vacancy, 20.6% of the students believe that it is acceptable behaviour. Taking office supplies such as USB drives, papers or printer ink, 28.1% think that it is not an offense. Lastly, 37.3% think that it is not wrong to submit claims which are fully-sponsored. The summary of this survey was presented in Table 1.3.

**Table 1.3: Students' Perception of Corruption Integrity Institute of Malaysia (IIM)**

Attitudes	Percentage of participants indicating that it is not a corrupt act
Acceptance of gifts in the form of money, goods or services in exchange for services given was not a corrupt act.	35.8%
Direct involvement in the process of appointing family members to fill vacancies in their department is a permissible act.	20.6%
Not an offence to take company-owned properties or items (e.g. pen drives, printer ink or papers) for personal use.	28.1%
Submitting claims for fully-sponsored outstation duties was not wrong.	37.3%

Notes: The study is based on a survey with 402 university students. 33.1% are from UKM, 47.5% are from USM, 15.9% are from UiTM and 3.5% are from other universities.

(Source: Malay Mail, 2017)

The corruption complex in Malaysia report published by The International Institute of Public Policy & Management (INPUMA) (2021) revealed that 50.2% of the survey participants agreed that corruption is a culture in Malaysia, 62.9% thinks that lack of religion belief lead to corrupt behaviour and 92% agreed that environment that do not prevent corruption, led to corrupt behaviour.

All of the surveys mentioned above were carried out among university students, providing us basic understanding how young adults perceive issues related to corruption. However, there was a huge gap in resolving this issue. For example, we now know that 35.8% of young adults think that accepting money in exchange for services is not corruption, but it is not clear what could change their attitudes that influence their actions. Study focuses on young adults dishonest prevention usually carried out in other fields of dishonesty such as academic cheating (Carpenter et al., 2004; Yu et al., 2021). This dissertation closes the knowledge gap about young adults by exploring their social representation towards bribery and corruption and factors that could influence their bribe giving intention.

#### **1.3.1.5 Influence of close friends and parents towards behavior**

Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) argued that one's behavior will be influenced by people / groups who are important to them. Past research has shown significant relationships regarding the influence of close friends and parents in young adults' intention such as payment of speed fines (Bantjes et al., 2021), young adults' moral decadence (Lukman, 2021). Although past research has suggested that close friends and parents are influential groups of individuals in shaping the intention, very little is known about the roles of close friends and parents in regards to bribe giving intention. Hence, this study would close this knowledge gap by providing scientific description regarding the roles of close friends and parents.

#### **1.3.1.6 Gender differences**

Malaysia is a patriarchal multicultural and multilingual society. All of these are the factors that influence one's behavior. In a patriarchal society, men are expected to achieve more than women (Cheng, 2008). Achievement motivation was found to lead to dishonesty (Krou et al., 2021). Corruption related research in other countries have found significant differences between gender (Lambsdorff & Frank, 2011; Lan & Hong, 2017; Esarey & Chirollo, 2013). However, are there any gender differences when it comes to bribe giving intention remained unknown. Hence, these researches would also close the gap by providing scientific knowledge about differences between gender and bribe giving intention.

#### **1.3.1.7 Types of school**

Environment is one of the strongest predictors of behavior (Zimbardo, 2022). Due to its multiculturalism, Malaysians have the opportunity to attend different types of primary and secondary school. Generally, schools in Malaysia segregate students based on race and mother tongue language (Lim, 2017). Despite growing up in a very different school environment, every school has their own version of success stories. However, there are limited scientific studies

available to understand how students differed when they graduated and understanding these differences could help us in restructuring the environment so that we can eliminate bribe giving.

Besides that, when it comes to school, past research often describes how education level could affect one's dishonesty (see Mocan, 2008 and Ivlevs & Hinks, 2015). However, the education level is completely different from the school environment. For example, students who are holding PhD graduates from Malaysia and Japan could hold completely different attitudes towards bribe giving as reflected through CPI (Transparency International, 2017). Yet, how attending different types of school (national or vernacular school) changes an individual's attitudes towards bribe giving intention is not fully understood.

Hence, this dissertation plan is to provide scientific knowledge by describing if there are differences for young adults who attended different types of primary school and secondary in bribe giving intention.

### **1.3.2 Practical gaps**

In accordance with the SDG's goal to curb corruption, efforts have been made over the years to find solutions (see Haw et al., 2020; Kasim & Hoesni, 2021). In Malaysia, the government allocated funding for the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) as the sole agency to fight corruption, a national anti-corruption plan, two government transformation programmes and national integrity plan (Muhamad & Gani, 2020). However, most of the efforts to curb corruption failed to improve the situation in an expected manner (Muhamad & Gani, 2020). This is due to lack of understanding of this behaviour from micro-perspective (Othman et al., 2014, Budiman et al., 2013 and Zaloznaya, 2014). Hence, this research intends to close two practical gaps in effort to curb corrupt behaviour.

#### **1.3.2.1 Complementing current effort to curb corruption.**

This study could complement Malaysia's current effort in fighting corruption and improve our current practice. Most of our anti-corruption efforts are based solely on Becker's (1968) cost-benefits analysis. Mazar et al. (2008) have refuted this theory as the core to understand dishonest behaviour. According to Zaloznaya (2014), anti-corruption policies that focus on adjusting the incentive structures by raising the costs and lowering the benefits of corrupt behavior are ineffective. Not only that, Quah (2010) found that corrupt behaviour is carried out based on the logic of appropriateness but not logic of consequences.

One of the reasons why Malaysia's anti-corruption effort is not as successful as expected is due to lack of public support for corruption prevention (Kapeli &

Mohamed, 2019). In order to be successful in combating corruption, public support is needed. This is because the general public is part of the corrupt system. This phenomenon is not uncommon, given that many of our efforts in combating corruption are carried out at the macro level and not the micro level (Othman et al., 2014; Köbis et al, 2015).

As this dissertation explores young adults' micro-level understanding using social psychology theories as foundations such as social representation and attitudes, the knowledge obtained can be used to complement all of our current effort in curbing this dishonesty. For example, if the study found that our bribe-giving intention is influenced by people around us, we can redesign an environment, educational program or law to prevent it from this perspective.

### **1.3.2.2 Anti-corruption education**

A culture of anti-corruption can be fostered through anti-corruption education (Swanda & Nadiroh, 2018). Learning from the east, Japan's success in managing corruption can be attributed to their investment in anti-corruption education (Assegaf, 2017). Therefore, there is still a high demand for anti-corruption education that is widely supported by the general public who is forcing the government to look into the matter (Bernama, 2020; Lee, 2018). MACC has a legal responsibility to educate the public against corruption and fosters public support against corruption through various education programs (The commissioner of law revision, Malaysia, 2019). Former Education Minister, Dr. Mazlee Malik said that the Ministry of Education would introduce an anti-corruption syllabus through the civic education subject (Kaos & Lee, 2018) with the aim to educate people that corrupt behaviours are evil and it is something that needs to be eradicated from daily life. Report published by the International Institute of Public Policy and Management (INPUMA) also proposed to make anti-corruption education a compulsory subject among undergraduate students (INPUMA, 2021).

Although research has been carried out to explain corruption-related matters (see Muhamad & Gani, 2020), there have been few empirical investigations about the syllabus of anti-corruption education. As educational matters such as syllabus and funding are usually controlled by the government (Gill & Berezina, 2020), developing a syllabus without proper research might result in waste of public funds and failure. Without formal anti-corruption education to date, we must first explore how much our young people understand corruption in order to design a syllabus that complements the current knowledge and understanding. This research could close the practical gap by providing important insight for the stakeholder.

### **1.3.3 Theoretical gaps**

#### **1.3.3.1 Theory of Social Representation (TSR)**

Although TSR is commonly used in the western context to understand behaviour from a social representation perspective, it is uncommon in Asian context particularly Malaysia. In Malaysia, social representation was only used in the study of history of Malaysia and Singapore (Liu et al., 2002), Museum use of facebook (Shaharir & Zanuddin, 2018) and Heroic representation in the citations of medal of honor recipients (Anmpalagan, 2018).

Orosz (2010) used this theory to explore social representation of competition, fraud and academic cheating of French and Hungarian citizens. In the other field of study, Manchaiah et al. (2019) studied young adults' knowledge and attitudes regarding "music" and "loud music", comparing youth from India, Iran, Portugal, United Kingdom and the United States. The result of this research would add to the pool of theory literature about the usage of this theory in exploring corruption.

#### **1.3.3.2 Reasoned Action Approach (RAA)**

This theory was the extension of the previous theory, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991). In TPB, there were three main variables, attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control. However, RAA further breaks down each of the variables to provide a deeper understanding of each behaviour. For example, according to RAA, the variable attitude consists of two sub-variables, (i) instrumental and (ii) experiential attitudes. TPB measured only instrumental attitudes, however, RAA also measured emotional response of the individual to the idea of giving a bribe (or experiential attitudes).

Various studies have utilized the TPB to explain dishonest behaviour, such as academic cheating. For example, in a meta-analysis by Chudzicka-Czupala et al. (2015) found that this model could be used to predict academic cheating cross-culturally in seven countries compared in the study. The seven countries are New Zealand, Turkey, Poland, Romania, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United States. The same theory is also used to predict academic cheating in other countries such as France (Hendy & Montargot, 2019), Hong Kong (Kam et al., 2018) and Indonesia (Dewanti et al., 2020). Previous research showed that TPB could be used not only to understand the underlying factors about academic dishonesty or cheating, it could be applied cross-culturally. However, the study using the latest theory, RAA, was limited.

Besides that, the nature of academic cheating is different from bribery in terms of resolving problems. Academic cheating could be executed by an individual without involving others, but for bribery to happen, at least two parties have to

be involved. In Malaysia itself, TPB was also used in research such as ethnic tolerance (Idris et. al., 2016), hiring Malaysians with disabilities (Ang et al., 2015), online game playing among Malaysian undergraduate students (Alzahrani et al., 2017), sustainable transport acceptance behaviour (Khoo & Ong, 2015), and money donations intention among Muslim donors (Kashif, & De Run, 2015). Isa & Abdullah's (2021) study intentions among the university's students towards bribery, however, an old theory, TPB was used. This study intends to bridge the theoretical gap by examining young adults' bribe giving intention.

#### **1.4 Research questions, objectives and hypotheses**

The general aim for this dissertation is to gain complementary views and "complete" picture of factor (s) influencing bribe giving intention among young adults in Malaysia. The mixed methods triangulation design will be used to achieve the aim. This means qualitative and quantitative inquiries will be addressed and triangulated at the end. The qualitative (QUAL) inquiry intends to explore the common sense definition (social representation) of bribery and corruption while quantitative (QUAN) inquiry aims to investigate the factors that would influence the bribe giving intention. The following specific research questions, objectives and hypotheses are formulated.

##### **1.4.1 Research questions for qualitative (QUAL) inquiry**

**RQ1.** What are the social representation of "corruption" and "bribery"?

Objective 1: To determine the social representations of "corruption" and "bribery" among young adults in Malaysia.

##### **1.4.2 Research questions for quantitative (QUAN) inquiry**

**RQ2.** What is the score of RAA variables, demographic variables and bribe giving intention among young adults in Malaysia?

Objective 2: To describe the score of RAA variables, demographic variables and bribe giving intention among young adults in Malaysia.

**RQ3.** What are the reliability and validity of the developed survey questions to measure the RAA variables and bribe giving intention?

Objective 3: To develop reliable and valid survey questions that could be used to measure all the RAA variables and bribe giving intention.

**RQ4.** What is the relationship between RAA variables and bribe giving intention?

Objective 4: To examine the relationship between RAA variables and bribe giving intention.

To answer RQ4, 8 alternative hypotheses were formulated. Alternative hypotheses were used as prediction could be made upon the theoretical framework and past studies (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The following hypotheses were written using the format proposed by Field (2018).

- H1. There will be a significant relationship between instrumental attitude towards bribery (IA) and the bribe giving intention
- H2. There will be a significant relationship between experiential attitude towards bribery (EA) and the bribe giving intention
- H3. There will be a significant relationship between descriptive norms towards bribery for close friends (DNF) and bribe giving intention
- H4. There will be a significant relationship between descriptive norms towards bribery for parents (DNP) and bribe giving intention
- H5. There will be a significant relationship between injunctive norms towards bribery for close friends (INF) and bribe giving intention
- H6. There will be a significant relationship between injunctive norms towards bribery for parents (INP) and bribe giving intention
- H7. There will be a significant relationship between capacity and bribe giving intention
- H8. There will be a significant relationship between autonomy and bribe giving intention

**RQ5.** What are the main predictor(s) of bribe giving intention?

Objective 5: To examine the main predictor(s) of bribe giving intention.

To answer RQ5, 1 alternative hypothesis was formulated

- H9. All RAA variables are the predictor of bribe giving intention.

**RQ6.** What are the demographic differences on bribe giving intention?

Objective 6: To examine the demographic differences on bribe giving intention. To answer RQ6, 4 alternative hypotheses were formulated

- H10. There will be a significant difference between gender and bribe giving intention.
- H11. There will be a significant difference between types of primary school attended and bribe giving intention.
- H12. There will be a significant difference between types of secondary school attended and bribe giving intention.

### **1.4.3 Research questions for mixed-method inquiry**

Besides addressing research questions for qualitative and quantitative inquiries, this dissertation also aimed to draw overall conclusions by triangulating the results from both inquiries.

**RQ7.** How does understanding the social representation of corruption and bribery help to explain findings that predict bribe giving intention?

Objective 7: To draw an overall interpretation about how understanding the social representation of corruption and bribery helps to explain findings that predict bribe giving intention.

## **1.5 Study Plan**

The triangulation design: multilevel model of mixed methods design was chosen as there is a strong need to incorporate two theories, Moscovici's (2008) TSR and Fishbein and Ajzen's (2011) RAA, as its fundamental to understand the bribe giving intention. Triangulation design: multilevel model uses both qualitative and quantitative methods to address different research questions and the results from both studies will be merged together into one overall interpretation (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). Both qualitative and quantitative data are collected at the same time with equal weight. The rationale for this approach is that the both qualitative and quantitative data could provide in depth insight in understanding the phenomena. Table 1.4 presents the summary of qualitative and quantitative method study design of this study. RQ7 would triangulate both studies to form an overall interpretation.



**Table 1.4: Summary of the qualitative and quantitative method study design**

Research Design	Qualitative Inquiry	Quantitative Inquiry
Theory	Theory of Social Representation	Reasoned Action Approach
Name	The social representation of corruption among young adults in Malaysia	Factors related to bribe giving intention among young adults in Malaysia
Addressing research question	RQ1	RQ2, RQ3, RQ4, RQ5 & RQ6
Study breakdown	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Questionnaires development</li> <li>2. Actual study</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Questionnaires development</li> <li>2. Pilot study</li> <li>3. Actual study</li> </ol>

## 1.6 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework gives an overall portrayal of relationships that explains problems. Two social psychology theories will be used as the fundamental to explore the phenomenon.

### 1.6.1 Theory of Social Representation (TSR)

This theory was first introduced by the late French social psychologist, Professor Serge Moscovici in 1961 (Moscovici, 2008). According to Moscovici, social representation can be regarded as a system of values, ideas and practices that establish an order that enables individuals to become familiar (Galli & Fasanelli, 2020). In other words, social representation assists us to understand reality, guide social practices, rationalize the positions taken and define the identity of the groups. This theory posits that human behavior is the result of understanding social and cultural conditions that determine how a thing is perceived (Sammut et al., 2015).

One of the techniques to understand social representation is the structural approach (Abric & Moliner, 2015), proposed by the late Professor Emeritus from Aix-Marseille Université, Jean-Claude Abric in 1976. The same approach is also referred to as the Central Core Theory or Central Nucleus Theory.

According to the structural approach, social representation is generated through objectification. Objectification helps us make sense of unfamiliarity. To understand the unfamiliar world or phenomena, psycho-social elements such as information, opinions, beliefs and attitude (Abric & Moliner, 2015) are used as representation. All of these elements are interrelated, yet they do not have the same status. The elements could be grouped into two systems based on their respective status.

The first system is the “central core system”. It consists of elements that help us to manage the meanings associated with the phenomena and strengthen non-negotiable beliefs. The elements are stable over time, agreed upon by the majority of people in the group and are deeply rooted in the collective memory of the social group (Orosz, 2010). It consists of just a few unconditional beliefs that allow one to define the group’s values, norms and history.

The second is the “peripheral system”. The main function of this system is to protect the central core system (Abric & Moliner, 2015). It consists of elements that are unique for each group member. Elements in the peripheral system are more anchored in momentary reality, unstable, developing, and nonsolid. It is closer to individual memories. Due to these unique characteristics potentially new and contradictory information could be integrated without transforming the central core system.

### **1.6.2 Reasoned Action Approach (RAA)**

RAA (Fishbein and Ajzen, 2010) is one of the most influential Social Psychology theories that could be used to predict and change human social behaviour. It is the expansion version of the original theory, TPB. The expansion further broke down the original construct as illustrated in Figure 1.2.

Most people believe that human social behaviour is complex and can only be understood if we consider a variety of influencing factors. Unlike this general belief, Fishbein and Ajzen (2011) suggest that human social behaviour is regulated by just a few determining factors. RAA proposed that human social behavior is guided by information or beliefs people hold about the behaviour. According to this theory, three types of beliefs are identified (see Figure 1.1 and Figure 1.2).

Firstly, one of the three pieces of information people would consider before behaving in a certain way is their own attitude towards that behaviour. This is known as “attitude toward behaviour”. People will evaluate the degree of favourable or unfavourable evaluation they will receive after performing the behaviour. The evaluation could be separated into two types: (i) instrumental attitudes, when one considers the positive or negative consequences they might experience; (ii) experiential attitudes, the emotions that the evaluation will elicit.

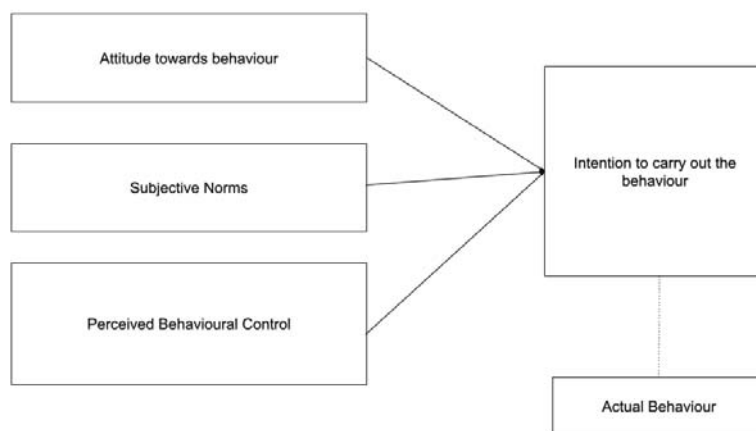
These behavioural beliefs determined people's attitude toward performing the behaviour.

Secondly, individuals will consider if those who are important to them (e.g. parents, close friends) would approve or disapprove of their actions or if they would do the same in similar situations. This is known as the perceived norms, which has two subcategories: (i) descriptive norms, which are the normative beliefs about what others are doing; (ii) Injunctive norms, which are the normative beliefs about what others expect one should do.

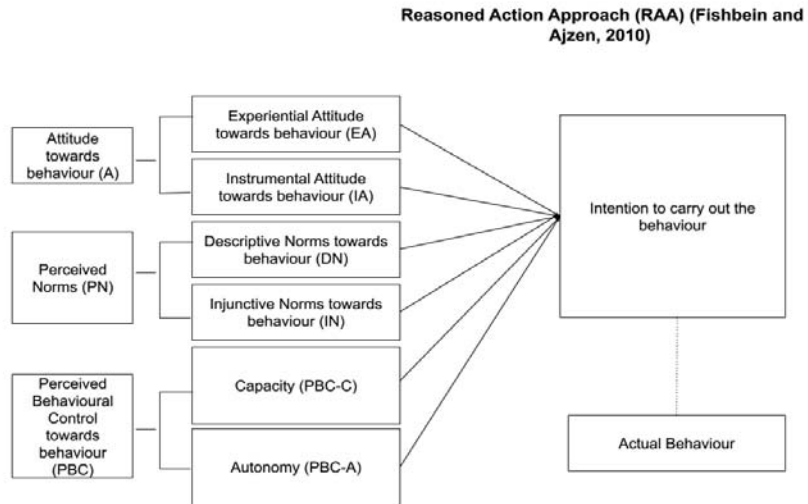
Lastly, people also form beliefs about personal and environmental factors that will allow or deter them from carrying out the behaviour. These beliefs contribute to the amount of perceived behavioural control people think they have. Perceived behavioural control can be separated into two subcategories: (i) Capacity, which refers to one's perceived ability to perform a certain behaviour; (ii) Autonomy, which refers to the one's perceived degree of control or discretion over the behaviour.

Attitude toward behaviour, perceived norms and perceived behavioural control will guide an individual's intention and behaviour. However, the theory also suggests intention is only a good predictor of behaviour if individuals have control over the behavioural performance.

**Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)**  
(Fishbein and Ajzen, 1991)



**Figure 1.1: Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)**  
(Source: Fishbein and Ajzen, 1991)



**Figure 1.2: Reasoned Action Approach (RAA)**  
(Source: Fishbein and Ajzen, 2011)

## 1.7 Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework explains researcher's idea on how the research problem will have to be explored (Kumar, 2019). The main purpose of this mixed-method research is to draw an overall interpretation to gain complementary views and "complete" picture of bribe giving intention among young adults in Malaysia. One of the main limitations of quantitative results is its capability to explain. In other words, the qualitative data can be used as the basis to further understand quantitative finding. Conceptual framework of this study is constructed based on TSR for Level 1 and RAA for Level 2. The TSR explores the phenomena in a qualitative manner while RAA explores in a quantitative manner. Both data will be analyzed separately and overall interpretation will be explained (refer to Figure 1.3).

This method is necessary because the study of how "attitudes" influence one's "behavior" is extensively studied in the field of social psychology (Bidjari, 2011; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011; Sammut, 2015). However, attitudes studies are often criticized for only including the cognitive aspects of psychological phenomena and not considering the influencing factor from social, ideological and historical perspective (Bidjari, 2011) or emotions and practices (Orosz, 2010). As people are irrational in nature (Ariely, 2008), considering only cognitive factors might not present the complete picture of a phenomena. To overcome the limitation of understanding the phenomena by just applying attitude theory, RAA; this dissertation also includes the study of social representation using TSR.

The study of social representation includes the influence of community, collective practices and institutionalization while describing social knowledge (Bidjari, 2011). Moscovici (1963) suggested that social representations are the basis in which attitudes were formed. He argued that the formation of attitudes includes both cognitive processes together with social and cultural representation. The inclusion of both theories are necessary to understand the phenomena of bribe giving in a deeper manner.

Hence, referring to Figure 1.3, the conceptual framework for this study is divided into 2 levels. Level 1 explores the social representation of corruption and bribery and Level 2 explores the factors related to bribe giving intention. After that, the overall interpretation will be illustrated. This is also referred to as the mixed method "Triangulation Design: Multilevel Model" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This mixed method design will be discussed further in Chapter 3.

In summary, bribe giving intention will be explored by triangulating both TSR and RAA. TSR is the theory that explains social representation and RAA explores attitudes. This research expects to explore factors related to bribe giving intention using RAA model and the TSR model helps to understand the whole phenomenon in a holistic manner.

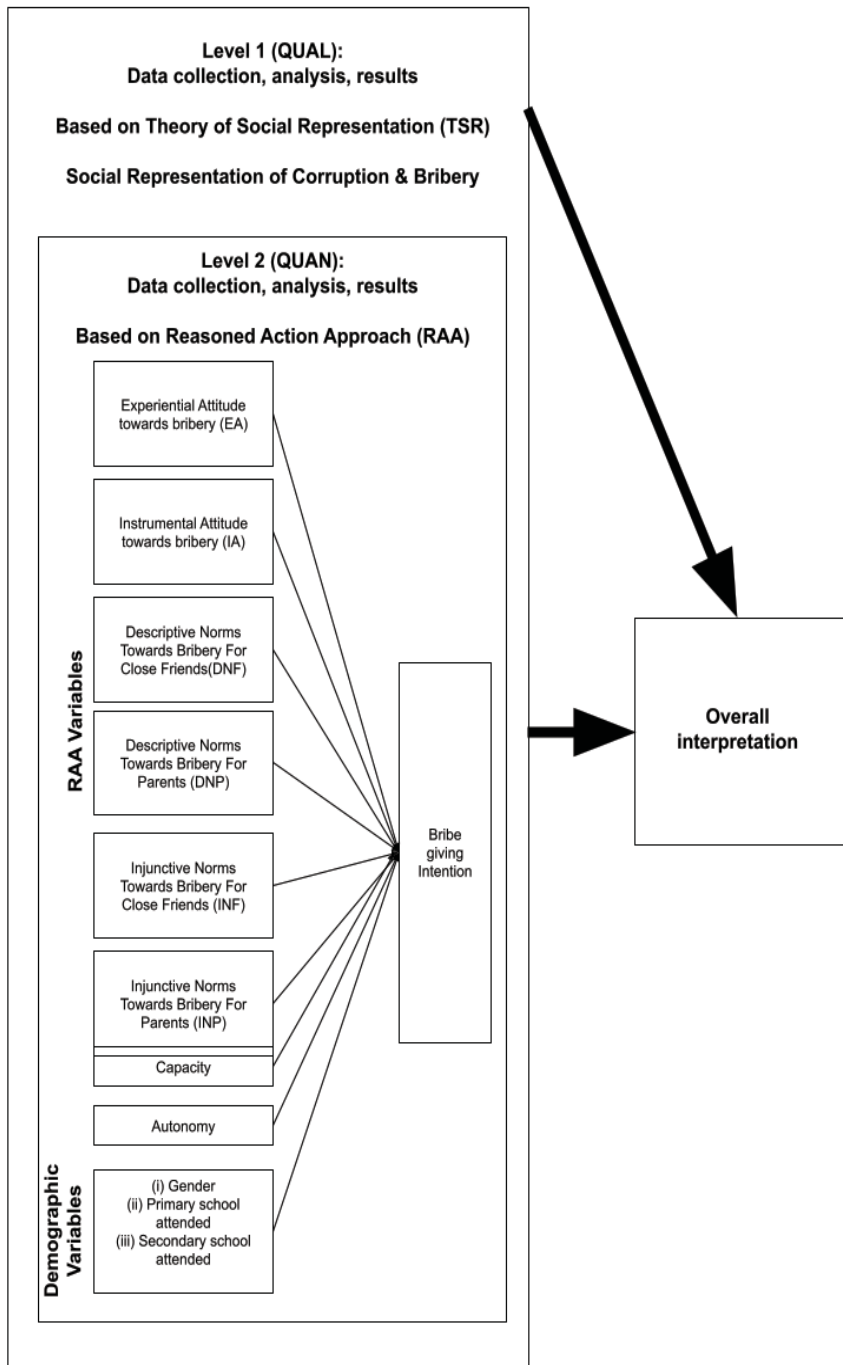


Figure 1.3: Conceptual Framework

### 1.7.1 Level 1 (QUAL): Social Representation of Corruption and Bribery

The qualitative inquiry is based on Moscovici's (2008) TSR. The social representation explored in this study are "corruption" and "bribery" and it is explored using free association techniques (also known as verbal association techniques). This allowed the meanings that individuals assign to the term being explored. The association that an individual describes is called the elements of social representation. For instance, if an individual describes "corruption" with "money", money will be the element of the social representation. All the elements gathered will be analyzed based on the structure theory of social representations; it organized social representation in a dual system (Abric, 2001); central core and peripheral elements. Table 1.5 presents the summary of the characteristics of the core and peripheral elements.

**Table 1.5: The characteristic of core and peripheral elements**

Core elements	Peripheral elements
Formal characteristics	
Made up of a limited number of beliefs	Made up of many beliefs
Significant consensus among group	Many differences among group members
Stable over time	Varying and unstable
Expressive characteristics	
General characteristics of the object, elements of definition	Specific cases
Abstract elements	Concrete and contextualized elements
Unconditional beliefs and non-negotiable	Conditional beliefs
Psycho-social characteristics	
Related to the group's values, norms and history	Related to group members' individual experiences
Ensures the sustainabilities of the representation	Absorbs contradictions and changes
Contribute to the group's homogeneity	Allow for the group's heterogeneity

(Source: Moliner & Abric, 2015)

### 1.7.2 Level 2 (QUAN): Factors Related To Bribe Giving Intention

The quantitative section of the dissertation is based on RAA (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011). RAA variables provide the core understanding of behaviour. In this study,

the descriptive norms and injunctive norms were further separated into “close friends” and “parents” to explore its determinants towards bribe giving intention. In total, RAA variables in this study consist of 8 sub-variables as shown in Figure 1.3. Demographic variables are also included in this study.

## 1.8 Conceptual and Operational Definition

### 1.8.1 Social Representation

**Conceptual definitions:** Social representation can be used as a verb or noun (Chryssides et al., 2009). When interpreted as a verb, it is a process of representing “socially”. As a noun, it refers to some product, a representation, whose content it is possible to study (Chryssides et al., 2009). Based on TSR, social representation is a noun, and can be defined in detail as a set of conceptions and explanations deriving from everyday life which are generated by communication of individuals. In our society, they are equivalent to the myths and belief systems of traditional societies. They can also be interpreted as the modern form of common sense (Orosz, 2010, p. 26). Social representations are a product and process of a mental activity of an individual or a group whereby s/he reconstructs the reality which has a specific meaning for him and with which he confronts (Orosz, 2010, p. 27). It is commonsense knowledge worked out by people in everyday communication in order to provide meaning to different objects, phenomena, events that are new, strange, unknown and threatening (Dvoryanchikov et al., 2014). It is a set of elements between which individuals establish connections (Sammut et al., 2015, p. 84).

**Operational definition:** In this study, social representation should be understood as a noun unless otherwise specify, it refers to a product and process of a mental activity of an individual or a group of young adults whereby s/he reconstructs the reality which has a specific meaning for him / her and with which he confronts (Abric, 1987, p. 64, as cited in Orosz, 2010, p. 31). It may also be referred to as “common sense definition” or “lay representation”.

### 1.8.2 Corruption

**Conceptual definition:** Corruption is the abuse of entrusted power motivated by individuals (or small groups) desire to maximize personal benefits at the expense of public, organizational, or other non-private goods (Transparency International, 2020).

**Operational definition:** In this study, corruption is the abuse of entrusted power motivated by individuals (or small groups) desire to maximize personal benefits at the expense of public, organizational, or other non-private goods.



### 1.8.3 Bribe

**Conceptual definition:** A bribe refers to an act of giving any gratification to induce a person to do a favour with a corrupt intent. The abuse or misuse of power or trust in a quid pro quo exchange (Robertson & Nichols, 2017). Quid pro quo is defined as something that is given to a person or done for the person in return for something the person has given to or done for someone else (Merriam-Webster, 2021).

**Operational definition:** In this study, a bribe refers to an act of giving any gratification to induce a person to do a favour with a corrupt intent.

### 1.8.4 Bribe giving intention

**Conceptual and operational definitions:** In this study, bribe giving intention refers to the desire or motivation not to pay bribes to resolve problems.

### 1.8.5 Attitudes towards bribery

**Conceptual and operational definitions:** In this study, attitudes towards bribery refer to the degree of one's favourable or unfavourable evaluation of the act of bribing. It could be either positive or negative. It could also be further broken down into two sub variables; Experiential attitudes towards bribery (EA) and Instrumental attitudes towards bribery (IA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011).

#### 1.8.5.1 Instrumental attitudes towards bribery (IA)

**Conceptual and operational definitions:** In this study, IA is the beliefs about giving bribes that are determined by the beliefs of the outcomes (i.e., its anticipated positive or negative consequences) of giving bribes (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011).

#### 1.8.5.2 Experiential attitudes towards bribery (EA)

**Conceptual and operational definitions:** In this study, EA refers to the emotional response of the individual to the idea of giving a bribe (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011).

### 1.8.6 Subjective Norms (SN)

**Conceptual and operational definitions:** An individual's perception that most people who are important to an individual think one should (or should not) perform a particular behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011, p.131).

### 1.8.7 Perceived Norms (PN)

**Conceptual and operational definitions:** Perceived social pressure to perform (or not to perform) a given behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011).

#### 1.8.7.1 Descriptive norms towards bribery (DN)

**Conceptual definition:** The indication of how likely others will follow the specific course of action. One might ask oneself whether or not a respective behavior is common. How many other people in the same situation would act in this specific way? (Reno et al. 1993).

**Operational definition:** In this study, descriptive norms refer to perceptions that close friends or parents are or are not giving bribes in a given bribe situation.

#### 1.8.7.2 Injunctive norms towards bribery (IN)

**Conceptual definition:** The acceptability of a specific behavior and describes whether a specific course of action is approved by others in a given social context (Cialdini et. al. 1990).

**Operational definition:** In this study, injunctive norms refer to perceptions concerning acceptability of close friends or parents with respect to giving bribes.

### 1.8.8 Perceived Behavioural Control (PBC)

**Conceptual definition:** It refers to people's general expectations regarding the degree to which they are capable of performing a given behavior, the extent to which they have the requisite resources and believe they can overcome whatever obstacles they may encounter (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011).

**Operational definitions:** It refers to people's general expectations regarding the degree to which they are capable of giving bribes. It could be further broken down into two sub variables, capacity and autonomy.

#### 1.8.8.1 Capacity

**Conceptual and operational definitions:** In this study, it refers to belief that one can, is able to, or is capable of, giving bribes (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011).

#### 1.8.8.2 Autonomy

**Conceptual and operational definitions:** In this study, it refers to the degree of control or discretion over giving bribes (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011).

### 1.8.9 Young adults

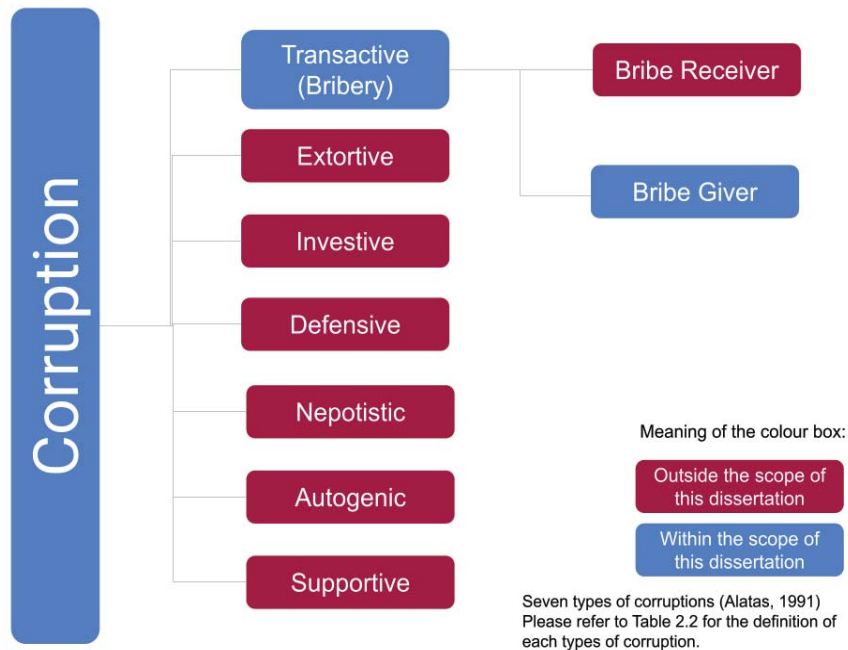
**Conceptual definitions:** Erik Erikson (1950) defined young adults as those who aged between 20s to 30s (Ciccarelli & White, 2021).

**Operational definitions:** In this study, a young adults is defined as anyone aged between 18-35.

## 1.9 Scope of the study

Although Alatas (1991) argued that there are seven types of corruption, this dissertation only limited to exploring corruption, bribery and specifically bribe giving as illustrated in Figure 1.4. In the context of this study, corruption can be understood from 3 main levels: (i) Level 1: the concept of corruption, (ii) Level 2: Different types of corruption and Level 3: The subtype based on level 2. Other Level 2 types of corruption such as nepotism, bribe receiving would not be covered in this study. As corrupt behavior could be explored from a very large scope, it is practically not possible to explore every single scope in one dissertation. The area covered was chosen based on the available literature that

suggests further exploration is needed (see Rothstein, 2014; Zaloznaya, 2014; Othman et al., 2014 and Köbis et al, 2015).



**Figure 1.4 : Seven types of corruption**  
(Source: Alatas, 1991)

The research on corruption and bribery will be carried out based on the TSR while bribe giving intention will be explained based on the RAA model. The study of corruption and bribery could help us to understand bribe-giving intention in a holistic manner as bribe-giving is the “branch” of corruption and bribery.

The social representation of corruption and bribery should be treated as exploratory research. Exploratory study could provide us with knowledge about problems that are not clearly defined (Bobbert et al., 2021, p.220) and solve everyday problems (Çalıyurt & Yüksel, 2017). However, bribe-giving intention is confirmatory research as this study is trying to predict the intentions based on a well-established RAA model. Thus, two of the fundamental social psychology theories, namely TSR and RAA were chosen based on their merit and significance in making the most basic exploration in any given behavior of interest.

### 1.10 Significance of study

There are three main reasons why this study matters and should be carried out. The three main reasons are (1) micro-level understanding of the

behaviour, (2) evidence-based decision and (3) broadening the data pool of literature.

Firstly, the result of this study will allow us to understand Malaysian young adults' perception towards corruption and bribe giving intention at the micro-level. Our ability to make informed and rational decisions is often influenced by various cognitive biases, instincts and emotions. Thus, having a deeper understanding regarding attitudes and behaviour at the micro-level would allow us to better predict behavior and make more informed decisions on ways to tackle corruption, such as: investing in MACC or formulating an anti-corruption education plan for Malaysian youngsters.

Secondly, it is more time and energy efficient to carry out evidence-based solutions. The result of this scientific study could contribute by testing out the efficacy of the proposed solutions towards tackling corruption before policy makers can make any decision to invest substantial amounts of resources into them. For instance, the result of this study could provide insight on ways to design anti-corruption module syllabus and campaigns, as well as helping policy makers to identify the contextual characteristics of interaction moments that promote corruption (Zaloznaya, 2014). Social psychological studies as such could also help anti-corruption efforts towards the meso-level or organisation, neighbourhoods, and others where little structural adjustment could serve a long lasting positive social change (Zaloznaya, 2014).

Lastly, this research could also broaden the data pool of literature and fill in the gaps for both social psychological theory, TSR and RAA. TSR is widely used in Europe but not much research was done using this theory in Asia. On the other hand, RAA is widely used to predict intention in health related behaviour. The result of this study could confirm if this theory could be used across disciplines and cultures.

### **1.11 Dissertation organization**

This dissertation will consists of the following chapters:

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: Literature Review
- Chapter 3: Methodology
- Chapter 4: Result and discussion
- Chapter 5: Discussion

## 1.12 Chapter summary

This chapter introduces the reader with the background of the study, problem statements, research questions, objectives and hypotheses, study plan, theoretical and conceptual framework, definitions, scope of the study, significance of the study and dissertation organization. Next chapter reviews the available literature regarding the study topics.



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