

Combating Workplaces Corruption

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Abstract: The study emphasises the necessity to address workplace corruption in Malaysia. It discusses the causes, effects and how to address the corruption issues happened in workplace Malaysia. Individual factor, economy development, organizational culture and religious, political leadership power has led to the causes of corruption in workplace. In addition, effects like income distribution, consumption pattern, government budget, economic reforms are highlighted in the paper. The paper also touched upon the remedial measure like leadership, credibility, involving people, responsible press, oversight bodies and improving institution as remedial measure to address the issue

Keywords: Workplace corruption, causes, effects, remedial measures, Malaysia

1. Introduction

Corruption endures in human communities and, like bullying, has been researched from a variety of disciplinary viewpoints, such as psychology, sociology, economics, law, and politics [26]. Some personnel at all organisational levels continue to pursue their aims by unethical, anticompetitive, deviant, and criminal means, according to the available evidence. However, despite the prevalence and veracity of cases exposing dishonest individuals, businesses, and workplaces such as Enron and the widely derided leaders of those companies; see [6], inaccurate and incomplete notions of what corruption is and what dishonest behaviour might entail persist [10]. Additionally, corruption assessments have often been restricted to looking at the problematic individuals involved and the professional, institutional, or environmental contexts where the misbehaviour has happened, similar to the research on workplace bullying [12]. Additionally, the abundance of unclear, sometimes contradicting empirical data in the literature on corruption [26] fosters the persistence of false and incomplete notions.

Definitions of corruption which are ambiguous, or contradictory are ineffective: There have been as many definitions of corruption as there have been study inquiries into it, according to [11], who also observes that opinions about corruption may and have evolved in reaction to shifting social, institutional, political, and cultural values and attitudes. The terms accidental, institutional, and systemic have all been used to describe corruption. Small-scale theft and misappropriation, bribes, favouritism, and prejudice are examples of incidental corruption. Bribery and bribes, conspiracy to deceive, extensive embezzlement, theft through public procurement or disposal of public property or economic benefits granted to privileged interests are all examples of institutional corruption. The large-scale distribution of public property to privileged interests, the use of phantom labour on government payrolls to steal funds, the favouring of certain individuals owing to political contributions are all examples of systemic corruption [9].

It is common to categorise corruption as incidental, institutional, or systemic. Small-scale embezzlement and misappropriation, bribery, favouritism, and prejudice are examples of incidental corruption [14] Bribery and kickbacks, conspiracy to deceive, extensive embezzlement, embezzlement through public procurement or sale of public property, or economic benefits granted to privileged interests are all examples of institutional corruption [17]. The large-scale distribution of public property to privileged interests, the use of phantom labour on government payrolls to embezzle funds, the favouring of certain individuals owing to political contributions are all examples of systemic corruption.

In addition to being subtle, sophisticated, and pervasive, corruption is also socially reinforced. It has been discovered that corrupt employees encourage co-workers and onlookers to engage in corrupt behaviour or to turn a blind eye to it by urging them to socialise their thoughts about their own corrupt behaviour [4]. Corrupt employees do this by demonising those who disagree with them, insisting that their immoral behaviour benefits the organisation and furthers important objectives, or by asserting that their past, highly glorified time and effort allows them to balance any immoral behaviour they may be engaging in now by comparing themselves to "much worse" people there or elsewhere [4].

It has been determined that different institutional and societal structures and procedures either prevent or enable and encourage personnel to engage in acts of corruption. It is stated that in some cases, they may even be the cause of spectators feeling under pressure to engage in corrupt behaviour or to support or tangentially assist in the corrupt behaviour of others [15]. There is proof that corruption behaviour endures for a very long time in the workplace., frequently uncontested. Psychological socialisation and rationalisation processes enable corrupt individuals to act without regret while believing that they are upright, moral, and ethical beings.[4]. Also, corrupt personnel explain their activity by denying personal responsibility and the potential harm their acts might cause [7]

Rarely does corruption originate from the acts of a single employee. Instead, corruption in the workplace is typically the result of conscious collaboration between several personnel, with bystanders participating in blatantly immoral conduct[4]. Over time, acts of corruption can spiral downwards because: (1) Loops of diverging norms start to form in the workplace, and those who engage in corrupt behaviour seem to benefit from it; (2) Spirals of workplace pressure, such as performance standards in competitive businesses, serve to foster corrupt behaviour (often unwittingly).; and (3) When the perceived (low) danger of dishonest personnel being found and disciplined does not deter them, spirals of opportunity might develop. It is also almost impossible to prevent corruption among other employees in that organisation when management refuse to do so or, worse still, engage in it themselves [15].

Analysis of corruption has also made a distinction between "a group of corrupt people" (Groups of workers that benefit personally from workplace corruption) and a "corrupt organisation" (in which personnel engage in corrupt behaviour on behalf of the company) [26]. Corruption study encompasses both personnel working on their own interests and those representing a wider, corrupt, rapacious, or abnormal [6]. Other studies have seen corruption from a systemic angle, classifying it as both a

condition and a process (Ashforth et al., 2008), and seeing corrupt behaviour as an infection that, if left uncontrolled, may seep into a group's, organization's, or industry's culture [26]

[32] defines corruption as the abuse of authority to further personal interests or benefits. This includes engaging in several dishonest, incorrect, or illegal behaviours as well as breaking established laws. More subtly, there is a connection between money and corruption. [9] recognise that "participation in corruption proceeds from the ideas, social relationships, and incentives faced by individuals, like other unlawful acts".

The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) is released yearly by Transparency International. Since 1995, Transparency International. Using the Malaysia Corruption Perception Index as a measure (CPI), as mentioned in Table 1, the score for the battle against corruption has increased from 47 to 48 in 2017 until 2021. According to [32], when the CPI falls below 50, it indicates that corruption concerns are severe. Therefore, it can be clearly seeing that Malaysia's corruption level is very worrying. In year 2019 to 2021, the corruption and crises reinforce one another, resulting in a significant upward movement to our CPI score. This is due to vicious cycle of mismanagement and escalating disaster. The vast quantities of money necessary to respond to catastrophes and the speed with which these monies must be disbursed create the ideal conditions for corruption.

Table 1: Malaysia's Corruption Perception Index

Year	CPI score (out of 100 points) (0 is highly corrupted, 100 is clean)	Overall rank (i.e., is the least corrupted, 180 is the most corrupted)	No. of countries assessed
2021	48	62	180
2020	51	57	180
2019	53	51	180
2018	47	61	180
2017	47	62	180

Source: Data from Transparency International; Various years

The number of arrests made by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) between 2018 and 2022(until September) decrease annually. From 2018 to 2022, Table 2 illustrates an increase in the number of public officials and individuals detained. This situation highlights the pervasiveness of corruption in the country and MACC's continual attempts to remove it and restore the public's trust.

Table 2: Number of individuals arrested by MACC

Year	Public official	Number of individuals arrested by MACC (private sector, General public, Politician, others)
2018	418	476
2019	525	576
2020	467	531
2021	411	440
2022(UNTIL SEPT)	279	528

Source: Data from MACC's Statistic on Arrests; Various years

2. Discussion

Even though corruption has been a part of society since its inception, it has only recently received increased attention; studies on the phenomena and its harmful effects have grown more prevalent since 1995, when countries and international institutions became aware of this issue [30]

Causes of Corruption in Workplace

Even if corruption in workplace are varies from one nation to the next, there are several major factors that are universal to all of them. [31] has identified some characteristics that are shared by all the nations that are among the most corrupt: all of them are developing or transitional nations, all but a few have low incomes, most have closed economies, Protestant nations have by far the lowest levels of corruption, there is little media freedom, and education levels are generally low. Despite the foregoing, corruption cannot be judged with certainty since there is never just one phenomenon that causes it to occur and grow; corruption always results from a variety of many, linked elements that might be quite different from one another. The political and economic environment, professional ethics, and regulations, as well as simply ethnological variables, such as customs, habits, and traditions, are among the factors that impact the growth of corruption that are most frequently highlighted.

According to [25], a powerful individual is more susceptible to corruption. Political power, authoritative power, and controlling power are the three types of power. In addition to power, one will conduct bribery when the chance presents itself. There will be possibilities when one has authority. Therefore, a person with considerable political power has more opportunity to engage in corruption. Moreover, those with poor moral standards, less integrity, selfishness, and greed are considerably more likely to engage in corruption [25]

Daud (2019) in his study found that among the factors that influence a person to commit corruption is because of the attitude of ignoring pure values and religious demands. This happens because the individual himself does not appreciate and understand the concept of reward and sin as well as the concept of work as a form of worship. Some individuals who are greedy and want to get rich quickly will usually take steps to use bribery as an easy way by accepting bribes because they have lost their honesty, trust and self-control. Without their appreciation and understanding of this concept, it causes them to do something according to their will and heart's satisfaction without thinking about the society that is affected by the act and the reward that will be received in the afterlife. Those with weak personalities and weak religious beliefs will easily commit corruption because they are controlled by lust and are easily influenced by rewards offered for personal gain [1].

According to another research by [24], corruption may be caused by behavioural characteristics such as the desire and purpose to corrupt. A particularly powerful emotional state for bribery is the desire to corrupt, which is a result of behavioural factors. In contrast, intention is a state of mind that is significantly impacted by desire. Despite this, an individual's aim may be managed provided they possess drive, law, regulations, and good values. As a result, to remove corruption, everyone's demands must be infused with positive values, and they must uphold moral and ethical standards with accountability and honour.

According to the common perspective, corruption hinders the economic prosperity of a nation. Few previous research in Malaysia have examined the relationship between economic progress and corrupt behaviours. Nonetheless, several studies have compared nations in terms of economic development and the corruption perception score. For instance, [14] investigated whether corruption is detrimental to economic progress in Asia-Pacific nations. Intriguingly, [13] discovered that the high perception of corruption in South Korea has led to a rise in economic development. Furthermore, China's economic growth appears to have a strong positive influence on corruption, showing that a rise in economic growth leads to an increase in corruption. Therefore, the Chinese government has implemented several anti-corruption campaigns and efforts to combat corruption practises meanwhile, the analysis reveals

that there is no correlation between corruption and economic development in Malaysia. These findings likely explain the limited acceptance of anti-corruption programmes as a method of promoting economic growth.

Based on the correlation between economy development towards corruption will affect on the employees at their workplaces. This well-being is to protect against economic risks such as unemployment, chronic illness, bankruptcy, poverty and financial problems after retirement. Xiamen University Malaysia lecturer, Dr Anas Afandi Ahmad is of the view that there are some workers who are forced to take bribes because of pressure in certain industries [21]. This pressure usually occurs in a company that sets achievement targets that are too high or unrealistic where they need to be achieved no matter what. As a result, corruption is used as a way to get tenders or projects so that annual performance can be achieved as desired by the industry.

According to the preceding explanation, variables such as individual attitudes and economic trends might influence corrupt behaviours. However, past research has also demonstrated that organisational characteristics, such as corporate culture and religious belief, influence corrupt behaviours. In the context of Malaysian public organisations, [17] examined the links between organisational culture, religious beliefs, and corruption among individuals younger than 34 years old. The findings indicate that corporate culture, including shared values, beliefs, and norms, as well as personal religious conviction, positively influenced corruption control. Consequently, the data demonstrated that employees' religion and company culture have a major impact in influencing corruption among Generation Y employees. The significance of healthy organisational culture and the development of religious consciousness among employees should be brought to the attention of public organisation management by these findings

According to [18] the level of corruption in a country will be impacted by a prime minister or dictator who blends personalization of power with neoliberal principles. Personalization of power includes actions like using an existing institution's authority for one's own benefit, eliminating competition for leadership positions by changing rules and regulations, and forming new organisations to demand that established ones take on completely new responsibilities to undo the effects of the previous regime. Contrary to neoliberalism philosophy, which holds that the government should restrict the capital movement and the wealth distribution in order to promote an more equitable and equal social order (Ahmad [2])

The study by [3] demonstrates how an aspiring authoritarian leadership may increase individual authority and erode the fair infrastructure. This in turn enhances the demand and supply sides of corruption production. Perwaja Steel served as the research's case study. This is because it was a significant controversy at a time when personalization of power was only starting to take hold. The study concluded that elite politicians who use their position of power to protect a state-owned business, alter economic laws, and strengthen their own and their friends' positions of power are a major cause of corruption in the nation. Therefore, corruption will continue if the nation's autocratic leadership is not addressed[2].

In general, corruption crimes in Malaysia continue to show an increase in arrests and this matter is feared to become a culture and part of the organizational system and community life [33] Efforts in combating corruption were found to be less encouraging due to the lack of support from the community as a result of the loss of their trust in agencies that combat corruption. Especially when high-profile corruption cases often fail to be convicted in court. Those who are accused of corruption still find a place in the hearts of supporters and can even win seats in the election and maintain their respective positions and be known by many [33]

Effects of Corruption in Workplace

When one thinks of the negative repercussions of corruption, the detrimental effect of great corruption is one of the first things that comes to mind. The misappropriation of enormous quantities of public monies, which can relate to some dictators and their cronies, as well as the mismanagement, waste, inequality, and societal disintegration that come along with it, can be extremely detrimental to an economy [30]. The irreparable damage that may be caused by unethical behaviour on such a large scale is self-evident, and there is no need to elaborate on the topic since it is self-evident. This is especially true for underdeveloped nations that are consistently and severely lacking in foreign exchange. On the other hand, the extent of the harm that corruption may do is not always proportional to its size. There are further negative repercussions that, when combined, can be extremely detrimental to a developing nation. These merit a more in-depth discussion, which may be found below.

The rich and well-connected receive economic rent under a corrupt system. Economic rent, by definition, denotes abnormal or monopolistic earnings and can confer substantial advantages. Consequently, there is a tendency for money to concentrate in the hands of a small subset of the population. As a result, the distribution of income becomes incredibly uneven. Additionally, the poor are disproportionately affected by corruption because they cannot afford to pay the bribes necessary to provide their children with a decent education, access to quality healthcare, or adequate access to services offered by the government like domestic water supply, electricity, sanitization, and community waste disposal facilities. In certain countries, the fairways' grass is kept green by a golf course's water sprinkler system for most of the day, while the neighbours across the street cannot get enough water for their daily needs. Due to the payment of bribes, the driving range of the golf course is lit by floodlights at night in support of the government's energy-saving plan, but students in the nearby hamlet must do their homework by candlelight [3].

The efficacy of the tax base and the government's ability to assure equitable wealth redistribution from the rich to the poor are undermined by corruption, which makes it easier for tax evasion, dysfunctional tax administrations, and exemptions that benefit the wealthy and well-connected. Increased inequality may provide the wealthy more incentive and resources to buy influence, both legally and illegally, while the poor may become more corruptible and less able to keep an eye on and hold the powerful and wealthy accountable. This will likely lead to an ongoing cycle of inequality, corruption, and inequity [19]

Corruption has an influence on economic growth in terms of distribution as well as economic efficiency. Although there is clear evidence that corruption and GDP per capita are negatively correlated, other scholars contend that research of this kind should additionally incorporate social welfare and wealth distribution measures [19]

The Gini coefficient, which measures income inequality, shows a positive correlation between corruption and this variable [27] According to research that uses panel data from African nations, a one-point rise in the corruption index is correlated with a seven-point rise in the Gini coefficient of income inequality. This is valid for developed nations. Research that used data from US states to examine the impact of corruption on income inequality and growth discovered strong evidence that corruption raises the Gini coefficient of income inequality and slows income growth. This can be explained by the fact that those with stronger connections, who are often members of higher income groups, are likely to gain from corruption. The ability of the government to ensure equal resource allocation is undermined by the likelihood that better connected individuals would receive the most lucrative government projects [18]

A distorted spending pattern develops to fit the lifestyle of the new, extremely rich urban elite because of unequal income distribution and the concentration of wealth in the hands of a select few. This entails the importation of a wide range of luxury goods, such as flashy cars, cutting-edge consumer

durables and electronic products, fashionable clothing, exotic perfumes, and all manner of other upscale items that could be found in the supermarkets and department stores of any prosperous Asian city during the region's economic boom. Of fact, most metropolitan and rural populations are unable to afford these products. The ostentatious usage of costly vehicles on dirt roads and the showy development of fancy apartment buildings among poverty and misery demonstrate that wealth is not widely distributed in these nations [31].

Fixing the roof should be the first order of business when it comes to maintaining and repairing a property properly. Since the leadership of a nation has a crucial role to play in battling corruption, many authors, like Malaysia's Professor Syed Hussein Alatas, a well-known expert on the subject, share this belief [3]. Asian culture has a history of valuing and holding leaders in high respect. To demonstrate honesty, integrity, and the ability to work hard, top leadership must lead by example. The leadership must also demonstrate determination, political will, and commitment to implement the necessary reforms since combating corruption would entail making difficult decisions. But while having sincere and committed leaders is a must, it is not sufficient to fight corruption. There are a few more requirements that must be met.

Regrettably, corruption throws serious limits on a country's ability to carry out economic reforms, making it more difficult for that country to do so. This is since reforms require increased transparency, accountability, free and fair competition, deregulation, and reliance on market forces and private initiative, as well as the limitation of discretionary powers, special privileges, and price distortions. All these things will reduce opportunities for economic rent, which is a source of economic rent opportunities on which corruption thrives. Reforms will face opposition from wealthy and powerful individuals since they are the primary beneficiaries of a corrupt system [5]

In addition, past studies indicate there is a connection between economic reform and corruption, and it should even be a positive association. Most scholars directly and indirectly accept and comprehend this argument. [29] argues that economic reform is supposed to result in a society free from corruption, and smaller nations can support this claim. The fundamental concept, according to [16] is how to use economic reform as a strategy to lessen corruption's interest in economic aspects. Every reform initiative that a nation undertakes includes instances of this unscrupulous behaviour. Corruption was first frequently invoked as a justification for enacting the reform agenda and afterwards as a justification for failings of the reform programme that had been put in place.

Remedial Measures

The following is a list of some ideas and recommendations to combat corruption:

Fixing the roof should be the first order of business when it comes to maintaining and repairing a property properly. Since the leadership of a nation has a crucial role to play in battling corruption, many authors, like Malaysia's Professor Syed Hussein Alatas, a well-known expert on the subject, share this belief [3]. Asian culture has a history of valuing and holding leaders in high respect. To demonstrate honesty, integrity, and the ability to work hard, top leadership must lead by example. Since fighting corruption will require making difficult decisions, the leadership must also show resolve, political will, and commitment to enact the required reforms. While having true and dedicated leaders is essential, fighting corruption still requires more. There are a few additional conditions that need to be fulfilled.

Political leaders, according to [7] are crucial in eradicating the culture of corruption by enacting legislation and devoting resources for its enforcement. They wouldn't rid their colleagues or their country of corruption, though, if they had accepted payments to support their parties and themselves. The anti-corruption agency or other analogous agencies should be given sufficient legal authority, staff, and resources to implement the anti-corruption legislation impartially and without political interference if the incumbent government of a country is committed to doing so.

Credibility is one among them. The demand and supply side offenders must be convinced that the government is dedicated to eradicate corruption for a corrupt agreement to thrive. [22]. One idea for achieving this goal is to "fry some big fish," or publicly attempt to punish some well-known corrupt individuals in the nation. In numerous Asian nations, there have been some well-publicized trials and convictions of prominent leaders and businesses on corruption-related accusations. The recommendation is further made that the fish that is fried should preferably be from your own pond because accusations of corruption are frequently used to destroy political rivals.

In order to have a more effective, fair, and efficient government, it is crucial to fight corruption. The state struggles to establish credibility and authority when there is insufficient openness, accountability, and probity in the use of public resources [25] Hence, systemic corruption works against effective governance and undermines the legitimacy of democratic institutions. In addition, there is a strong association between corruption and a lack of regard for human rights as well as between corruption and anti-democratic actions. Corruption makes people distrust their government. Therefore, it is very important for the government to gain the trust and credibility from the people in order to combat corruption.

According to the study analysis of the influences of individual factors on the likelihood to bribe, [12] found that certain personal traits were predictive of dishonest behaviour. Furthermore, [23] stress the need of investigating the function of moral emotions in bribery research. Therefore, it would be beneficial to run a public relations effort to raise awareness of the negative impacts of corruption and to make a clear and unequivocal government declaration about the need to control it. Ordinary folks should be enlisted for assistance and collaboration to successfully begin an anti-corruption effort since they are a valuable source of information and have a lot of first-hand knowledge about corruption.

In addition, people will react and offer their full assistance in finding a solution if they are persuaded that a true and genuine attempt to eradicate corruption is under way. A flood of information, thoughts, and proposals would result from just a little bit of opening and giving people the chance to share their opinions on the subject [22]

A responsible press that can acquire, analyse, present, and disseminate information is thought to be essential for raising public awareness and giving changes to fight corruption impetus. Politicians and public servants have been able to get away with corruption in large part because of secrecy. In many nations, both established and developing, a responsible and investigative press has been crucial in exposing wrongdoing and acting as a watchdog to keep corruption in check and stop it going out of control. Like everything else in our world, the press hasn't always done responsibly. It's also not flawless. Its ability to restrict wrongdoing and unethical behaviour should not be understated, though [22]

There are differing opinions on the performance of anti-corruption oversight or watchdog agencies. They have been helpful in several situations. For instance, it is thought that the Independent Commission Against Corruption in Hong Kong, China, and comparable organisations in Botswana, Chile, Malaysia, and Singapore did a decent job. However, most respondents do not have a positive impression of them in polls and conversations with public officials and members of civil society groups. According to the predominant opinion, for such organisations to be effective, they must be established in a political environment where leaders are honourable, government personnel are protected from political meddling, and stronger incentives are offered to deter corruption. If not, the monitoring bodies will become ineffective or, worse, be abused for political purposes. The nation may then be forced to select a watchdog to keep an eye on the watchdog body if an unfavourable circumstance arises.

For example, in Malaysia. The president of the Perak Malay Assembly (DPMP), Datuk [12] said the government's policy of blindly giving aid is one of the causes of contagious corruption in the community. Most politicians give rewards in the form of aid before the elections simply to get the

support of the people. Datuk Zahar expressed his opinion again that the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (SPRM) should be an independent body that is not controlled by politicians and placed directly under the Yang di-Pertuan Agong. This is because, usually the bribe giver comes from among politicians who have contacts in political bodies or SPRM who can help them escape from any punishment and action [1].

The pertinent concerns can only be briefly mentioned because this is a very vast area. It entails things like enhancing the legal system, finding easier, quicker, and less onerous ways to carry out court proceedings and justice administration tasks, enhancing police force effectiveness, fortifying the auditor general's office, and appointing a responsible inspector general with the authority to investigate and prosecute corruption.

The strategy to promote good governance via, among other things, prevention, is to assist client nations in reducing corruption and fostering integrity so that they may enhance their public services and foster an enabling environment [8]. The Governance and Anti-Corruption programme consists of three main activity areas: (a) improving public sector service delivery by focusing on public sector accountability and legal reform in order to reintroduce rule of law; (b) building integrity by promoting governmental accountability and transparency; and (c) building a prevention and anti-corruption capacity of the public sector, including parliament, watchdog and enforcement agencies, and the judiciary.

3. Conclusion and Recommendation

Corruption is a process that can go in several directions. On the one hand, the person who provides the service benefits, while on the other hand, the recipient does, and both parties are aware of the act that is kept a secret. Everybody else, who are the victims, make up the third link in the chain. Even if not all instances of corruption are currently considered to be illegal offences, engaging in corrupt behaviour is nevertheless immoral and harmful to the economic and political growth of a community.

Corruption is a sign of deep-seated and basic economic, political, and institutional deficiencies and flaws in a society. This is a valuable conclusion that has evolved from the present conversation and continuous debate on the corruption issue. To be effective, anti-corruption programmes must target these fundamental causes rather than the manifestations. Therefore, emphasis must be directed on avoiding corruption by addressing its core causes via economic, political, and institutional changes. In the absence of a real effort to address the root causes of corruption, anti-corruption enforcement tools such as monitoring organisations, a stronger police force, and more effective courts will be ineffective.

From the discussion above, it can be indicated that a connection between corruption and its harmful impacts, although most research are unable to distinguish between the cause and effect. Whether the degree of corruption is lower due to a high GDP or vice versa cannot be determined with certainty because corruption depends on economic indicators while simultaneously influencing them. Additionally, it is impossible to assert that the average low level of education is a result of corruption or vice versa. The same may be said about the rule of law and the (in) efficiency of government management. The only way to be effective in the battle against corruption is to identify and eradicate its root causes.

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