

BRIBERY INTENTION IN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY : AN APPLICATION OF THE THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT: Illegal and unethical behaviors of the construction industry affect people's lives and health more than the same problems of the other industries. Among these behaviors, the construction industry is mostly criticized for bribery scandals. According to the survey of the Ministry of Justice in Taiwan over the past years, bribery cases involving public engineering projects and governmental procurements account for a rather large portion of the indicted corruption cases. Transparency International's "Bribe Payer Index" indicates people in construction-related industries are the most likely to pay bribes. Poor construction quality directly and indirectly caused by bribery poses a great threat to public safety, organizational reputation and economic development. However, there is a limited number of existing research on the bribery problem of the construction industry. This study is an empirical attempt to explore bribery intention and its affecting factors among the construction organizations in Taiwan by conducting a questionnaire survey. The theory of planned behavior was used in this study to build its research model (covering elements of attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavior control, and intention). Totally 431 valid samples were returned. To explore the factors affecting bribery intention, this study adopted Pearson's correlation analysis to discuss about the connections among the questionnaire respondents' attitudes to bribery, subjective norms, perceived behavior control, and bribery intention. A multi-regression analysis was then conducted to test if the planned behavior theory can effectively predict bribery intention. The research found (1) according to the results of Pearson's correlation analysis, the respondents' bribery intention, attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control are positively correlated with one another; (2) according to the results of the multi-regression analysis, bribery intention can be explained through attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control with an adjusted R^2 value of 0.591, meaning 59.1% of the bribery intention's variances can be explained through the three dimensions. In addition, each of the three dimensions has a significant influence on the respondents' behavior intentions.

Keywords: Theory of Planned Behavior; Bribery Intention; Engineering Ethics; Multi-regression

1. INTRODUCTION

According to Transparency International's 2009 "Bribe Payer Index (<http://www.transparency.org/>) [1], Taiwan ranked the 14th cleanest among totally 22 countries. Despite an improvement in its ranking in the index from previous years, Taiwan still lags behind Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong in Asia. In addition, the Ministry of Justice conducted a survey on the integrity of totally 21 categories of civil servants perceived by the public (<http://www.moj.gov.tw/mp001.html>) [2]. The survey results indicated the civil servants in charge of construction-related affairs, such as construction regulation, governmental procurement, and river gravel management, are perceived as the most corrupt by the public. Furthermore, construction problems can lead to not only losses of money but also losses of priceless lives. For example, in early 2008, a crane collapsed at a construction site in Manhattan, New York City,

destroying three apartments nearby and leaving four dead and 17 injured. This incident not only caused damage worth millions of dollars but also seriously threatened public security. Another example is the Wenchuan earthquake in China's Sichuan Province in May 2008 in which many students and residents were killed by collapsed buildings. After the wake of the earthquake, a majority of the buildings were found to have severe problems of corner cutting. These two cases are only the tip of the iceberg, demonstrating how much more illegal and unethical behaviors in the construction industry affect the life and health of each of us than the same problems in the other industries.

Of course, illegal behaviors and activities can be deterred or penalized through legal measures. However, legislation always lags behind the ever-changing development of society while there are always some people deliberately exploiting legal loopholes. Therefore, laws can only play a role of passive prevention but not of

proactive intervention. Only when one has good ethics will he spontaneously adhere to all the regulations both at work and in every other aspects of life. Laws and ethics are closely connected. Any discussion of illegal behaviors should also involve discussion about insufficiency or lack of ethics.

Engineering ethics is a branch of professional ethics, covering moral norms and other related issues in engineering professions [3]. Therefore, compared with general ethics, it focuses more on the professional aspects of engineering for only those with professional training in engineering can foresee possible consequences of their work. Among the many illegal or unethical scandals in the construction industry, corruption is the most criticized. Corruption problems can not only hurt the economy but also deter foreign investments. Therefore, it is meaningful to study how to improve the ethical levels and curb corruption in the construction industry. Among the different forms of corruption, bribery is the most commonly seen [4]. However, most of the existing studies on bribery discuss mainly corruption and legal issues. Few explore bribery from the perspective of professional ethics.

This research is intended to explore the problems of unethical and illegal behaviors in the construction industry. A questionnaire survey was conducted and the theory of planned behavior developed by Ajzen [5] was used to build a model in this study to discuss the affecting factors of unethical and illegal behaviors among the construction organizations.

There is currently an extremely limited amount of existing research concerning the bribery intention in the construction industry. Hopefully, this study can offer some helpful suggestions on how to improve the engineering ethics of the construction organizations by exploring the factors of bribery intention in Taiwan's construction industry. The purposes of this study are as follows:

1. Measuring the bribery intention of the employees of the construction organizations in Taiwan by exploring the current conditions of their attitudes toward bribery, subjective norms, perceived behavior control, and bribery intention.

2. Examining if the attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavior control of the employees affect their bribery intention and testing if the planned behavior theory can effectively predict their bribery intention; and

3. Providing suggestions for the organizations on how to improve their engineering ethics and also how to curb bribery intention of the employees.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Corruption and Bribery in the Construction Industry

Many of the construction-related disasters can be attributed to problems of corruption or bribery. Bribery refers to the act of paying money or offering something of value to the receiver so that he or she is induced or obliged to reciprocate by offering favors [6]. It is the most commonly seen and frequently discussed form of

corruption [4]. Scandals of bribery are frequently heard of in the construction industry but, regrettably, there is little related empirical research or survey.

According to the survey results published by Taiwan's Ministry of Justice in 2009 on the integrity of civil servants, the most corrupt perceived by the public were the legislators and the civil servants in charge of river gravel management, followed by the civil servants in charge of governmental procurements and public engineering projects. These three types of civil servants also ranked the bottom two in the previous surveys.

The survey also indicated the corruption cases involving governmental procurements and public engineering projects accounted for a rather large share of all the indicted cases. This finding indicates governmental procurement is the major channel for unethical civil servants or legislators to obtain illegal gains. Among those corruption cases not related to governmental procurements, most involved civil servants or legislators abusing the power and opportunities brought by their positions to extort money from the interest party, steal from the coffer, take bribes, or engage in other types of corruption practices [1].

Research on the corruption of Afghanistan's governmental departments also found that women in Afghanistan are more likely to bribe people working in the health department than men. 74% of the surveyed women indicated they bribed to "speed up the medical procedure" and the other 26% bribed to "receive better medical treatment". Bribery is rampant in Afghanistan with nearly one out of every two Afghans having resorted to bribery to have things done [7]. In the Former Soviet Union, foreign companies needed to bribe officials in each department of related authorities in order to make investments in the country. Such a problem of rampant corruption made the Soviet Union unattractive to foreign investments and hindered its economic growth and development as a consequence [8].

The above-mentioned findings suggest that even though bribery or corruption is seen incorrect or unfair, it is sometimes perceived as a necessary method to do things under some circumstances.

2.2 Theory of Planned Behavior

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) is an extension and improvement from the theory of reasoned action (TRA) developed by Fishbein and Ajzen [9]. TRA suggests that an individual's behaviors, controlled by his or her consciousness, are well-reasoned. During the following two decades after the theory was developed, TRA had been used to predict personal behaviors and behavior intentions. However, it was found many behaviors are also decided by non-volitional factors that are beyond the control of personal consciousness. Therefore, Ajzen reckoned TRA only applied to volitional behaviors and, therefore, proposed TPB to better predict and explain behaviors. Ajzen [5] believed behavior intention is the most effective indicator for the

prediction of an individual's behaviors for it can better represent the intention of this individual to perform a behavior. In addition, behavior intention is decided by the three factors of attitudes to behaviors, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control. The following is a short introduction to the three factors [10]:

1. Attitudes

Most researchers believe one's attitudes to a behavior are based on a continuous evaluation of both positive and negative attributes of the people, things and concepts concerning the behavior. In other words, it takes a relatively long period of time for one to develop certain attitudes toward a behavior. Such attitudes are composed of elements of emotions (emotional reactions to the behavior and people involved in the behavior), cognition (thoughts or beliefs about the behavior and the people involved), and behavior (actions taken in response).

2. Subjective Norms

Subjective norms refer to the social expectation perceived by an individual when performing a behavior. It is necessary for one to have a sense of belonging to a certain group. To be accepted by a group, one needs to conform to its norms and only do things in line with the values and beliefs of the group.

3. Perceived Behavior Control

Perceived behavior control refers to one's perceived presence of factors that may facilitate or impede performance of a behavior. It is a function of control beliefs, reflecting the level of difficulty perceived by one in performing a behavior.

3. Analysis Methods

3.1 Research Method

To fulfill the goal of this study, in addition to the literature review on bribery and TPB, a questionnaire survey was conducted to collect opinions from the employees of the surveyed organizations in Taiwan and the questionnaire results were statistically analyzed to further explore the issue of bribery in the construction industry.

3.1.1 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire survey in this research was intended to find out the attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control toward bribery among the employees of the surveyed organizations in Taiwan. The questionnaire was designed based on the results of literature review. A pilot test of the questionnaire was also conducted and some of the questions were modified based on the pilot test results.

1. Scale of Attitudes

The scale mainly discusses the attitudes of the respondents' attitudes toward bribery. The scale was based on and modified from the questionnaires developed by Francis et al [11] and Cronan & Al-Rafee [12]. It uses the Likert 7-point design with higher scores indicating that the respondent has higher acceptance of bribery, believing bribery is beneficial for him or her. Questions 2

and 4 in the scale are reverse questions (indicated with "*" signs) and their scores were reversed in the statistic analysis.

2. Scale of Subjective Norms

The scale was designed based on the questionnaires developed by Francis et al [11] and Powpaka [13] and then modified based on the attributes of the construction industry in Taiwan. It is a Likert 7-point scale with higher scores indicating the reference groups of the respondent have higher acceptance of bribery. Questions 2 and 6 in the scale are reverse questions.

3. Scale of Perceived Behavior Control

The scale was based on and modified from the questionnaires developed by Francis et al [11] and Cronan & Al-Rafee [12]. It is also a Likert 7-point scale with higher scores indicating the respondent has more conditions and resources required to pay bribes. Questions 9 and 11 are reverse questions.

4. Scale of Bribery Intention

The scale is designed based on the questionnaire developed by Francis et al. [11] with some modifications based on the attributes of Taiwan's construction industry. It is a Likert 7-point scale with three questions. Higher scores in the scale indicate the respondent has higher bribery intention.

3.1.2 Analysis Methods

The questionnaire results were statistically analyzed with SPSS, using methods such as descriptive analysis, reliability analysis, Pearson's correlation analysis, and multi-regression analysis.

3.2 Research Limitation

This study did not include the variable of "behavior" in the TPB model. It is because observation of the questionnaire respondents' behaviors can be very time-consuming and costly, making it very difficult to ensure thorough observation and obtain reliable information. In addition, the observation results may only account for a small portion of the respondents' behaviors while the possible difficulties in distinguishing some types of behaviors may lead to analysis errors. Therefore, following the example of previous research, this study did not include behaviors in its discussion and focused only on intentions.

4. RESEARCH FINDINGS Statistic Analysis Results and Research Findings

The questionnaire results in this study was analyzed first using descriptive analysis to find out the structure and characteristics of the samples, then reliability analysis to examine the reliability of each dimension, Pearson's correlation analysis to find out the correlations among each dimension, and finally multi-regression analysis to explore the influence of each dimension on the others.

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

The subjects in this study were employees of the construction organizations in Taiwan, including technicians, designers, inspectors, construction site directors, and people in charge of procurement affairs working for construction contractors, construction design companies, or construction-related governmental departments.

Totally 1,500 questionnaires were sent in this study and 543 of them were returned (with a return rate of 36.2%), among which there were 431 valid samples.

1. Scale of Attitudes: The average score of Question 6 was the highest (5.01 points with a standard deviation of 1.967), indicating the respondents believe bribery is a wise decision and helpful in solving problems. Question 1 had the second highest average score (3.59 points with a standard deviation of 2.267). However, it was slightly lower than the intermediate value (four points), which indicates the respondents believe bribery is prone to causing harm. The average scores of the other four questions were all lower than four points while the average score the scale was 3.23 points (with a standard deviation of 1.02). These analysis results indicate the respondents generally have negative attitudes toward bribery. They generally don't find bribery agreeable or pleasant.

2. Scale of Subjective Norms: Question 7 had the highest average score (3.52 points with a standard deviation of 2.11), followed by Question 6 (3.35 points with a standard deviation of 2.10). In addition, the average score of the scale was 2.95 points with a standard deviation of 1.43, which indicates the respondents generally have negative (or relatively low) subjective norms. In other words, when deciding to pay bribes or not, the respondents are less influenced by the opinions from the reference groups important to them (such as colleagues, family members or professional groups).

3. Scale of Perceived Behavior Control: The average score of this scale was 3.09 points (with a standard deviation of 1.26). It is lower than the intermediate value of four points, indicating that the respondents tend to disagree with the statements in the questions. In other words, they believe they don't have sufficient resources to be able to decide whether or not to pay bribes. Question 12 had the highest average score (3.43 points with a standard deviation of 2.28) while Question 8 had the lowest average score (2.50 points with a standard deviation of 1.74).

4. Scale of Bribery Intention: The average score of this scale was 3.16 points (with a standard deviation of 1.90), which is lower than the intermediate value and indicates that the respondents tend to disagree with the statements in the questions. In other words, they have relatively low bribery intention.

Table 1. Descriptive Analysis Results of the Questionnaire Data

Dimension/ Question No.	sub-dimension	Average Score	Standard deviation
Scale of Attitudes		3.23	1.02

In my opinion, paying bribes to facilitate the project implementation is...		
(6) foolish-wise	5.01	1.967
(1) harmful-helpful	3.59	2.267
(5) very unworthy-very worthy	3.13	2.028
* (4) very valueless-very valuable	2.93	1.987
(3) very bad-very good	2.47	1.800
* (2) very unpleasant-very pleasant	2.24	1.670
Scale of Subjective Norms	2.95	1.43
7 I think my company agrees with my behaviors (of bribery) very much.	3.52	2.112
* 6 Most of the people or groups who can influence my decisions would agree with my behaviors (of bribery).	3.35	2.104
5 Most of the people important to me would expect me to give bribes.	2.82	1.873
* 2 Most of the people or groups important to me would disagree with my behaviors (of bribery).	2.79	2.048
3 I think I am expected to give bribes.	2.58	1.840
4 I think, according to the current social expectations, I should give bribes.	2.54	1.827
Scale of Perceived Behavior Control	3.09	1.26
12 I am fully capable of deciding whether or not to give bribes.	3.43	2.28
* 11 It is out of my capacity to decide whether or not to give bribes.	3.27	2.15
* 9 I find giving bribes very easy/difficult.	3.14	2.05
10 I believe I have the ability (knowledge, resources and courage) to give bribes.	3.12	2.01
8 I can give bribes at my own will.	2.50	1.74
Scale of Bribery Intention	3.16	1.90
15 I think I will give bribes.	3.27	2.104
14 I plan to give bribes to facilitate my work.	3.21	2.128
13 In similar situations in the future, I think I will choose to give bribes as well.	3.01	2.003

Note: Questions marked with a "*" sign are reverse questions.

4.2 Reliability Analysis

The study used Cronbach's α value analysis, a commonly used method to measure internal consistency, to find out the reliability of the dimensions of attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavior control, and bribery intention in the questionnaire. The analysis results showed the Cronbach's α value of each dimension was over 0.7, indicating high reliability.

Table 2. Reliability Analysis Results

Dimension	Cronbach's α
Attitudes	0.813
Subjective Norms	0.826
Perceived Behavior Control	0.726
Bribery Intention	0.899

4.2.1 Correlation Analysis

A Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted in this study to measure the correlations between attitudes, subjective norms, perceived behavior control, and bribery intention. Table 3 lists the matrix results. The correlations between the dimensions are described as follows:

1. Attitudes

The respondents' attitudes were moderately positively correlated with subjective norms ($r=0.569^{**}$, $p<0.01$), perceived behavior control ($r=0.229^{**}$, $p<0.01$) and bribery intention ($r=0.574^{**}$, $p<0.01$), which means when the respondents have more positive attitudes toward bribery, their subjective norms, perceived behavior control, and bribery intention will increase accordingly.

2. Subjective Norms

The subjective norms of the respondents were significantly correlated with the other dimensions. Its correlation with perceived behavior control was lowly positive ($r=0.340^{**}$, $p<0.01$) and that with bribery intention was highly positive ($r=0.726^{**}$, $p<0.01$), which means when the respondents have higher subjective norms, their perceive behavior control and bribery intention will increase accordingly.

3. Perceived Behavior Control

The dimension of perceived behavior control was found moderately positively correlated with bribery intention ($r=0.436^{**}$, $p<0.01$), which suggests when the respondents have higher perceived behavior control, their bribery intention will increase accordingly.

Table 3. Correlation Analysis Results

Variable	Attitude	Subjective Norm	Perceived Behavior Control	Bribery Intention
Attitude	1	-	-	-
Subjective Norm	0.569**	1	-	-
Perceived Behavior Control	0.229**	0.340**	1	-
Bribery Intention	0.574**	0.726**	0.436**	1

* $p<0.05$ ** $p<0.01$.

4.2.2 Multi-regression Analysis Results

A multi-regression analysis was conducted using the dimensions of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control as independent variables and bribery intention as a dependent variable. According to the analysis results shown in Table 4, the regression model reached the level of significance ($F=166.553^{**}$). In addition, its Durbin-Watson (DW) value was 1.905, close to two, and the VIFs were all smaller than ten. These results indicate the regression model is free from problems of autocorrelation or collinearity.

As indicated in the correlation model, the variables of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control are capable of explaining bribery intention with an Adj-R2 value of 0.591, which means they can explain 59.1% of the variances of bribery intention. In addition, attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control each has a significant influence on bribery intention as shown in Figure 1.

According to the above-mentioned analysis results, the respondents' bribery intention is positively influenced by their attitudes. In other words, if they find bribery a kind of positive behaviors (pleasant, valuable, or wise) that are

helpful in solving problems, their bribery intentions will increase accordingly. Therefore, if the organization can invest more in training its employees to establish virtuous values and correct attitudes toward bribery, it can help effectively reduce their bribery intention.

Subjective norms also have a positive influence on their bribery intention. This suggests that if the subjective norms of the people or groups important to the respondents are stronger (causing more pressure on the respondents to follow the norms), the bribery intention will increase as a result and vice versa. Therefore, to reduce bribery intention among employees, organizations should invest more in promoting among the reference groups important to the employees (such as their colleagues, family members or professional groups) the awareness that bribery is a kind of condemnable and negative behaviors so that the employees will receive less pressure from these groups to perform bribery and reduce their bribery intention.

From the regression analysis results, perceived behavior control and bribery intention are found significantly positively correlated with each other. This suggests, when the perceived behavior control is stronger (when the respondents are more confident in giving bribes), the bribery intention of the respondents is higher. Therefore, an organization can reduce the bribery intention of its employees by reducing their perceived behavior control over bribery, i.e., making them perceive bribery more difficult to perform.

From the above-mentioned results of the multi-regression analysis, the equation of bribery intention (BI), attitudes (A), subjective norms (SN), and perceived behavior control (PBC) is: $BI = -1.071 + 0.412 * (A) + 0.697 * (SN) + 0.290 * (PBC)$.

Table 4. Regression Analysis Results

Independent Variable	Regression Model			
	Unstandardized B value estimate	Standardized β Coefficient	T	VIF
Constant term	-1.071	-	-4.349**	-
A	.412	.224	5.359**	1.474
SN	.697	.530	12.154**	1.601
PBC	.290	.194	5.280**	1.137
R ²	0.594			
Adj-R ²	0.591			
Result F	166.553**			
P	0.000			
DW	1.905			

* $p<0.05$ ** $p<0.01$.

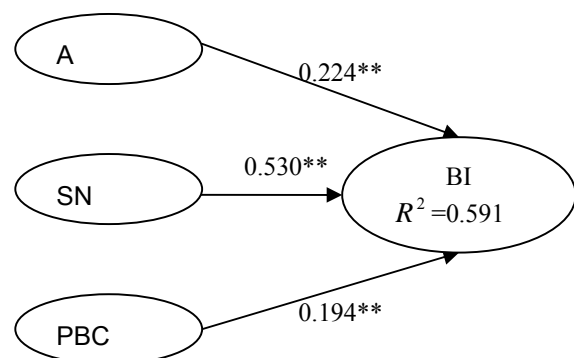


Figure 1. Regression Model Analysis Results

5. CONCLUSIONS

Through the correlation and regression analyses of this research, it was found:

1. The respondents demonstrated negative attitudes toward bribery in the questionnaire survey, indicating the respondents generally do not accept bribery and find it unpleasant (with an average score of 3.23 points with a standard deviation of 1.02). In addition, nearly 40% of the respondents indicated that they find bribery beneficial, which indicates there are still a number of people in the construction industry who find bribery suitable and acceptable.
2. The average score of the scale of subjective norms was relatively low (2.95 points with a standard deviation of 1.43), lower than the intermediate value of four points. This indicates the subjective norm has a negative influence on the bribery intention. In other words, when making decisions, the respondents do not change their decisions due to opinions from the reference groups important to them. However, there were nearly 30% of the respondents believing that their companies would agree with their decisions to pay bribes.
3. The average score of the perceived behavior control was 3.09 points with a standard deviation of 1.26, also lower than the intermediate value. This indicates the respondents find themselves relatively lack the resources or opportunities to perform bribery. Only nearly 30% of them believed that they are capable of performing bribery at their will or have more opportunities to do so.
4. The scale of the bribery intention had an average score of 3.16 points with a standard deviation of 1.90, also lower than the intermediate value. This suggests the respondents have relatively low bribery intention.
5. The regression analysis results in this study indicate that the three factors of attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavior control of TPB are significantly correlated with bribery intention with an adjusted R^2 value of 0.591, meaning 59.1% of the bribery intention's variances can be explained through the three factors. The factor of subjective norms in particular has the strongest influence on bribery intention. Therefore, it is suggested that organizations focus more on the factor of subjective norms in order to ensure more efficient and effective bribery prevention.

Based on the findings listed above, the research suggests the governmental authorities and the organizations to invest more in strengthening the promotion of engineering ethics, particularly the promotion of legal knowledge and related penalties of

bribery among not only their employees but also the groups important to their employees so that bribery intention can be intimidated, reduced and, ultimately, prevented.

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