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Research paper

Does Gender Matter in Combating Corruption? A Comparative Analysis of Chinese Manufacturing Companies

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of a social cooperative attitude on efforts to combat bribery within organizations, examining gender as a moderating variable. Employing an explanatory sequential mixed-method design, the research first gathered quantitative data from 665 employees working in the accounting and financial departments of manufacturing companies in China through online surveys. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was applied to test the research hypotheses and explore the relationships among key constructs. The results indicate that a social cooperative attitude significantly and positively impacts employees' ability to resist and combat unethical behaviors, such as bribery, in the workplace. Moreover, the study reveals that gender acts as a significant moderator in this dynamic: women demonstrate a greater role in mitigating unethical attitudes among employees compared to men. This emphasizes the necessity of considering gender when developing ethical interventions and organizational policies. Future research should be conducted across various regions and sectors to enhance the generalizability of the findings. The insights provided by this study provide beneficial advice to organizational leaders and policymakers in both the private and public sectors. It emphasizes the need to enhance ethical controls and promote an organizational culture grounded in gender equality, aiming to foster positive employee attitudes and behaviors. Ultimately, such strategies can strengthen ethical standards and reduce the likelihood of bribery and other forms of unethical conduct in organizations.

Keywords: gender, social cooperative, attitude, organisation culture, bribery

Fraud has become a significant and increasingly complex issue affecting both private and public entities around the world, posing serious threats to the integrity and financial stability of the insurance industry and beyond. This multifaceted problem takes various forms, ranging from individuals making false or exaggerated claims to sophisticated, organized crime groups orchestrating elaborate and systematic fraud schemes (Chen & Wu, 2023; Qin et al., 2026). The rapid expansion of manufacturing companies and the emergence of new markets, particularly in countries such as China, have further intensified the need for comprehensive fraud detection mechanisms (Detkova et al., 2021; Shin & Lui, 2022). The heightened demand for global goods and services has inadvertently created new opportunities for fraudsters to exploit gaps in oversight and enforcement, making the problem even more urgent and complex (Astuti et al., 2026; Cengiz & Demir, 2022; Rahman et al., 2023). It has become authoritative and essential for companies to develop and implement advanced fraud detection systems, leverage

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cutting-edge technologies, and foster greater collaboration between law enforcement agencies, regulatory authorities, and industry stakeholders.

Fraud manifests in a diverse range of phenomena across the insurance industry and broader financial sectors, reflecting the adaptability and persistence of those who seek to exploit systemic vulnerabilities. The fraud is often clustered in certain geographic regions or specific policyholder demographics, suggesting that socioeconomic factors and local enforcement capabilities play a critical role in shaping fraud risk (Agarwal et al., 2025; Akram et al., 2021; Bhatia et al., 2025). Another anomaly observed in the literature is the cyclical nature of fraud spikes, which frequently coincide with economic downturns or regulatory changes that either incentivize or inadvertently enable fraudulent activities (Afzali et al., 2021; Rusfiana & Kurniasih, 2024). Prior research has also highlighted gaps and inconsistencies in data collection and fraud reporting standards, making it challenging to accurately assess the full scope of the problem and compare findings across regions or insurance lines. These anomalies underscore the importance of developing tailored fraud detection models that account for local context, temporal trends, and evolving criminal tactics.

Chinese manufacturing companies have taken steps to combat fraud by tightening regulations and introducing advanced fraud-detection procedures. An important dimension of this issue is the influence of gender on unethical behavior in companies globally (Amadi et al., 2023; Natalis & Al Asy'arie, 2026). Some studies found that men may be more likely than women to engage in unethical practices such as fraud and corruption (Guerra & Zhuravleva, 2022; Wang et al., 2022). In contrast, some studies found that female leaders are more inclined to emphasize ethical considerations and foster cultures of integrity within their organizations as a social cooperative attitude towards communication and interaction (Kulkarni & Mishra, 2021; Qin et al., 2026). Social cooperative attitude refers to an individual's tendency to work collaboratively with others, prioritize group goals over personal interests, and engage in behaviors that promote mutual benefit, trust, and harmony within a social or organizational context (Cui & Lu, 2026; Wang et al., 2026). It embodies willingness to communicate openly, share resources, and uphold fairness and ethical standards to maintain positive social interactions. Furthermore, social role theory suggests that gender differences in socially cooperative attitudes rooted in culturally assigned social roles help explain why men and women may differ in their tendencies toward bribery or fraud (Hanek & Garcia, 2022; Zahari et al., 2024). This highlights the importance of considering gendered socialization and cooperative attitudes in understanding and addressing corruption. Understanding these gender dynamics is therefore crucial for designing targeted interventions and promoting higher ethical standards in both global and Chinese corporate environments.

Some studies attempt to uncover the key drivers of fraud and how to assess the effectiveness of existing fraud-detection strategies and explore innovative solutions to mitigate fraud (Chen & Wu, 2023; Lennox & Wu, 2022). Additionally, there is growing interest in understanding how gender influences corruption patterns in the insurance sector. For instance, men may feel pressured to conform to aggressive business practices, while women may be socialized to prioritize ethical considerations and collaboration (Agerberg, 2022; Amadi et al., 2023). In Chinese businesses, traditional cultural norms may make these tendencies even worse because male-dominated leadership structures can promote a culture of taking risks and making unethical choices. However, the existing research on corruption is more concerned with Western countries and avoids elaborating on employees' gender roles against unethical action. There is an insufficiency of empirical evidence regarding the impact of gender on fraud-related behavior in the Chinese context, as well as the mechanisms that explain this relationship. Therefore, understanding how gender influences power dynamics, patronage, and corruption is critical for a more complete understanding of company failures in China. How is a social cooperative attitude contributing to bribery practice in China?

The findings of this study contribute significantly to corruption research and also understanding the dynamics and insights into the interplay between gender, culture, and unethical practices, ultimately informing strategies for promoting ethical behavior across the industry. Furthermore, this research provides important perspectives on how gendered power dynamics influence corruption networks, offering a more appreciation for the interplay between personal relationships, gender, and corruption in public organizations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social role theory

Social role theory posits that gender plays a central role in shaping behavioral expectations and socialization processes, which, in turn, directly impact individuals' attitudes toward cooperation, ethics, and decision-making in both personal and professional contexts (Cui & Lu, 2026; Schneider & Boss, 2019). Societal norms and cultural traditions assign different roles and expectations to men and women (Atef, 2026). It can foster the development of stronger social cooperative attitudes among women, encouraging behaviors that reinforce group cohesion and mutual support. As a result, women may be more inclined to resist corrupt practices, such as bribery or abuse of power, due to an internalized commitment to fairness, transparency, and the common good. It highlights the powerful influence of gendered socialization on average behavioral tendencies. Additionally, the theory

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underscores the role of broader institutional and cultural factors in moderating these effects (Handoyo & Anas, 2024). Organizations with strong ethical cultures and robust anti-corruption policies can help mitigate the risk of unethical behavior for all employees, regardless of gender. Social role theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the observed differences in cooperative attitudes and susceptibility to corruption.

Corruption in China

Corruption is generally defined as the misuse of public power for personal gain. Female leadership can lead to lower levels of corruption, emphasizing the importance of gender diversity in governance (Transparency International, 2024). Corruption is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. It typically involves actions that violate legal or ethical standards, such as embezzlement, nepotism, and favoritism, and undermines the integrity and effectiveness of organizations and institutions (Akram et al., 2021). This phenomenon encompasses various forms such as bribery, embezzlement of public funds, nepotism, and policy manipulation for individual or group benefits. Bribery is a specific form of corruption where a person offers, gives, receives, or solicits something of value (such as money, gifts, or favors) to influence the actions or decisions of someone in a position of authority (Afzali et al., 2021; Babiker et al., 2025). Bribery distorts decision-making processes and leads to unfair outcomes. Corruption in China is intricately linked to the concept of guanxi, which refers to personal networks that facilitate the exchange of power, favors, and bribes. This situation makes it hard to break the cycle of corruption. As anti-corruption campaigns, guanxi has adapted as a strategy to justify and continue to combat corruption within an ever-changing legal and political framework (Shin & Lui, 2022). The complexity of these guanxi networks involves a wide range of actors, including intermediaries, who facilitate corrupt action across Chinese companies (Qin et al., 2026). The presence of women in leadership roles can disrupt these entrenched networks, as diverse perspectives often lead to more transparent decision-making processes and a greater emphasis on ethical governance. Therefore, promoting gender diversity in leadership is crucial; it is a strategic imperative for reducing corruption and enhancing the integrity of governance systems.

Social cooperative attitude

Social cooperative attitudes are defined as an individual's or group's willingness to work collaboratively with others, prioritize collective goals, and contribute to the welfare of the community or organization (Smith et al., 2026). These attitudes often manifest through trust, fairness, reciprocity, and readiness. This requires companies to adopt transparent practices and engage in ethical decision-making, which fosters support and shared efforts. The rise of corporate financial scandals reflects a growing recognition of the need for ethical behavior in business practices (Agerberg, 2022; Di Zheng et al., 2021). In addition, organizations need to promote ethical conduct that supports companies in incorporating access to information and raising a heightened awareness of global issues such as environmental sustainability and human rights (Atef, 2026; Zahari et al., 2024). Hence, companies that adopt transparent practices and engage in ethical decision-making foster a more cooperative social environment. This approach requires companies to adopt transparent practices and engage in ethical decision-making, fostering a more cooperative social environment.

Empirical studies have demonstrated that social cooperative attitudes significantly impact the effectiveness of resistance against unethical action among employees. Social ties within a community can enhance the trust and loyalty necessary for effective patronage systems, while a weak social cooperative attitude may lead to fragmentation and instability in attitudes among employees. It demonstrates that social cooperative attitudes play a crucial role in combating unethical behavior. An organization's cultural, social cooperative attitude, and economic factors shape the landscape of ethical behavior (Qin et al., 2026; Wang et al., 2026). Traditional Confucian values, for instance, prioritize harmony, respect for authority, and collective well-being, all of which can foster cooperative attitudes (Hu & Mohd. Balwi, 2025). It proves that addressing unethical behavior requires a comprehensive approach that combines education, cultural values, and regulatory support. Societies can create environments that discourage unethical practices and promote integrity, thereby fostering a social cooperative attitude within organizations through a code of conduct.

H1: Social cooperative attitude has a positive and significant effect on bribery combatting action

Gender and corruption

Gender, organizational hierarchies, and cultural norms affect how people make moral choices and engage in corrupt behavior (Batalla, 2024; Saleem et al., 2024). Women's limited presence in leadership roles restricts their ability to shape organizational culture and ethical standards (Cui & Lu, 2026; Rys & Górska, 2026). Traditional gender roles may dictate that men are more assertive and competitive, while women are expected to be nurturing and cooperative in some regions. These stereotypes can affect how individuals approach ethical dilemmas, potentially leading to different responses to corruption based on their social roles. Moreover, when leadership

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lacks diversity, hierarchical structures within organizations can normalize unethical behavior (Junaidi, 2024). The effectiveness of corporate merit systems is crucial for enhancing employees' equality and commitment to ethical conduct (Levi & Smith, 2022). Moreover, having women in leadership positions can foster ethical organizational cultures. Moreover, female leaders may emphasize transparency and accountability, fostering ethical organizational cultures. Female leaders may emphasize transparency and accountability, which helps foster ethical organizational cultures.

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, expressions, and identities that societies consider appropriate for men, women, and gender-diverse people (Rys & Górska, 2026; Wang et al., 2022). Gender is shaped by cultural, social, and individual factors and can influence attitudes, opportunities, and interactions in various contexts (Swamy et al., 2001; Qin et al., 2026). The intersection of gender dynamics and corruption has gained significant traction in private and public companies. Scholars have extensively debated how gender influences both the prevalence and perceptions of corrupt practices. This perspective has led to policy initiatives advocating greater female participation in leadership roles to combat corruption (Barnes & Beaulieu, 2019; Tu & Guo, 2023). Although corruption is not inherently gender-specific, research shows that both male and female officials encounter similar opportunities to participate in corrupt practices (Akbar et al., 2024). However, women play a critical, multi-faceted role in fighting corruption by acting as agents of change, fostering ethical cultures, and driving transparency in both private and public spheres (Detkova et al., 2021; Shin & Lui, 2022; Tu & Guo, 2023). They contribute by educating families, engaging in community oversight, and promoting gender-responsive policies.

Women in management positions can play a pivotal role as mentors and role models, helping other women build their own professional networks (Aaltio & Huang, 2018; Detkova et al., 2021). However, they frequently encounter the additional challenge of reconciling professional obligations with personal life, which may affect their participation in anti-corruption activities (Carreras et al., 2024). Moreover, female officials may develop and rely on different forms of guanxi, often centered around personal support systems or crisis management, rather than leveraging work-related power and connections. This divergence further shapes the way in which women may be involved in corruption. This dynamic suggests that gender affects individual behavior and influences the broader organizational climate regarding ethics. Additionally, the intersection of gender with other factors, such as cultural context and power dynamics, contributes to unethical behavior. Therefore, it is essential to implement diversity initiatives and foster inclusive environments that encourage ethical decision-making among employees.

H2: Social cooperative attitude has a positive and significant effect on bribery combatting action, which is moderated by gender.

METHODOLOGY

This study applied an explanatory sequential mixed-method approach. A mixed-method approach is valuable because it combines the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative research, enabling a more comprehensive understanding of complex phenomena. Furthermore, mixed methods identify broad patterns while also uncovering the underlying reasons, meanings, and social contexts toward integrating statistical analysis with in-depth interviews or observations. This approach also enhances the research's findings by addressing the limitations of single-method studies and is particularly effective for exploring multifaceted topics such as cultural practices or social behaviors that require both generalizable data and contextual insights (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2022). For the quantitative step, a pretest was carried out based on the following method: anonymous respondents and randomization sequence of the measurement items. Furthermore, a pilot test was applied to discover the participants understood the questions and revised directions to avoid single-source bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The pilot test aims to identify various responses and implications of the participants related to the questions in the pretest. AMOS 22 and SPSS 22 statistical software programs are used to analyze data.

The hypothesis testing was carried out by applying the structural equation model (SEM). First, the measurement model was probably based on confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to examine the reliabilities and validities of the research constructs. The qualitative phase, which consists of semi-structured in-depth interviews, follows this initial phase. This study uses ten Chinese technology manufacturing company employees in the Guangdong and Hubei provinces by complementing and adopting an explanatory sequential mixed-method approach to examine a phenomenon's distinctive corruption pattern. They were active in company offices and had worked as employees for more than five years in the accounting and financial department. Participants were provided with detailed recruitment information, including the purpose of the study, expected time commitment, participants' rights, and privacy safeguards, with emphasis on the voluntary and anonymous nature of participation. In the quantitative stage, online surveys were utilized in the research data collection process. The survey sample was recruited by contacting the personnel administrators of companies through social media platforms and email invitations. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used in this phase. Both the interview and survey were conducted to

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facilitate direct interaction with employees and foster positive emotions, occurring from September 1 to October 31, 2024.

Quantitative design

Participants were selected for the questionnaire survey by obtaining a list of company employees in the accounting and finance department through the company human resources department and conducting a random sampling. Data collection was conducted via online survey while maintaining anonymity and employing random sampling to reduce bias and improve validity. The questionnaire was first developed in English for translated into Mandarin and then reviewed by two experts, to ensure accuracy and cultural sensitivity. The purpose of the pretest is to confirm whether participants understand each item clearly and to make necessary revisions to minimize common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The gender attitude on the bribery and corruption scale was anchored between 1 ("bribery is never justified") and 7 ("bribery can always be justified"). Furthermore, social attitude and moral courage comprise 14 items that were adapted from Swamy et al. (2001). This study conducted a pre-test and pilot test to validate the measurement item bias. A total of 743 participants were enrolled in this questionnaire survey. 668 valid survey questionnaires were collected, with an effective rate of 89.90% (Table 1).

Table 1

Respondent Demographics

Demographic Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	320	48.2
Female	348	51.8
Age		
20-35 year old	227	33.9
36-50 year old	266	39.8
>50 year old	175	26.3
Education		
Senior High School and below	246	36.8
Undergraduate Degree	261	39.1
Graduate Degree	161	24.1
Experience as employee		
5-9 years	132	19.7
10-20 years	318	47.6
>20 years	218	32.7

Common method variance (CMV)

The structural equation model (SEM) was additionally used to examine the correlation of research constructs using AMOS and SPSS software. This study also utilized common method variance (CMV) to mitigate potential bias issues in anonymous questionnaire distribution and randomly arranged the measurement items (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The explained variance of the first factor is 25.63%. Besides, the factor loading of CLF was 0.678, which indicated a 45.96% variance of CMV. The result showed that no significant problem was associated with the CMV. This study also suggested post-detection methods for the common latent factor (CLF) using Harman's single-factor test. Table 2 shows the correlations between the variables in this study are significant, allowing for further analysis, including confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modeling (SEM) to assess research hypotheses (Hair Jr. et al., 2019).

Table 2

Correlation matrix for measurement scales

Constructs	Mean	SD	SC	BC	GN
SC	5.48	0.89	**0.867**		
BC	5.39	0.83	0.531**	**0.823**	
GN	5.31	0.84	0.651**	0.631**	**0.815**

Note: SC: Social cooperative attitude, BC: Bribery combatting, GN: Gender, SD: Standard Deviation
Diagonal elements are the square roots of the AVE for each construct
Pearson correlations are shown below the diagonal
*Significant at *: $p < 0.05$, **: $p < 0.01$, ***: $p < 0.001$*

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Measurement result

The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) results are in line with the model fit requirement (Hair Jr et al., 2019): $\chi 2/df$ 3.631, TLI = 0.956, RMSEA = 0.046, GFI = 0.951. CFI = 0.952, and IFI = 0.951) showed that the data fit well with the model (see Table 3). The values of Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted (AVE) are significantly above the threshold value, indicating that inter-item reliability exists among the items of each variable in this study. In addition, each item's factor loading and square multiple correlations were larger than 0.7, as well as the Cronbach's α for all constructs was larger than 0.8, indicating good reliability for all measurement items, constructs, and convergent validity (Anderson & Gerbing, 1984). Evidence of discriminant validity exists when the square root of AVE in each construct exceeds the coefficients representing its correlation with other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 3

Measurement Results

Constructs	MLE estimates factor loading	Composite reliability (CR)	Average of variance extracted (AVE)	Cronbach's α
Social cooperative attitude		0.843	0.672	0.839
I enjoy working with others to achieve common goals.	0.721			
I am willing to compromise to maintain harmony in a group.	0.825			
I actively listen to others' opinions, even if they differ from mine	0.772			
I believe teamwork is more effective than working alone.	0.875			
I willingly help others without expecting anything in return.	0.837			
I feel more attracted to products that is caring for the environment.	0.785			
I trust that most people have good intentions in cooperative settings.	0.823			
I feel a sense of accomplishment when my team succeeds.				
Bribery combatting		0.851	0.656	0.851
I believe bribery is unethical and should not be tolerated in any situation.	0.768			
I would report a bribery attempt if I witnessed one.	0.789			
I understand the laws and policies related to bribery in my country/organization.	0.726			
I feel confident refusing a bribe, even under pressure	0.728			
I believe organizations should have strict policies to prevent bribery.	0.866			
I think accepting small "gifts" in exchange for favors is a form of bribery.	0.974			
I encourage a culture of integrity and transparency in my workplace/community.	0.761			

Structural result

This research provides empirical support that social cooperative attitude has a direct effect on bribery combatting ($\gamma 11 = 0.407$, $p < 0.001$), hence supporting H1. This correlation suggests that individuals who exhibit cooperative behaviors are more likely to engage in actions that resist bribery, thereby fostering a culture of integrity and accountability within and across the communities. Furthermore, a social cooperative attitude also has an indirect effect on bribery combatting towards gender (0.358, $p < 0.001$), which supports H2. Social cooperative attitudes influence how genders perceive and respond to bribery, suggesting that gender dynamics play a role in the effectiveness of anti-bribery measures. The correlation between social cooperation and gender perspectives underscores the necessity of considering these factors in the development of anti-corruption strategies. It means that the quality of social values and outcomes is indispensable in employees' decisions to avoid wrongdoing and pursue professionalism. Internally, they optimize organizational culture by emphasizing ideological and ethical principles that can enhance their commitment to organizational goals. Gender diversity can lead to a broader range of viewpoints, enhancing problem-solving and ethical reasoning. Moreover, women often face unique challenges related to discrimination and exploitation, which can motivate employees to advocate for ethical practices and policies that protect vulnerable individuals.

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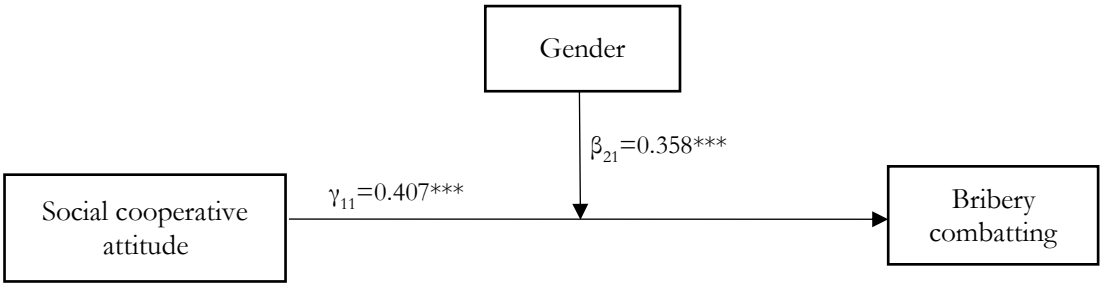
Figure 1

Structural model result



Note: χ^2/df = 3.861, GFI = 0.941, NFI = 0.942, CFI = 0.935, and RMSEA = 0.042.

Quantitative design

The qualitative phase consists of two stages. First, semi-structured in-depth interviews are conducted with various informants. This stage aims to gather insights based on the experiences of those involved in addressing and enhancing employees' attitudes and behaviors. The semi-structured interview guide has been particularly developed to investigate the experiences and meanings that participants associate with the Chinese company. Open-ended questions in this interview guide encourage participants to elaborate on their personal experiences and perspectives. The qualitative data are analyzed using thematic analysis to identify key themes that emerge from the interviews, complementing the quantitative results with in-depth stakeholder insights. For the interviews, interviewees were selected from questionnaire survey respondents. The relevant demographic information is disclosed in **Table 4**.

Table 4

The List of Participants

Position	Name
Financial Office Manager	Mr. A
	Ms. B
Corporate Plan	Ms. C
	Mr. D
Finance Officer	Ms. F
	Mr. G
	Ms. H
Financial administrator	Mr. I
	Ms. J

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative research design

First, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with various informant offices. This approach involves a thematic analysis of cases that highlight how employees rise within corrupt networks through personal relationships and patronage as well as the influence of gendered power structures on their involvement in corruption. This stage aims to gather insights based on employees' experiences of those involved in addressing and enhancing their attitudes and behaviors. The semi-structured interview guide, which has been particularly developed to investigate experiences and meanings, includes open-ended questions that encourage participants to provide further details about their personal views and experiences about bribery and corruption (Cresswell & Cresswell, 2022). Thematic analysis was used to examine the research process, which entails the subsequent procedures that are implemented for data analysis. The transcription of interview data and observation recordings was performed verbatim. In the second step, the transcripts were read and analyzed by the researchers to identify the initial themes. Furthermore, researchers perform data classification by discerning text fragments relevant to existing topics.

Four main themes applied during the interview (see appendic). First, gender and ethical leverage was developed from codes such as "gender discrimination," "career advancement," and "integrity and honesty based on gender." Second theme is how organizational culture and support promote profesional training and code of conduct ethics based on gender equality. Theme 3 elaborate navigating gender and career development including ethical dilemmas among workers based on codes ethical dilemmas, "bribery and corruption, and integrity and honesty. Lastly, how emotional and social impact of ethical practices among employees.

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Qualitative research design

Female officials have greater leverage to advance their careers and professionalism and to avoid unethical actions (see Figure 1). The employees were recognized for employees' socially cooperative attitude toward unethical actions with regard to motivation to work on ethical and societal norms. The characteristics of employees' attitudes and behaviors encompass a holistic approach that integrates ethical development and practical skills. It demonstrates that gender has a differential role, fueled by the organizational culture of discrimination, which can embolden discriminatory behavior. The characteristics of employees' attitudes and behaviors encompass a holistic approach that integrates ethical development and practical skills. Furthermore, this result demonstrates that gender plays a differential role, influenced by an organizational culture that can perpetuate discrimination in collaboration settings. Its emphasis on ethical standards can empower women employees to navigate challenges more effectively, ultimately enhancing their ability to promote integrity in the organizations.

This study underscores the close relationship between the implementation of the ethical dimension and strengthening an organization's cultural climate in China. It has great potential to become a model in company offices, which is in line with the vision of a Chinese manufacturing company to form a generation with integrity, honesty, and professionalism. The majority of participants expressed a reasonably favorable attitude toward ethical standards and dilemmas, while they had differing perspectives about the bribery and corruption process. However, some offices have implemented a robust system of continuous professional training for employees with regard to the company code of conduct. Employees elevate their skills and ethical standards through targeted training and scholarly studies and cultivate innovative work to enhance commitment to the organization and performance. It indicates that organizational culture and code of conduct potency have psychological and emotional impacts, illustrating how ethical practices can provide emotional and mental assistance to employees. It also enhances the cohesion of Chinese manufacturing company employees' communities. This study shows that taking steps to prevent bribery and promote ethical behavior by improving company rules and culture effectively reduces unethical behavior among employees. Engaging in the workplace had a beneficial consequence on the employees' emotions and security of their personalities. These emotions aided in managing the sentiments of bereavement and unease, while also fostering a sense of camaraderie in daily existence.

KEY FINDINGS

Discussion

A social cooperative attitude is essential in combating bribery practices within organizations, as it fosters collaboration, ethical behavior, and mutual support among employees. Leadership and organizational culture have an important effect on determining ethical conduct, with leaders setting the tone for integrity and accountability. This result aligns with Quah et al. (2022), who found that strong leadership and zero-tolerance educational programs, especially in key areas like accounting and finance, are crucial strategies to encourage ethical behavior and stop bribery. Policies and practices that stress teamwork, ethical standards, and a shared commitment to integrity can help companies get their employees to develop a cooperative social attitude. However, anti-corruption agreements and campaigns alone are ineffective without open organizational commitment (Rahman et al., 2023). Anti-corruption agreements and campaigns are ineffective without genuine engagement and commitment from organizational leadership and culture. It also highlights the unique value of internal surveillance and continuous education in aligning employee behavior with ethical standards. In addition, anti-bribery efforts require a comprehensive strategy that combines strong leadership, a cooperative and ethical culture, effective policies, and effective surveillance to mitigate unethical practices within organizations.

Women play a pivotal role in promoting transparency and ethical behavior within organizations against corruption (Gras-Gil et al., 2020; Larson, 2020). Furthermore, both cultural and social pressures from the organization members may influence ethical decision-making with regard to gender (Asiedu, 2020; Qin et al., 2026). Gender diversity, especially the inclusion of women, plays a crucial role in combating unethical actions in the workplace (Rusfiana & Kurniasih, 2024; Smith et al., 2026). This perspective helps foster a culture of accountability and integrity, encouraging all employees to adhere to ethical standards. Employee social cooperative attitude and fraud preventing are emerged as an outcome from organization culture. The adaptability and resilience of ethical values are critical as organizations navigate social and structural changes (Brierley & Pereira, 2023; Dim et al., 2023). Maintaining cultural relevance requires organizations to adapt while preserving their ethical foundations. This emphasis on adaptability and gender equality not only strengthens group identity but also supports the pursuit of sustainability and good corporate governance (Quah, 2022; Rusfiana & Kurniasih, 2024). Gender diversity, particularly the inclusion of women, is instrumental in promoting transparency, ethical behavior, and combating corruption within organizations. The influence of cultural and social pressures on ethical decision-making varies by gender, highlighting the complex interplay between organizational dynamics and individual behavior. A commitment to gender equality and inclusivity not only strengthens group identity but also underpins sustainable

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practices and robust corporate governance by ensuring diverse perspectives are considered and reducing internal conflict.

Theoretical contributions

This study enriches our understanding of the interplay between organizational culture, leadership, gender diversity, and ethical behavior, particularly through the lens of social role theory (SRT). SRT posits that gender differences in behavior arise from the expectations and norms associated with societal and organizational roles. This study highlights that organization culture and gender equality play a critical role in combating corruption. It extends this theory by illustrating how gendered expectations within the workplace influence ethical decision-making, particularly in contexts involving bribery and corruption. Women's participation in organizational leadership and decision-making processes is associated with increased transparency and a stronger ethical climate. This aligns with SRT assertion that women are often socialized to value communal, cooperative, and prosocial behaviors, which can positively shape organizational ethics.

Practical contributions

This study offers clear guidance for organizations seeking to strengthen ethical behavior and reduce bribery and corruption. A social cooperative attitude, combined with gender diversity, plays a crucial role in mitigating unethical behavior among employees. The company should consider to provide career development for women employees. Furthermore, company leaders should put diversity and inclusion first, especially in leadership roles. They should also set up mentorship programs that show how to act ethically. It facilitates employees' ethical decision-making and creates a more inclusive and supportive work environment. Employees can confidently raise concerns about unethical activities without fear of retaliation to reinforce the organization's values of integrity and accountability by fostering open communication. Moreover, governments have a responsibility to promote gender equity and ethical workplace practices by enforcing laws that guarantee equal pay and opportunities for all genders. Schools, including colleges and universities, should teach ethical leadership and gender equality in their classes and promote cooperation between the public and private sectors. These efforts strengthen ethical standards, nurture moral behavior, and contribute to a workplace culture where integrity and inclusivity are deeply valued. The company should prioritize women's roles in developing relational and communal ones. Women have more sensitive and ethical implications for their actions as a team. Therefore, women are more likely to encourage open communication, collaboration, and a collective commitment to ethical conduct. These tendencies can lead women to more readily challenge unethical behavior and moral decision-making, thus strengthening the team's integrity and resilience against corruption. Companies can foster a more ethical and inclusive organizational culture that acknowledges and leverages these gendered social roles.

Limitations and future study directions

This study has several important limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings and designing future research. First, the use of a cross-sectional design restricts the ability to establish causal relationships between variables. Future research should employ longitudinal or experimental designs to better assess how changes in organizational culture or interventions impact ethical behavior over time. Second, the study relied primarily on self-reported data, which can introduce biases such as social desirability and recall error. Employees may have provided responses they perceived as favorable or aligned with organizational expectations rather than their true attitudes or behaviors. Incorporating multiple data sources such as peer assessments, managerial evaluations, or objective behavioral measures could strengthen the validity of future studies. Third, sampling limitations are notable. The focus on Chinese manufacturing companies in Guangdong and Hubei Provinces may limit the generalizability of the findings, as these regions may not represent the broader landscape of manufacturing firms across China or in other countries. Future study to include a wider variety of sectors, regions, and organizational types, as well as employing randomized or stratified sampling methods, would enhance external validity. Fourth, the study's approach to gender was binary, considering only male and female categories. This binary treatment may overlook the experiences and perspectives of non-binary or gender-diverse individuals, limiting the inclusivity and applicability of the findings. Future research should adopt more nuanced measures of gender to better reflect the diverse workforce and capture a fuller range of experiences.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that promoting a socially cooperative attitude and building a robust ethical culture are fundamental strategies in combating bribery and unethical practices within organizations. The presence of strong, integrity-driven leadership sets the tone for organizational behavior and accountability, while policies that encourage collaboration, transparency, and ethical standards foster an environment where employees feel

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supported in acting ethically. Moreover, the findings confirm that anti-corruption measures such as organizational agreements and awareness campaigns are only effective when they are backed by genuine leadership commitment and open engagement at all organizational levels. The research further highlights the importance of ongoing professional development and internal oversight, ensuring that ethical standards are continuously reinforced and integrated into daily operations. The presence of women in decision-making roles not only promotes transparency but also contributes to a more inclusive workplace culture that values accountability. Both cultural and social pressures within organizations influence ethical decision-making.

The adaptability of ethical frameworks is crucial as organizations navigate social and structural changes. This approach not only strengthens group identity and cohesion but also supports sustainability and good corporate governance by integrating diverse perspectives and preventing internal conflicts. A comprehensive anti-bribery strategy must combine strong leadership, a cooperative and ethical culture. The focus on organizational culture, ethical leadership, and gender diversity transcends national boundaries, as issues of bribery, corruption, and ethical conduct are universal challenges faced by organizations worldwide. The findings emphasize that fostering a cooperative social attitude and inclusive work environment is not unique to any one country or cultural setting. It can apply globally and adapt their own anti-corruption strategies, considering how local cultural and regulatory contexts intersect with global best practices. From an interdisciplinary perspective, the study bridges organizational behavior, business ethics, gender studies, psychology, and sociology. It demonstrates how ethical climate, leadership style, and social role expectations interact to shape workplace behavior. Professionals and scholars in fields such as management, human resources, public administration, and governance can draw actionable conclusions about building ethical organizations that are resilient, adaptable, and inclusive.

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Ethical statement

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards and and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration. No ethical issues were identified by the Thai Ethics Committee

Competing interests

The author declares no competing interests.

Author contributions

YL contributed to the conceptualization, methodology, data collection, analysis, and writing. He reviewed both the original draft and the reviewed manuscript and oversaw the final version of the article. JZ contributed to conceptualization, methodology, data collection, analysis, and writing. He reviewed both the original draft and the reviewed manuscript and oversaw the final version of the article. RX contributed to conceptualization, methodology, data collection, analysis, and writing. He reviewed both the original draft and the reviewed manuscript and oversaw the final version of the article. JJ contributed to project administration and data analysis. He reviewed the final draft manuscript and oversaw the final version of the article.

Data availability

The quantitative data supporting the findings of this study are not publicly available due to ethical considerations. Anonymized excerpts and supporting materials may be made available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

AI disclosure

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