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Understanding Grand and Petty Corruption: A Case Study of Slovak Health Care



University
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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of *Doctor of
Philosophy*

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Studies

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Abstract

INTRODUCTION: As one of the more elusive social phenomena, corruption is notoriously difficult to investigate or measure, due to its clandestine nature. Within this work, corruption is conceptualised and addressed by focusing on sociological elements of cultural pressure, learnt behaviour, historical perspectives, and Central European regional idiosyncrasies of post-communist practices, all impacting on modern corrupt practices.

METHODS: This thesis examines the applicability of the ‘grand’ and ‘petty’ corruption distinction to a real-life understanding of corruption by qualitatively analysing the data collected during fieldwork in Slovakia. The main research question addressed reads as follows: **To what extent is the theoretical difference between grand and petty corruption reflected in the real-life understanding of corruption in Slovakia’s health care?** Interviews and focus groups are analysed in the work using thematic and textual analysis, and utilising the NVivo12 software to identify trends and commonalities in regard to views of the prevalence, mechanisms, and barriers associated with corruption. The empirical part of the work is centred around the interpretivist approach to data analysis, emphasising the relevance and indispensability of the participants’ natural narrative in their real-life understanding of corruption, shaped by experience, rather than theory.

RESULTS: The research demonstrates the shortcomings in corruption scholarship so far with regards to classification, measurement, and presentation of data. The existing bias towards economic and financial angles of corruption investigation is mitigated by applying a qualitative research design, focused on language and understanding. The research identified cultural nuances of acceptance of gift-giving, and the prevalence of corruption brokerage in everyday corruption in Slovakia. The roles of trust, fear, communist legacies, and networks in day-to-day corruption instigation, and deterrence in corruption reporting, are presented as instrumental in promoting corrupt practice in the Slovak health care sector.

CONCLUSION: The thesis concludes that the labels of grand and petty corruption apply to real-life understanding only marginally and that all theoretical terminology relating to corruption disaggregation should be verified in similar research designs, with emphasis on qualitative data analysis. Such analysis is upheld as able to encompass complexity of corruption understanding, inclusive of regional specificities and circumstances. Specific recommendations on incorporating real-life language and understanding are made regarding policy and legislation changes in Slovakia, as well as transparency of language within healthcare insurance re-drafting, and healthcare professional oversight.

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List of accompanying material

Appendix 1 List of nodes of the project generated in NVivo 12

Appendix 2 Cross tabulation of nodes and participant responses

Appendix 3 List of field questions

Appendix 4 Ethical approval

Appendix 5 Research questions and Field questions table

List of abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full description
BII	Business International Index
BTI	The Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index
CE	Central Europe(an)
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe(an)
CPI	Corruption Perception Index
EC	The European Commission
EU	The European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FOI	Freedom of Information
GDPR	The General Data Protection Regulation
GMC	The General Medical Council
GP	General Practitioner
GRECO	The Group of States against Corruption
HPI	Health Policy Institute (Slovakia)
INESS	Institute for Economic and Social Analysis
LOZ	Slovak Doctors Union
NAKA	National Criminal Agency (Slovakia)
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NSI	The National Statistical Institute (Bulgaria)
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSC	The Office of the Special Counsel
PAS	Slovak Business Association
PHARE	The Poland and Hungary Assistance for the Restructuring of the Economy
SITA	Associated Slovak Press
TI	Transparency International
ÚDZS	Slovak Bureau for Medical Care Oversight
UN	The United Nations
USSR	The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
V4	The Visegrad Group (Visegrad Four)
VŠZP	The General Health Insurance Company (Slovakia)
WB	The World Bank
WBCC	The World Bank Control of Corruption Index
WHO	The World Health Organisation
WGI	World Governance Indicator

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Author's declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Printed Name: Kristina Cimova

Signature:

1 Introduction

2 *'I can imagine reporting something like law enforcement or judicial corruption.*
 3 *But for healthcare and education we are delving into basic questions of survival*
 4 *and if I reported those cases, I would be going against myself. Because today it's*
 5 *your neighbour who does it and tomorrow it will be me' (INT2)*

6 *'The very first thing you do when something happens is you pick up the phone and*
 7 *you start calling who you know, hoping that someone knows someone else and*
 8 *that something can be done in that situation' (INT13)*

9 *'Health is your most precious commodity...health care is something that touches*
 10 *everyone on a basic, personal level- you can't just buy it in a store. So that's why*
 11 *it [corruption] is more frequent there' (INT1)*

12 These quotes offer a taste of the stark image of real-life understanding of
 13 corruption displayed by my participants in the course of their interviews and focus
 14 groups for this project. They paint the picture of corruption as an everyday reality
 15 and a frequent occurrence in the realm of public service, linked to insecurity,
 16 fear, and personal connections. These are, consequently, some of the central
 17 tenets that I explored in relation to corruption. The thesis will show, in its later
 18 chapters, that this narrative is also representative of the prevalence and endemic
 19 nature of corruption in the Central European region as a whole, buttressing the
 20 impact of deeper understanding of corruption for the region. Research shows that
 21 the Central European countries (especially the countries of the Visegrad group)
 22 have similar standing in corruption perception measurements to date
 23 (Transparency International 2020), share occurrences of corruption in similar
 24 public sectors of education, healthcare, law enforcement, or the judiciary (Fric
 25 1999, Batory 2012, Batory 2012, Grochova 2013, Kohlami 2013, Koudelková,
 26 Strielkowski et al. 2015, Wysmulek 2017), and have a special proclivity for
 27 corruption to be pronounced in the healthcare sector (Puček 2014, Wierciński
 28 2017). Specific focus on healthcare corruption is recommended by official bodies
 29 (Eurobarometer 2017) in order to successfully tackle corruption as a whole in the

1 CE region, and offer unique insight into a public sector accessed by everyone,
2 regardless of personal circumstance.

3 *‘These post-socialist countries have a different kind of experience with*
4 *corruption...but on the other hand it’s also a matter of choice, of decision, and of*
5 *societal pressure and cultural context. Your individual decisions matter though’*
6 *(INT4)*

7 Besides the similarities of sectors affected by corruption, any study into this region
8 and its social phenomena must grapple with the socio-historical context the
9 interviewee aptly describes above. How then, can corruption be addressed in a
10 manner than does not shy away from implications of collective memory juxtaposed
11 with personal decision-making? Combined with the theoretical distinction between
12 grand and petty corruption presented in the literature review, the
13 Soviet/communist legacies of the past, along with the practical realities of
14 engaging with corruption (e.g., the roles played by social networks and customs),
15 these elements comprise the central themes informing the main research question,
16 which asks: **To what extent is the theoretical difference between grand and**
17 **petty corruption reflected in the real-life understanding of corruption in**
18 **Slovakia’s health care?** I found this inquiry into real-life understanding fascinating
19 precisely due to the multitude of elements to explore, to get a holistic picture of
20 corruption as it is viewed and understood in this particular part of the world. I
21 seek to understand not only the angle of historical impact, but also the shape
22 corruption takes in real life, how it operates through everyday interactions, and
23 also where the motivations for getting involved in corruption originate. As
24 participant INT4 articulated, a focus on the system and the circumstance is one
25 dimension to consider, but, from a sociological standpoint, individual choices,
26 pressures, responsibility, and culture all play a significant role in the extent of
27 corruption in Slovakia historically and today.

28 This introduction will now outline the complexity of corruption as far as its
29 definition and classification, which led to the rationale for this research and its
30 scope within the selected case study. I will also outline the methods that were

1 used to address the research questions generated and provide a brief overview of
2 findings and the individual chapters.

3 **Rationale for research**

4 Corruption in the Central and East European region has already been the subject of
5 rigorous scholarly research (Goel and Budak 2006, Ivanov 2007, Ledeneva 2009,
6 Rose-Ackerman 2016). Goel and Budak (2006) outline that within this region,
7 corrupt activities had managed to evade rigorous scrutiny at first and those that
8 came to the fore, while noted by official bodies and within accession criteria to
9 the European Union, were treated relatively leniently throughout the early
10 nineties as a result of the post-communist ‘honeymoon period’. Going forward,
11 however, the spread of corruption was recognised more pressingly by official
12 bodies such as the EU and the World Bank as the ‘single largest obstacle to
13 development’ in the region, which has prompted an interest in the idea that
14 corrupt practices within this region may be particularly potent due to its post-
15 communist past (Goel and Budak 2006). The idea is that countries such as Slovakia,
16 for example, have a unique set of conditions; a) the benefit of learning the best
17 practices of government and anti-corruption from other countries, but also b)
18 facing massive structural adjustments needed in the transition phase, able to
19 create unique opportunities for rent-seeking activities (Goel and Budak 2006).

20 In 2016, Transparency International (TI) ranked Slovakia as the 6th most corrupt out
21 of the European Union’s 28 Member states (Sipos 2016), and this ranking has not
22 significantly improved since (TI 2020). One area where corruption is recognised to
23 be acutely present is the Slovak healthcare system, and TI drew the conclusion
24 that as many as 3,000 Slovaks may die unnecessarily every year due to corruption
25 in the healthcare system (Sipos 2016). The Slovak government has taken numerous
26 measures to address the issue of corruption (e.g. the 2011 Strategic Plan to tackle
27 corruption, the establishment of the Special Prosecutor’s Office, the establishment
28 of specialised corruption-focused courts), however, these have often been
29 criticised for merely ‘alleviating surface symptoms’ (Alexa 2007), rather than
30 tackling the core problems enabling corruption. A 2017 Eurobarometer showed the

1 problem is still present despite steps taken on a governmental level- it lists
2 Slovakia among the seven 'striking' exceptions of countries (Greece, Cyprus,
3 Lithuania, Romania, Slovenia and Slovakia) where health care is most frequently
4 mentioned as the sector with greatest levels of corruption.

5 Corruption is a phenomenon that is notoriously difficult to categorise and even
6 more difficult to generalise. Contextualising it within cultural circumstances is
7 important not only because corruption will adopt a different façade depending on
8 its location, but also because it has the potential to erode democracy itself
9 through eroding the public's trust in official institutions, figures, and other
10 members of the public themselves (Warren 2004, Linde and Erlingsson 2012).
11 Research stipulates that if democracy is the ultimate avenue for inclusion within a
12 society via institutions that facilitate it, corruption is the ultimate tool of
13 exclusion in a democracy (Warren 2014). While corruption across cultures may
14 share a 'single normative core, its practical meanings will depend upon domain-
15 specific institutions and practices' (2014:43). In other words, while corruption may
16 share some generic characteristics of informality or illegality, it will manifest
17 differently depending on its domain/ environment. As a result, all of these
18 'domains' or environments, in my case the case of Slovakia's health care, require a
19 'conceptualisation appropriate to the kind of corruption to which they are
20 susceptible' (2014:44). This specific study of different domains or environments is
21 under-investigated in current research, which focuses mostly on the economic
22 angle of corruption study, quantifying the financial impact of corruption as one of
23 its few measurable attributes. However, understanding of corruption as arising
24 inductively from lived experience, as opposed to absorbed from terminology, is
25 rarely documented in depth. My research contributes to this existing gap and
26 provides a meticulous level of detail in its qualitative analysis of corruption in the
27 Central European context. This level of detail is achieved by my thematic and
28 textual analysis approach, which I selected to scrupulously take apart the language
29 and expression used by the participants to describe what they mean under
30 'corruption' and how they understand its impact, which is then compared to the
31 theoretical underpinnings of scholarly understanding of corruption. My case study
32 of a post-communist, transitional society, and economy such as Slovakia therefore

1 offers a unique opportunity to examine the development and the understanding of
2 corruption by those affected, while taking into account all the factors that have
3 enabled corruption to flourish in this region.

4 **Research questions and aims**

5 In its essence, corruption is a multi-faceted phenomenon that spans the remits of
6 sociology, anthropology, economics, politics, and history. Its continuous
7 disaggregation into binary pairs, such as private/public, individual/institutional,
8 grand/petty (as outlined in Chapter 1 and 3), may aid in its measurement in
9 theoretical terms, but does not present corruption in a real-life perspective. In a
10 real-life perspective, such levels are often not the only two that exist to any one
11 type of corruption (i.e., there is a whole spectrum of grey between where private
12 gain finishes and public gain begins), nor are these levels observable independent
13 of one another. My research is inspired by showing that such levels are artificial in
14 their conceptualisation and investigates to what extent such labels are valid
15 representations of how people perceive corruption to behave in real, practical
16 terms.

17 Consequently, the thesis addresses the following research question throughout its
18 analysis of the case study of corruption in Slovakia's healthcare sector: **To what
19 extent is the theoretical difference between grand and petty corruption
20 reflected in the real-life¹ understanding of corruption in Slovakia's health care?**

21 This question encompasses several sub-questions relating to specific aspects of
22 corruption as listed in table below, but in its core, it is focused at eradicating any
23 artificial boundaries between labels of corruption through a deeper understanding
24 of corruption. A focus on real-life narratives has the potential to elicit language
25 and understanding from the general public that has not been considered before,

¹ Real-life understanding is based on the definition laid out by Schwandt (2001:84) as a human lived experience: ie 'the *life-world* as it is lived, felt, undergone, made sense of, and accomplished by human beings' Schwandt, T. A. (2001). Qualitative inquiry: A dictionary of terms. Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage.

- 1 especially in theoretical endeavours to categorise corruption, nor in practical
 2 endeavours to curb it through legislation and policy.

Research Questions (RQ)	Hypotheses or Theoretical assumptions
RQ1: How does awareness of grand corruption inform/justify individual engagement in petty corruption?	H0a: Awareness of grand corruption will have no impact on the engagement of individuals in petty corruption and vice versa. H1a: Awareness of grand corruption will inform/justify individual engagement in petty corruption.
RQ2: How does awareness of petty corruption inform/justify individual engagement in grand corruption?	H0b: Awareness of grand corruption will have no impact on the engagement of individuals in petty corruption and vice versa. H1b: Awareness of petty corruption will inform/justify individual engagement in grand corruption.
RQ3: What are the strategies utilised to carry out grand and petty corrupt practices?	Theoretical assumption: There will be similarities in the strategies utilised to carry out grand and petty corrupt practices.
RQ3a- subquestion: What is the significance of trust as a pre-requisite for corrupt interactions?	Theoretical assumption: Trust is understood as one of the processes of corruption that links the corrupt practices on grand and petty levels; as such it is seen as a condition more often than it is understood as a result of corrupt practice.
RQ3b- subquestion: To what extent are social rules and customs important in the carrying out of corrupt practices?	Theoretical assumption: Social rules and customs are understood as one of the processes of corruption that links corrupt practices on grand and petty levels; as such they will prove as important determinants in carrying out corrupt practices.

- 3
- 4 These research questions are addressed through a single case study analysis of
 5 corruption within Slovakia's healthcare sector. As previously suggested and as will
 6 be explored in following chapters, Slovakia presents an illustrative example of a
 7 country within the CE region that has a specific set of socio-economic and
 8 historical factors impacting on corruption. It is also a country with a particularly
 9 rampant level of corruption and with healthcare as a sector that is uniquely
 10 affected. It therefore has the potential to produce results that could provide

1 unique levels of insight into corruption broadly, and into corruption specifically
2 within public sectors of the CE region.

3 **Methods**

4 The most known measure of corruption today is undoubtedly the Transparency
5 International's (TI's) Corruption Perception Index (CPI). However, when corruption
6 is addressed through the prism of perceptions, we must consider the main
7 criticisms of perception-based data collection (Miller 2001, Kenny 2006, Knack
8 2006, Weber Abramo 2007). It has been suggested by Pinkova (2016) that surveys
9 such as the CPI show that citizens may form their opinions on corruption based on
10 their overall dissatisfaction with politics, rather than on their personal experience.
11 The role of perceptions altering or taking the place of experience-based behaviour
12 is therefore a social constructivist issue. The main criticism of perception-based
13 index corruption, such as CPI, is that the index reflects mere perceptions rather
14 than experiences, reported cases or proven incidents of corruption (Weber Abramo
15 2007).

16 It was therefore imperative that I adopt a different methodology, one focused on a
17 qualitative, real-life basis for understanding corruption that would stem from
18 experience. I utilised volunteer and snowball sampling for in-depth interviews and
19 focus groups of over 40 participants in total, with a nearly perfectly even gender
20 split, varied age groups from 20 to 80, comprising over 1,000 minutes of recorded
21 material. The participants were recruited largely from two regions of Slovakia,
22 which does not make for a representative national sample, but the congruence of
23 responses across these two regions (the west Bratislava region, and the central
24 Banská Bystrica region) suggests potential similarities throughout the country. The
25 objective behind the qualitative research strategy was to obtain the level of
26 linguistic detail and specific expression that has not been captured before.
27 Interviews and focus groups were deemed to be effective tools for data collection,
28 mainly for their ability to process sensitive topics in an ethically sound manner,
29 but also their inherent flexibility and ability to respond to ad hoc situations,
30 scheduling changes, and other challenges. Most importantly, however, I wanted to

1 obtain a natural narrative of the participants that would enable them to describe
2 and conceptualise corruption in ways that felt organic to them and that did not
3 feed them any theoretical concepts. It was paramount that they should be able to
4 convey their understanding of corruption in their own words, based on their lived
5 lives and experiences.

6 I collected and transcribed acquired data myself and carried out the translation of
7 the original language. The analysis was conducted using qualitative methods of
8 thematic and textual analysis in the original language of Slovak (but providing
9 translations throughout the work), with the help of the NVivo 12 software. Due to
10 my focus on language and expression, the process of question selection and
11 wording was rigorous and underwent piloting and rewording of questions to their
12 final shape as seen in Appendix 3. Of course, true to the flexibility of semi-
13 structured questions, I was able to rephrase and add follow up questions according
14 to the participant needs.

15 **Scope of project**

16 **Health care rationale**

17 Healthcare is a public sector accessible to all and, with a pronounced problem of
18 corruption in Slovakia, it presents a feasible case study² for the investigation of
19 corrupt practices and behaviour. This investigation is able to include a discussion
20 on the impact of economic transition, culture, history, and regional idiosyncrasies
21 on corruption. Moreover, the official EC 2014 EU Anti-Corruption Report on
22 Slovakia specifically calls for the need to first and foremost ‘develop policy to
23 fight corruption in health care’, as an official recommendation for the country to
24 successfully tackle corruption as a whole - the thesis responds to this strategy.

² Unlike for example education with high regional variations in early school leaving, from 3.6 % in the Bratislava region to 10.4 % in the east of the country (EC (2016). European Commission Education and Training Monitor 2016. European Commission.)

1 With several EU member states struggling with corruption in health care
2 (particularly those with a post-communist past), it would be prudent to believe
3 that such recommendations could have not only cross-sectoral but also trans-
4 national applications (Eurobarometer 2017).

5 Since early 2010, corruption research has mostly focused on the typology and
6 mechanisms of corruption (Bussell 2015, Sommersguter-Reichmann, Wild et al.
7 2018). The exclusively typological approach contributes to a greater understanding
8 of types of corruption, but empirically unintentionally obscures the real-life data
9 on engaging in corruption that would provide for a more evidence-based
10 understanding of corruption. Through the work presented in this thesis, I seek to
11 show that in real life, and health care in particular, top-down and bottom-up
12 corrupt processes feed off one another to provide for a perpetual
13 interdependency, sustaining corruption.

14 **Overview of findings**

15 My research addresses the shortcomings exposed by the measurement issues
16 employed by TI's CPI. Instead, the thesis focuses on a qualitative data collection
17 and analysis conducted among both elites and general population, to counter
18 sample selection bias and provide results that fill in the blanks of quantitative
19 macro-report research. The qualitative data collected and analysed addresses the
20 research question and suggests that the theoretical distinction between labels such
21 as grand and petty corruption only applies to real life understanding of corruption
22 to a certain extent.

23 Empirically, I present several crucial findings. These relate to: the importance and
24 ubiquitous nature of the broker in everyday corrupt transactions, disproving the
25 reliance on the principal-agent model of corrupt transactions in previous studies
26 (Rose-Ackerman 2016); importance of customs and traditions in gift-giving;
27 importance of trust and fear in both incentivising and reporting corruption; and
28 finally health-care-specific findings. These are most prominently the prevalence of
29 bribery in specialty branches of medicine, as opposed to primary care previously

1 suggested by research (Mužik and Szalayová 2013), and the pressing need to
2 revamp the health insurance system to clarify the standard of care for the lay
3 person in plain language, in order to eradicate the perceived need for extra
4 payments to receive basic quality of care. The re-conceptualisation of the
5 principal-agent model in real-life corruption understanding to be less prevalent
6 than that of the brokerage model is emphasised as a crucial and a novel finding in
7 this context. Equally, the potential effectiveness of professional regulatory bodies
8 (and ensuing disciplinary action) as an alternative to criminal proceedings in
9 curbing corruption in health care is a crucial finding, alongside the need to
10 investigate the novel findings of differences in bribe and gift payments in a
11 primary care versus specialist context. The findings and their implications are
12 discussed at length in the final chapters of the thesis.

13 **Synopsis of thesis chapters**

14 **Chapters 1&2**

15 The thesis begins with a discussion of the literature on corruption as a theoretical
16 phenomenon and also provides an outline of literature relating to the case study of
17 Slovakia and healthcare itself. I present in detail the research conducted into
18 corruption in Slovakia and also into the region of the Visegrad Four countries and I
19 situate this particular research into existing literature. Slovakia is frequently
20 considered merely as a point of comparison for regional research into the Visegrad
21 countries, as opposed to the point of focus. The thesis responds to this trend and
22 makes Slovakia the point of focus instead, while also bringing to the forefront
23 several pieces of research conducted on a national level without being translated
24 into English, thus showcasing the impact of the existing research for the
25 international community.

26 **Chapter 3**

27 This chapter conceptualised corruption and its measurement to date, and argues
28 for why corruption research should be conducted on a national, or at least a

1 regional, basis and with a qualitative element, if not focus. This is in order to
2 encompass cultural specificities and provide room for incorporating these into the
3 vernacular used by respondents when describing and understanding corruption.
4 The limited quantitative measurement conducted to date is presented with several
5 methodological shortcomings, and the need for greater qualitative focus is
6 demonstrated, primarily through the indisputable benefits that open-ended
7 questions and detailed answers provide when looking into sensitive topics such as
8 corruption.

9 **Chapters 4,6&7**

10 This examination is outlined in the research design of the thesis which follows the
11 conceptualisation chapters, as well as in the data analysis chapters. These
12 chapters clearly lay out the data collection and analysis processes, which included
13 a volunteer and snowball sampling, in-depth interviews and focus groups with over
14 40 participants, and thematic and textual analysis undertaken after the
15 transcription and translation of the original language. I analysed several hundred
16 pages of text in this manner, both in the original language and in translation into
17 English. The analysis itself, both manual and with the use of NVivo 12 software,
18 was therefore conducted in the original language, but translations were necessary
19 to make the research accessible, transparent, and relevant for a wider audience.

20 **Chapter 5**

21 A specific chapter situating anti-corruption measures and legislation into Slovak
22 governmental agenda is sandwiched between research design and data analysis, as
23 it is crucial to be able to situate the understanding of respondents into context.
24 Later juxtaposition of respondent views and the legislation in place reveals the
25 shortcomings of anti-corruption measures to-date, which in some cases fail to
26 reflect the respondents' real-life views of corruption and their experiences.
27 Unveiling of this discrepancy lies at the heart of the impact of this thesis, which
28 seeks to ascertain to what extent the theoretical depiction of corruption, and the
29 anti-corruption guidance derived thereof, have permeated the understanding and

1 viewing of corruption in real-life scenarios. As was recently pointed out on a panel
2 discussion on bribery in health care in Slovakia, ‘words live organically in real life,
3 they carry content and meaning’³. I aim to show how the meaning of words such as
4 ‘bribe’, ‘corruption’, ‘gift’ evolves in real life. I want to show how this meaning is
5 shaped by customs and traditions, socio-economic situation, and by learnt
6 behaviour.

7 **Chapters 8-13**

8 Empirical chapters which outline how data were collated and categorised follow,
9 and individual categories of data are presented thematically. The results are
10 situated in existing literature, as well as within the research questions of the
11 thesis. The individual categories collated from the respondents relate to the
12 general awareness respondents have about corruption in Slovakia, the practices
13 employed in corrupt transactions in the healthcare sector, the nuance and
14 distinction a lot of them draw between gift-giving and bribery, the reasoning and
15 justification of corrupt behaviour, and also their views on disaggregating petty and
16 grand corruption as effective or not.

17 **Chapter 14 & Conclusion**

18 Finally, the thesis provides a discussion of these results and the implications of
19 findings for both Slovak health care provision and corruption in Slovakia. I then go
20 on to suggest recommendations for real-life anti-corruption measures based on
21 data trends and the understandings of, and attitudes to, corruption, as revealed in
22 the study.

23

³ The full debate is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vMQh8VVfW0> [last accessed 13/3/2021].

1 Chapter 1: Literature Review Part 1

2 1.1 Introduction

3

4 The literature review considers published material on the topic of corruption and
5 anchors the investigation of corruption in the Slovak healthcare sector. It also
6 presents the need to perceive corruption as a holistic phenomenon; thus eradicating
7 the artificial boundaries between petty and grand corruption typologies. The review
8 highlights several gaps in the contemporary understanding of, and the approach to,
9 the study of corruption.

10 The literature review is structured as follows: a general overview of literature
11 addressing the definition of corruption as a phenomenon, its position within social
12 sciences and its individual facets; and a specific review of literature published on
13 corruption in Slovakia and in the healthcare sector. The latter part of the review
14 will inform and justify the selection of Slovakia's healthcare sector as a feasible case
15 study for the investigation of corruption.

16 Part one of the literature review informs all the research questions as outlined in
17 the previous Introduction chapter and serves as a basis for the formulation of the
18 thesis structure and its hypotheses, discussed in the research design section.

19 This literature review section presents corruption as a phenomenon of several fields
20 of study, including anthropology, economic theory and sociology, and presents its
21 position within a host of communist legacies for the region of Central Europe. It
22 addresses the particular difficulty of separating corruption and 'informal practices'
23 or 'informal institutions'. Finally, it discusses challenges surrounding the
24 measurement of corruption, empirical capturing of elusive phenomena within
25 corruption, such as trust, and the inherent difficulty of separating corruption
26 experiences and corruption perception.

1 The conclusion demonstrates the reasoning behind the particular research
2 questions, the complexity of the phenomenon, and the need to promote a combined
3 approach to its investigation. It also sets out my own definitions of grand and petty
4 corruption based on the literature reviewed.

5

6 **1.2 Types of corruption**

7

8 *'Studies and projects often begin with a caveat about the contested definition of*
9 *corruption, and then proceed to treat it as though it were an unproblematic*
10 *concept' (Ivanov 2007)*

11 From a typological perspective, corruption is a widely studied phenomenon. It has
12 been addressed by scholars who have provided varying levels of distinction of the
13 scope of corruption, mechanisms utilised to engage in corruption, or conceptual
14 distinctions between several kinds of corruption (Nye 1967, Holmes 1997, Rose-
15 Ackerman 1999, Shehu 2005, Bussell 2015, Holzer 2016, Suleiman 2017). The
16 problem, as highlighted by recent works (Bussell 2015, Rose-Ackerman 2016) is that
17 while the field is rich with typologies, there is no universal guidance as to when we
18 should utilise a specific corruption typology, or how this typology should be applied
19 to the specific kind of corruption at hand.

20 Perhaps the most widely-known definition of corruption is that provided by
21 Transparency International: 'abuse of public office for private gain' and variations
22 thereof, for example: 'abuse of entrusted power for private gain' (Transparency
23 International, 2015). The British Medical Journal (Moszynski 2006) points out that in
24 health care, for example, this encompasses a much wider array of issues, namely
25 'bribery of regulators and medical professionals, manipulation of information on
26 drug trials, the diversion of medicines and supplies, corruption in procurement, and
27 overbilling of insurance companies' (Moszynski, 2006:332). Moszynski makes a valid

1 point that the ‘diversity of health systems worldwide, the multiplicity of parties
2 involved, the paucity of good record keeping in many countries, and the complexity
3 in distinguishing among corruption, inefficiency and honest mistakes make it
4 difficult to determine the overall scope and costs of corruption’ (Moszynski,
5 2006:332). This poses several problems in terms of both defining the phenomenon
6 itself, and, for the purposes of the thesis, within health care.

7 Even more comprehensive definitions than that given by Transparency International
8 include the consistency of a public-private dichotomy: Nye (1967) defines corruption
9 as ‘behaviour which deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of
10 private-regarding (personal, close family, private clique) pecuniary or status gains’
11 (Nye 1967). Suleiman’s (2017) definition of corruption is even more comprehensive
12 (2017:103): ‘a commission or omission of an action, an abuse of trust, or vice which
13 ultimately changes the legal, as well as the ethical obligations of a public function
14 to the pursuit of private objective of political, social or economic benefits’
15 (Suleiman 2017). Corruption, therefore, cannot be reduced to a merely mechanical
16 exercise of a *quid pro quo* exchange, but must also be understood from the point of
17 view of interpretation of ethics and the inclusion of moral struggle within the
18 overarching equation. These notions of ethical justification of corrupt behaviour are
19 explored further in Bohn’s work on ‘rational corruptors’ (Bohn 2013), and in the
20 latter sections of this review.

21 The differences in scales and measurable degrees of corruption must also be
22 defined. Rose-Ackerman is one of the pioneers of the distinction between ‘grand’
23 and ‘petty’ corruption, the latter referring to bribes (1999:91) ‘citizens pay to
24 lower-level officials either to speed the delivery of services or to bribe officials to
25 bend the rules’, while the former refers to ‘large sums of money with multinational
26 corporations frequently making the pay-offs’ (Rose-Ackerman 1999). However, Rose-
27 Ackerman’s definition of grand versus petty corruption presents visible issues with
28 narrowing the definition down to a monetary framework, thus embedding this
29 theoretical approach in the field of economics, relating corruption mostly to its costs
30 for the society and general fiscal incentives. Holzer (2016) concurs with this view
31 and suggests that corruption is mostly synonymous with bribery in Central Europe

1 (Holzer 2016). However, the thesis regards this as a reductionist approach and aims
2 to target a wider range of corrupt activities, such as gift giving, tokens of gratitude
3 or service exchange; equally or more popular in the Central European context, and
4 unaccounted for in Rose-Ackerman's definition.

5 Among other typologies of corruption we can include an emphasis on clientelism as
6 the 'central variety of corruption' (Debiel and Gawrich 2013), identifying specific
7 features within it, such as dyadic networks, asymmetrical clientelism, personal and
8 enduring clientelism, reciprocal or voluntary clientelism. This shows the level to
9 which corruption has branched out to a meta-analysis of individual components of
10 the phenomenon, encompassing a wide range of subjects. Among other types of
11 corruption explored to date, it is possible to identify bribery, electoral corruption,
12 favouritism, nepotism, procurement scams or budget corruption (Nye 1967, Agbiboa
13 2012, Ijereweme 2015). There are also theories on classifying corruption along the
14 broader lines of political, economic, bureaucratic, judicial, moral/ethical,
15 educational and social corruption (Osoba 1996, Berlinski 1997, Rummyantseva 2005,
16 Yaru 2009, Sadiq and Abdullahi 2013, Berkovich 2015). Heywood (1997, in Bussell
17 2015) introduces some other types of corruption identified by scholars to date on a
18 more specific basis: 'local v. national level corruption, personal v. institutional
19 corruption (ie that aimed at personal enrichment and that which benefits an
20 institution), traditional v. modern corruption (for example nepotism and patronage
21 as opposed to electronic fraud and money laundering)' (Bussell 2015). There is
22 therefore clearly a tendency in several typologies, to perceive corruption in binaries
23 and opposites. There does appear to be a lack of impetus towards eradicating the
24 distinctions between these pairings and even less effort to present a more holistic
25 understanding of these dichotomies, as utilising similar strategies and mechanisms.
26 With regards to specifically petty v. grand corruption, Shehu notes that this
27 dichotomous distinction is 'at its best artificial and therefore at worst it is
28 misleading' (Shehu 2005).

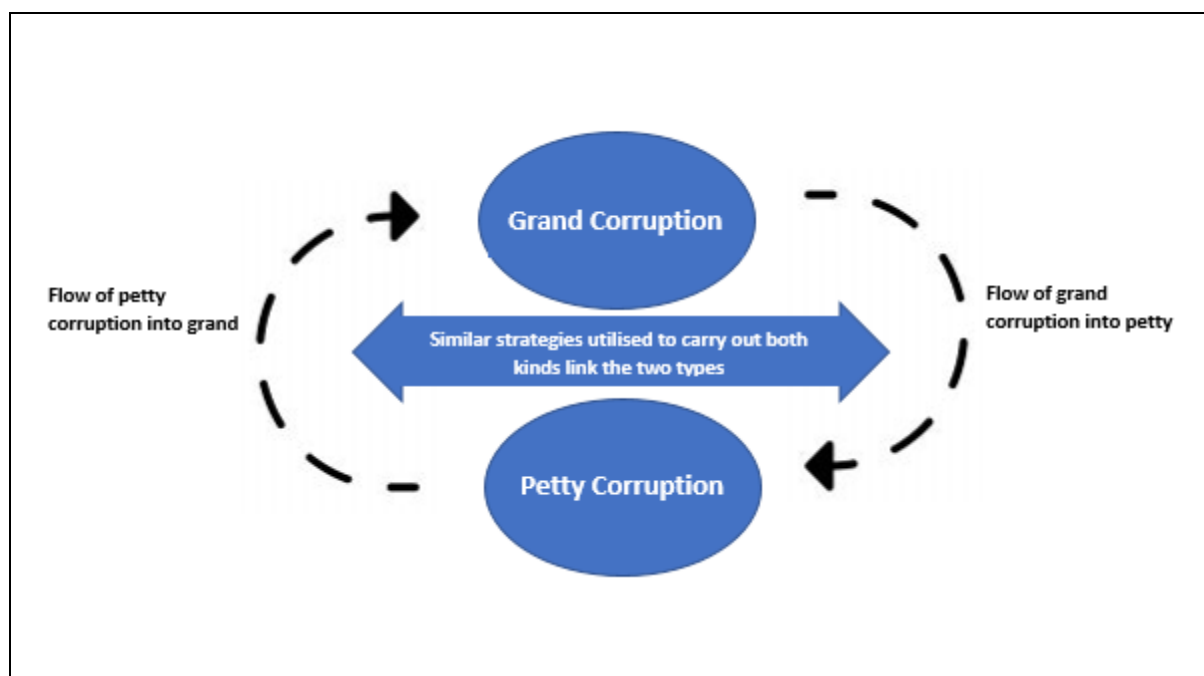
1 **1.3 Corruption as a multidisciplinary phenomenon within** 2 **political sciences**

3 ***1.3.1 Economic science & grand v. petty corruption distinction***

4 Whilst we have seen specific understandings and aspects of petty v. grand corruption
5 based on either monetary or legal grounds, I argue for a broader understanding of
6 grand v. petty corruption. There is no one way for corruption to be defined and no
7 one dimension within corruption that can be targeted in isolation. Therefore, a more
8 holistic approach is needed, making corruption conceptually a broader phenomenon.
9 Some scholars explicitly state the need to ‘identify the degree of corruption and list
10 different criteria for locating an exchange on a corruption continuum, rather than
11 offering one-sentence definitions’ (Zaloznaya 2012). It is precisely this type of
12 argument, responding to the need for such a ‘corruption continuum’, that the thesis
13 will adopt. *The thesis will, on a theoretical level, attempt to show that all kinds of*
14 *corruption of the corruption continuum (for example the above mentioned local,*
15 *national, educational, bureaucratic, nepotistic, clientelistic and many more), can*
16 *ultimately be investigated under the conduct of the ‘umbrella’ ‘petty’ and ‘grand’*
17 *levels.* This is specifically pertinent in response to corruption research having
18 produced a lot of typological ground to be covered, but little endeavour to show
19 how the bottom-up (petty) and top-bottom (grand) levels of corrupt activities
20 interact in an organic and culture-specific environment. Warburton’s language
21 (2013:231) confirms the theoretical potential of such a link by stating that
22 ‘corruption will tend to flow upwards through the authority hierarchy to the next
23 level of management, in order to gain access to greater discretionary authority’
24 (Warburton 2013). It is this ‘flow’ of corruption that is of utmost interest as it implies
25 an organic, fluid process of interaction and permeation of all levels by one, highly
26 infectious phenomenon. To take this theory further the thesis will argue that not
27 only does this flow happen upwards, as suggested by Warburton, but also downwards
28 and these ‘flows’ simultaneously feed off of one another in the strategies they
29 utilise, in order for corruption as a whole to sustain itself at all times of its duration
30 (Figure 1.1). The thesis does not claim that all petty corruption must inevitably

1 morph into grand corruption and vice versa- hence the intermittent arrows in Figure
2 1.1. It does however, theoretically expect to find a significant similarity between
3 the strategies utilised to carry out both types of corrupt activity, which will
4 ultimately link the two types into one approach to corruption as a whole (as shown
5 by middle arrow), directly informing RQ1 and RQ2. The 'flow' arrows depict the
6 expectation that based on selected strategies which are in fact the same, one type
7 of corruption serves as a justification for engagement in the other; thus creating a
8 perpetual vicious circle of engaging in corruption.

9



10

11 **Figure 1.1 Diagram of grand and petty corruption interaction. Source: Author**

12

13 Literature up to this point has popularly presumed that corruption can be presented
14 in its disaggregated individual types, which construes a major gap in the
15 understanding of, and the literature on, corruption. On the contrary, I argue that,
16 just like any controversial cultural phenomenon, it needs to be studied as an
17 interaction of all its specific components, lest it be continuously reduced to its

1 individual facets that together interact and create a complex whole. Consequently,
2 it would appear that rather than distinguishing and measuring each type of
3 corruption on its own, finding a link of similarities between the different levels of
4 corruption could provide a conceptual basis for an improved, more holistic kind of
5 corruption understanding and measurement. The thesis aims to identify such a link
6 following this literature gap. It is obvious from Figure 1 that such a link is not one
7 straightforward, linear connection.

8 Addressing corruption from an economic angle is the preferred approach of
9 economists like Susan Rose-Ackerman, as outlined in the previous section. This
10 approach is intertwined also with the division of grand and petty corruption. She
11 suggests that in both petty and grand corruption, the individuals with direct control
12 and indirect influence over allocation of a resource are those most likely to benefit
13 from corruption (Rose-Ackerman, 1999 in Bussell, 2015). Several scholars have
14 adopted Rose-Ackerman's economic view of grand corruption in their investigation
15 into corrupt practices; for example Bauhr and Charron (2017) broadly define grand
16 corruption as a 'collusion among the highest levels of government that involves
17 major public sector projects, procurement, and large financial benefits among high-
18 level public and private elites' (Bauhr and Charron, 2017:416), transactions which
19 are rarely directly observed by the general public (Bauhr and Charron 2017).

20 Bracking (2007) in her understanding of the economic angle invokes Mishra (2005)
21 when stating that 'classical economic theory of corruption sees it as one way among
22 several of allocating scarce resources, where the rational behaviour of market actors
23 in respect to incentives and rents explains corruption outcomes' (Bracking,
24 2007:10). Corruption in this sense then spurs anticorruption efforts that target the
25 government's specific role in economy or the specific investigation of the banking
26 or the investment sector. This is done in order to create a financial environment
27 with greater checks and balances that benefit investment but are not necessarily
28 healthier for the populace. However, as Bracking correctly points out, with such
29 efforts the 'political culture of a country is largely left intact, ready to exploit the
30 renewed opportunities for corruption' (Bracking 2007). Hindess (2013) outlines what
31 Rose-Ackerman (1999) sees as the remedies to economic dimension of corruption:

1 first Rose-Ackerman suggests that for less corruption there should be less
2 governmental involvement in certain spheres and secondly she suggests that high-
3 level public sector salaries should be competitive with private sector salaries, thus
4 eliminating the incentive to commit corrupt acts. However, as Hindess correctly
5 points out, the idea inverts on itself because such an increase of salaries would only
6 create a significant income gap with the rest of the populace. That, in turn, creates
7 opportunity for 'factionalism', which, as Hindess explains by invoking James
8 Madison, is the self-destructive 'corruption of the people by the people' in a
9 democracy (Hindess 2013). An extension of Rose-Ackerman's definition is provided
10 by Debiel and Gawrich's (2013:7) understanding of petty corruption as two strata, a
11 'small-scale corruption among public servants during the implementation of policy'
12 in separate institutions such as the police, post offices, administrative buildings; and
13 grand as a superior, 'large-scale corruption involving decision-makers during the
14 formulation of policy' on a governmental or legislative level (Debiel and Gawrich
15 2013). Clearly, the key element for these is policy-making and a more legislative
16 framework of corruption, as well as its enforcement in everyday situations. These
17 two examples alone point to a wide variation of interpretation of corruption labels
18 within the scholastic community and within the field of economics. Therefore, the
19 idea that somehow those who are better off will automatically be less susceptible
20 to bribery or other forms of corruption is not plausible and further research into the
21 topic is needed. Literature on this subject is also inconclusive, suggesting that in
22 some cases, topping up salaries will in fact increase the level of corrupt activities
23 (Foltz and Opoku-Agyemang 2015)

24 Ivanov develops the notion of public v. private sector gain further by stating that
25 'most econometric studies and global policy projects tend to sidestep definitional
26 debates by referring to the World Bank's (1997:8) standard and pithy 'abuse of public
27 office for private gain' (Ivanov 2007) later taken over by Transparency International.
28 Krastev (2000) underlines the criticism that such a short and generic definition could
29 encompass as complicated a concept as corruption by further implicating economic
30 theory as the main culprit: 'The measurement of corruption facilitated the
31 dominance of economics, marginalising the policy relevance of qualitative
32 approaches that treat corruption in its specific local context (Krastev 2000:8; in

1 Ivanov 2007). Ivanov (2007) is therefore right to point out the obviously reductionist
2 nature of a definition anchored exclusively in economic science and while the
3 motivations for using such a definition are obvious to institutions such as the World
4 Bank, foreign investors, and country risk assessors, there are clearly shortcomings
5 to this rationale. If the primary economic outcome behind CPI's approach to
6 corruption is to evaluate the economic and governmental health of the given
7 country, and therefore inevitably serve as an indicator of business incentive, then it
8 is important to highlight the shortcomings of causality. Iloie (2015) in her work, for
9 example, shows absolutely 'no correlation or strong connection between a country's
10 perceived corruption and investment inflows to that country' (Iloie, 2015:631). She
11 illustrates this on the examples of two Central and East European countries, Poland
12 and Ukraine. These, while significantly corrupt (according to the Transparency
13 International's Corruption Perception Index) (CPI), gathered bigger amounts of
14 foreign direct investment (FDI) from 2008 to 2013 than Austria or Slovenia, both far
15 more successful in their CPI (Iloie 2015). While there are factors other than CPI that
16 drive competitiveness in the market, such as population size or business opportunity,
17 from a purely corruption perspective, it would appear economic understanding of
18 corruption presents with difficulties of validity in justifying its own approach to the
19 phenomenon.

20 While I do not ignore the economic component of corruption in my investigation or
21 definition insofar as bribery and embezzlement are dominant features of corruption,
22 there is clearly need for a more whole-rounded approach to the problematic.

23 **1.4 Sociological approach to corruption**

24

25 Most political and/or sociological understandings of corruption return to the
26 foundations of political theory (Clarke 1983, Bracking 2007, Hindess 2013). Scholars
27 invoke the teachings of Aristotle and his several forms of government: of oneself, of
28 a household, and of a slave or of a state; all of which present with their own forms
29 of corruption potential (Hindess 2013). This is why Aristotle's understanding of

1 corruption goes back to the basic principle and essence of corruption- simply
2 described as ‘damaging impurity, some kind of intrusion or distortion which
3 prevented something from being as it should’ (Hindess, 2013:5).

4 Bracking (2007) invokes the teachings of Machiavelli and a slightly more callous
5 understanding, whereby one has a ‘natural tendency to ignore the claims of our
6 community as soon as they seem to conflict with the pursuit of our own immediate
7 advantage’ (Bracking 2007). She explains that modern political understanding of
8 corruption builds on these traditional ideas and therefore includes the notions of
9 good governance and, inversely, also the phenomena that disrupt it, such as ‘weak
10 political competition, underdeveloped civil society, insufficient public service
11 integrity and ethics and weak democratic structures’ (Della porta and Vannucci
12 1999, Doig and Theobald 2000, Bracking 2007, Heidenheimer 2009). Bracking
13 addresses the ideas of two abstract ‘countries’ or layers present in every real state:
14 *pays legal* and *pays réel*, one a legal structure and the other a structure where real
15 power is wielded (Bayart 2000; in Bracking 2007). She explains that following on
16 from this model, politically, corruption always takes place in the latter structure;
17 also referred to as a realm of politics called the “shadow state” (Reno 1995; in
18 Bracking 2007). Similarly, Lampert (1983) labels corruption a major ‘political issue
19 not only because it undermines the conditions needed for effective planning, but
20 also because it erodes the legitimacy of the whole political structure’ (Lampert,
21 1983:286). All of the above-mentioned reasonings outline the understanding of
22 corruption by political and social science as a necessarily clandestine endeavour
23 subject to human nature that takes place behind the scenes and is somehow an
24 intangible phenomenon that destabilises an otherwise potentially well-functioning
25 system. One particular challenge of studying corruption therefore comes from its
26 opaque and secretive nature and the difficulty of access.

27 This is not a sufficient conclusion for Bracking (2007), however, and from her
28 perspective a post-structuralist and a sociological angle is preferred. Bracking’s
29 outlook is that of investigating corruption, ‘as a wide range of discrete and differing
30 social practices’ (Bracking, 2007). Bracking’s main issue with understanding
31 corruption in political theory is that it has become a ‘ubiquitous normative labeller

1 of different economic behaviours, within contested political discourses on privilege
2 and power' (Bracking, 2007:12) and becomes an empty concept without the
3 sociological complexity she believes it encompasses. I concur with this emphasis on
4 the sociological, behavioural, and inherently empirical approach to the study of
5 corruption, as it is necessarily tied in with the development of a particular society-
6 in other words, corruption is as varied as societies themselves and requires an
7 individual approach. Warburton (2013) identifies this as a major gap in corruption
8 literature and one that the thesis addresses by its empirical data collection and
9 analysis in the cultural context of the field. Warburton specifically argues that it is
10 'essential to understand it [corruption] firstly from the individual's perspective and
11 to then build the individual into a complex social world...[we need to] understand
12 corruption as a social process and to understand the individual actors who are the
13 participants in this social system' (Warburton, 2013:221). He goes on to add that
14 this has not been done to date and there is therefore demand for this approach to
15 give corruption its due consideration, rather than a reductionist anonymous label of
16 a 'universal diagnosis for a nation's ills' (Ivanov, 2007:40).

17 At this point it is important for us to expand our horizons of understanding corruption
18 and become aware of Ivanov's argument that corruption does not exist in a vacuum
19 but within a social formation of other phenomena. It is therefore apt to point out
20 that the classic approach to anti-corruption techniques, ie the illusion that removing
21 the 'venal officials currently in power would automatically generate progress' and
22 curb corruption for good, is at worst naïve and at best incomplete (Ivanov, 2007:41).
23 Instead, Ivanov (2007) calls for the understanding of corruption in sociological and
24 cultural terms as a 'value-ridden concept that should not be treated as though it
25 were essentially the same phenomenon around the world...A more contextualised
26 analysis of corruption as a social construct could inform more successful policies'
27 (Ivanov, 2007:42). The idea of anchoring corruption research in a real-life
28 understanding of it, as the thesis does, therefore directly responds to this gap in
29 corruption understanding.

30 Kaufmann (2018) furthers the idea of corruption as a social construct and weaves in
31 the cultural factor shaping behavioural patterns of those involved in corruption

1 (Kaufmann, Hooghiemstra et al. 2018): ‘culture guides human behaviour as it
2 provides members of society with schematic, mental models about what is
3 appropriate versus inappropriate, legitimate versus illegitimate, and good versus
4 bad’ (2018:391). Meyer (2008) expands on this idea by indicating that corruption and
5 informal practices are all subject to both *subjective* (e.g. values, needs, interests,
6 attitudes, habits, emotions) and *objective* factors (political, legal, economic) (Meyer
7 2008). These factors then, according to Meyer, inform ‘collective memory,
8 history...and influence mentality of how people, elites, as well as ordinary citizens,
9 have learned to deal with the sphere of politics’ (Meyer, 2008:22). This behavioural
10 aspect of understanding corruption most prevalently informs my research design and
11 questions, along with the aforementioned urge of literature to employ a more
12 qualitative approach to investigating corruption. Warburton’s idea of anchoring
13 corruption in Social Network Theory (SNT) is consequently very compelling, as it
14 represents corruption as constantly evolving, possessive of the ever-expanding lease
15 of life it has within society (Warburton, 2013). He understands corruption as
16 fundamentally a ‘technique of goal achievement, not an end in itself’ (2013:224)
17 and that all who participate in it have a fundamental access to a resource and wield
18 some form of power (Warburton 2013) that can be exchanged for another resource.
19 In this way social networks develop, expand and even have the potential of capturing
20 an institution or organisation entirely, if the resource and power wielding of
21 corruptors reach a critical mass.

22 The most important idea here is that this approach to corruption ‘allows the
23 investigator to conceptualise the operation of corrupt networks in terms of power
24 flows and relationships, rather than the attributes of actors’ (Warburton, 2013:235).
25 This fluid interpretation of corruption, invoking ‘flows’ for a second time in the
26 review, is the basis for informing my research questions RQ 1-3, because the
27 rationalisation and justification of involvement in corruption is just as important
28 theoretically, as the empirical strategies utilised to carry out corrupt acts. What my
29 RQ3 labels as ‘strategy’ can easily be understood as Warburton’s idea of ‘dynamic
30 networks and relationships’. This is because these networks and relationships are
31 the gateway to Reno’s (1995) “shadow state”, where a whole new set of norms are
32 employed to ‘eliminate competition, create a charmed circle, an inside track’

1 (Clarke, 1983:xvi). Put simply, these networks and relationships are crucial to
2 accessing corrupt practices and therefore crucial to the empirical investigation of
3 corruption.

4 Ultimately, what this section has discussed and explored is the need to move away
5 from classical theories of political and social science and move towards a more
6 combined, modern approach to social science- i.e., combining sociological factors,
7 cultural, behavioural, and ultimately individual factors contributing to a complex
8 whole. The thesis attempts to address this gap in literature, resulting in an empirical
9 study, as opposed to a purely theoretical contribution to the debate. The
10 investigation embraces, rather than rejects, the overlap of cultural and individual
11 factors in corrupt practices and accepts it as axiomatic within any society, namely
12 the society of Slovakia within the healthcare sector. In sum, the sociological and
13 political debate about corruption raises questions about what the concept of
14 corruption *does* as much as what it *is* (Bracking, 2007). The thesis addresses this
15 through a rigorous investigation of experiences of corruption in a living and a
16 dynamic social setting. Giordano (2013) sums up the objective of an effective study
17 of corruption in a comprehensive way that I follow in the thesis (Giordano and Hayoz
18 2013): ‘The point is to find a behaviour’s underlying sense in line with the social
19 logic of the culture to which the actor belongs’ (2013:13). In this framework, it is
20 my goal to understand in qualitative terms this intentionality behind corrupt
21 behaviour and to place it within the ‘logic of the culture’. This means to identify
22 the strategies utilised to access corrupt behaviour and the ‘logic’ behind it;
23 expecting to find a connection between the ‘logic’ for grand and the ‘logic’ for petty
24 corrupt behaviour.

25

1 1.5 Anthropological approaches

2

3 While anthropology offers a fairly niche outlook on corruption and does not hold as
4 much theoretical prowess as that of sociology, there is an interesting facet to
5 economic anthropology that presents corruption within the framework of 'rules'.

6 Andvig (2001:46) describes corruption as 'fluid and always negotiable 'rules of the
7 game', multiple norm systems, ... gift-giving practices, networks of solidarity and
8 collusion, extended family solidarity and predatory forms of authority' (Andvig, Odd-
9 Helg et al. 2001). This broadens the understanding of corruption as it takes into
10 consideration the earlier contestation of economic theory being based solely on
11 bribery, as opposed to immaterial gifts, gift giving or exchange of services. The rest
12 of the mentioned aspects of corruption in this rule-based definition also hint at the
13 rationale behind RQ3 and a much more empirical inquiry into corrupt practices,
14 attempting to capture the precise accessing of these 'networks of solidarity', be it
15 friends or family, that I believe create a gateway into corruption involvement. Gerd
16 Meyer (2008) concurs with the essence of this understanding of corruption by
17 emphasising the role of rules in the emergence of "Informal Politics". Meyer (2008)
18 outlines several cases in which rules give way to informal politics, for example when
19 'formal rules or institutions do not exist, are weak, inconsistent or loose', when
20 'there is a lack of democratic traditions with respect for formal rules', when there
21 are 'rapid or permanent changes of rules', when 'there is an overload of rules to
22 understand' , when 'rules are inflexible', and when 'there is a large gap between
23 the actual functioning of the formal rules and normative claims of institutions'
24 (Meyer, 2008:24). Giordano and Hayoz (2013) also point out a similar concept of
25 corruption only 'existing in the presence of formal rules' (2013:12), as one defines
26 itself against the other. Gallina (2013) concurs with this dominant role of rules when
27 she argues that 'the general meaning of a negative form of informality is the use of
28 informal practices in order to outweigh independent institutions, to ignore formal
29 rules and so forth' (Gallina, 2013:142). She goes on to elaborate on such a 'rule-
30 based framework' and provides us with three dimensions to consider when

1 identifying whether negative informal practices (ie corruption) have taken hold over
2 independent institutions and are more likely to be utilised by the populace as a
3 result (Gallina 2013):

- 4 • A lack of rules- implying negligence in establishing rules
- 5 • Façade rules- either rules that are too weak or too complicated and their subsequent
6 inevitable ignorance
- 7 • Rule capture- strategic placement of an agent to capture rules for personal gain
8 (2013:143).

9 This kind of theoretical approach to corruption as a rule-breaking or rule-
10 manoeuvring exercise is also very close to theories of red tape, informal practices
11 and rational choice (see Kaufmann, 2018; Bohn, 2013), further showing that
12 corruption presents the field of social sciences with multiple dimensions. A certain
13 amount of overlap in conceptual understanding therefore does appear necessary to
14 accept, which is why my distilled understanding of corruption does not limit itself
15 to one specific area of study. The thesis includes a theoretical assumption on the
16 role of rules in corruption involvement, since this appears to be an effective manner
17 of relaying conceptual elements of corruption to respondents and facilitate their
18 understanding. However, it is important not to lose sight of the shortcomings of a
19 merely rule-based understanding of corruption, for example the difficulty of
20 separating the rule-breaking factor from the human decision-making factor, which
21 may not always share a direct relationship. Also, the implications and negative
22 connotations of rule breaking could make respondents uncomfortable to share their
23 experiences, which is why the wording of questions had to be very careful and
24 considerate. Therefore, a rule-based anthropological approach is merely one of the
25 elements informing the understanding of corruption for this investigation. This
26 approach also feeds into the understanding of corruption within the framework of
27 informal practices below.

28

1

2 **1.6 Informal institutions and practices**

3

4 *'Sticks and carrots alone cannot explain human behaviour' (Batory, 2012:74).*

5 Informality is defined by a lack of formal rules and structures; thus, informal
6 practices exist as an antithesis to formal practices. Lauth (2000) explicitly states
7 that informal institutions are dependent upon the existence of formal institutions.
8 They live, as it were, at the expense of the former, by exploiting them for their own
9 purposes, by either partially occupying or penetrating them. In this sense, they are
10 'parasitic institutions which, for example, find their expression in corruption'
11 (Lauth, 2000:26). Informal institutions and corruption, while two separate concepts,
12 are therefore intertwined in their theoretical and practical manifestation. Especially
13 within Central and Eastern Europe, Giordano (2013) emphasises the need to highlight
14 not only the differences between the two, but mainly 'similarities between the
15 various disciplines' approaches [to them], which are nevertheless characterised by
16 *family resemblances*⁴ (in Ludwig Wittgenstein's terms) due to shared cognitive
17 interests' (Giordano, 2013:10). These "family resemblances" are best illustrated by
18 Pejovich's (1999) understanding of formal versus informal institutions: formal
19 including constitutions, contracts and form of government; while informal
20 institutions include 'traditions, customs, moral values, religious beliefs, and all
21 other norms of behaviour that have passed the test of time' (Pejovich 1999:166; in
22 Kaufmann, 2018). As we have seen, the idea of corrupt behaviour reaches as far
23 back as Aristotle, so it would be fair to assume corruption has also passed the test
24 of time, which, according to this definition, would make it a subsection of informal
25 practices and institutions. In other words, all corruption should then take place as

⁴ Emphasis mine.

1 part of informality, as opposed to formality. Corruption has therefore been
2 considered both as a subset, and a manifestation of, informal practices- which evade
3 any quantitatively oriented empirical analysis (Lauth 2000). The overlapping nature
4 is obvious here and it is necessarily taken into consideration with further
5 investigation of corruption.

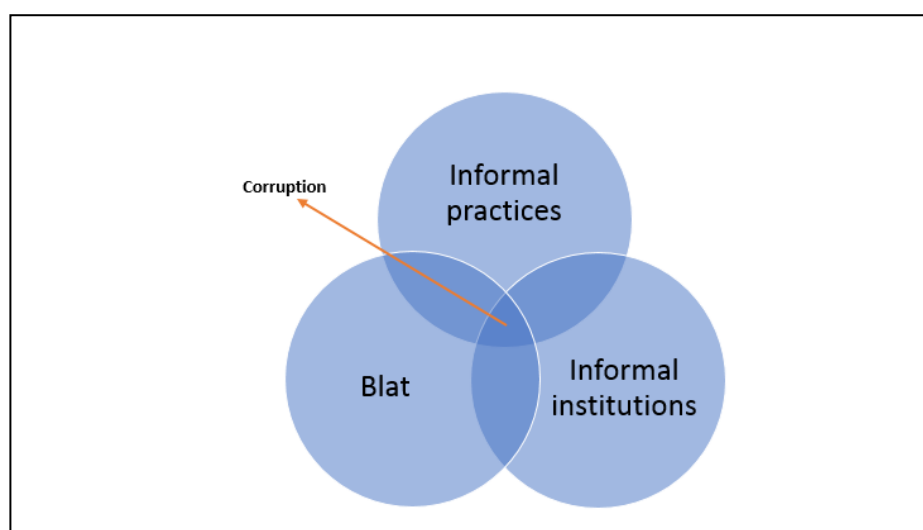
6 Meyer agrees with this classification and in a meta-analysis distinguishes two levels
7 within informal practices themselves: power structures on the one hand, and
8 'efficient, 'unwritten', often customary rules, values and norms as well as conscious
9 or unconscious patterns of perception, interaction and communication' on the other
10 (Meyer, 2008:17). Institutions are defined by Meyer (2008) as 'stable patterns of
11 interaction and social relations' which is why I believe, for practical and empirical
12 purposes, we can speak of corrupt practices and corrupt institutions almost
13 synonymously, since both require forms of interaction and take place within social
14 relations. Meyer goes on to elaborate his argument into institutions being
15 'embedded in society and their cultural norms and patterns, working according to
16 dominant values, conventions and group interests' (Meyer 2008:18). This, to Meyer
17 (2008), is a part of a new theory addressing institutions, *neo-institutionalism*, which
18 suggests that within such institutions, each actor of the institution uses these as a
19 mere mechanism and individual strategy of rational action to achieve their own
20 advantage, ie the 'rational choice approach' (Meyer, 2008:18). Meyer's
21 understanding of informal institutions, and within them corrupt institutions, feeds
22 into the definition of corruption as ultimately a way to achieve personal profit and
23 an advantaged position within society in Machiavellian terms.

24 However, in order not to accept this rather cynical outlook on informal institutions,
25 and alongside them corrupt institutions, we need to take a closer look at the
26 connotations behind informality and the ultimate reason why in this thesis we speak
27 of corruption rather than informality. Giordano (2013) points out that informality is
28 a phenomenon that works with several connotations depending on different social
29 situations. It can either evoke the idea of an open agent or environment and thus
30 have a definitely positive connotation; or, when linked to the so-called public
31 sphere, informality can take on a different meaning altogether. In this case it

1 becomes synonymous with dishonesty, illegality, double-dealing, dysfunction,
2 unreliability, irregularity, nepotism, corruption' (Giordano, 2013:30). Clearly,
3 corruption is here synonymous with the negative sphere of informality. Giordano's
4 ultimate definition of informality as 'entailing an extra-institutional resource based
5 on interpersonal transaction and exchanges of reciprocal services between
6 interacting actors' (Giordano, 2013:30) ties together all of our previously mentioned
7 ideas, central to the understanding of corruption: ie resources, exchange,
8 interpersonal relations, services, interaction, and social settings. It is therefore
9 essential to realise the overlapping nature of specific social phenomena and the
10 need to investigate corruption from as wide an outlook as possible.

11 Lovell, Ledeneva and Rogatchevski (2000) provide a comprehensive overview of
12 corruption, bribery, and the concept of informality, or "*blat*", which theoretically
13 serves as most helpful for investigating corruption within Central and Eastern
14 Europe, due to its origin in the region (Ledeneva, Lovell et al. 2000). Most
15 significantly, they point out the confusing nature of distinguishing rigidly between
16 the public and the private spheres in post-Soviet ideology (which stems from the
17 ideological norm of self-identification with the purposes of the organisation, the
18 Party, and the Soviet state) that helped to create a favourable environment for
19 'give-and-take' practices in the Soviet period' (Ledeneva et al., 2000:4). These
20 practices are what the authors claim to be not strictly-speaking corruption, but a
21 Soviet version of informal practices, called "*blat*". The authors explain that 'in
22 common parlance, "by *blat*" took root as meaning "by acquaintance" (po
23 znakomstvu) and was used to refer to ways to obtain (dostat') or arrange (ustroit')
24 access to goods and services by the use of connections' (Ledeneva, Lovell et al.
25 2000). In this sense they claim that *blat* had less of a negative connotation of bribery
26 or corruption. On the contrary, *blat* was seen to be more a form of 'cooperation and
27 mutual support with a long-term perspective and implies trust, rather than
28 compensation for risk' (Ledeneva, Lovell et al. 2000). The authors refer to the need
29 for one to be in possession of a network or a 'chain of *blat*' to be able to access
30 corrupt practices, such as bribery. As such, *blat* was considered less morally
31 reprehensible than bribery itself, serving as a mediating agent.

1 In my understanding of corruption practices, this idea forms one of the central pillars
 2 for addressing corruption. *It is these informal networks and blat that I believe exist*
 3 *not in isolation, but are in fact inseparable, and form the core of the strategies*
 4 *utilised to engage in corrupt activities. Therefore, my understanding of corruption*
 5 *is not that it is a mere subsection of informal practices as suggested above, but*
 6 *that in a Venn diagram (see Figure 1.2), corrupt practices would be at the*
 7 *overlapping centre of informal institutions, informal networks, and the post-Soviet-*
 8 *specific blat practices, typical for the region investigated.* It is the belief of this
 9 thesis that only as a truly overlapping concept can corruption be investigated in
 10 sufficient depth and that future qualitative studies on corrupt behaviour should
 11 adopt a similar approach with the variable of 'blat' being replaced in the diagram
 12 by whatever label is relevant and prevalent to the region at hand to describe
 13 informal attitudes and networks (e.g. *guanxi* in China (Fan 2002, Ledeneva 2008).



14

15 **Figure 1.2 Corruption presented as a cross-section point of multiple labels addressing**
 16 **informality, Source: Author**

17

18 The concept of informality within the understanding of corruption is key in order to
 19 form a whole-rounded picture of the complexity of the phenomenon. The
 20 implications behind informality relate to customs, behavioural patterns of choice,
 21 trust, and the unwritten rules behind the functioning of society as a whole. RQs 3 &
 22 3a,3b in particular are informed by this understanding and phrased specifically to

1 include notions of customs and rules, as well as trust to reflect the holistic
2 investigation that corruption demands. Specific field questions are included for the
3 respondents to be able to determine qualitatively the level to which informality and
4 corruption are understood as synonymous by the respondents or what differences
5 are observed. In this manner the thesis will further inform the literature on the
6 subject of informal practice versus corruption, which has clearly failed to draw a
7 clear distinction so far.

8

9 **1.7 Trust and ethics**

10

11 Having already touched upon the notion of morality and values embedded in
12 corruption earlier, it is no surprise that the investigation of corruption brings along
13 with itself a discussion of ethics and moral values. Clarke (1983:x) states: ‘You are
14 corrupt’ is a moral and a political cry more than it is a legal accusation- the
15 connotations of decay, depravity, secretiveness and self-interest are well
16 understood as grossly incompatible with official position’ in public sector (Clarke
17 1983). Rothstein and Eek (2009) interpret social trust as people’s moral evaluation
18 of the society in which they live (Rothstein and Eek 2009) and argue that ‘the
19 behaviour of public officials is one important device that people use when forming
20 beliefs about to what extent people in general can be trusted’ (2009:89). In a 2018
21 BTI report on Slovakia, up to 85.6% of over 1,000 respondents said that corruption
22 contributed the most to mistrust (BTI, 2018:11)⁵. Trust therefore appears to be
23 strongly correlated with corruption and therefore cannot be overlooked in this
24 investigation. In my research of corruption, it is the behaviour and public conduct
25 of the officials in the healthcare sector context that will get addressed as one of the

⁵ BTI 2018- Bertelsmann Stiftung’s Transformation Index Report of 2018; Slovakia-specific section.

1 issues pertaining to RQ1, targeting awareness of grand corruption. Batory (2012)
2 suggests that a World Values Survey conducted in CEE countries has shown that when
3 respondents were asked if they thought their compatriots engaged in corrupt
4 practice, over 76% of respondents thought ‘almost all’ did (Batory, 2012:75).
5 According to Batory, such lack of trust and lack of belief in integrity as a social norm
6 creates conditions for a general downward spiral of ‘self-fulfilling expectations
7 about corruption’ (Batory, 2012:75). Furthermore, pertinent to RQ1, Batory makes
8 the observation that ‘even for citizens who recognise that corruption is harmful and
9 find it morally objectionable the question that often arises is: who are they, our
10 politicians, to tell us not to bribe or accept a bribe?’ (Batory, 2012:76). This
11 rhetorical question is perhaps the closest I have encountered the existing literature
12 to hint at the essence of my RQ1 and RQ2, i.e., searching for a link and justification
13 of petty corruption by awareness of grand and vice versa.

14 A Slovak-specific example of untrustworthy behaviour of public officials is ex-Prime
15 Minister Fico’s unfulfilled promises of curbing corruption and his three consecutive
16 governments failing to do anything about greater media transparency or increased
17 media pluralism (BTI 2018). The BTI states that trust in political institutions has
18 continued to stagnate and decline since the 2012 elections. Boardman and Klum
19 (2013), for example, make a salient point about unethical and corrupt public
20 behaviour such as this compromising not only the value of services but also affecting
21 the cost, quality and availability of these services (Boardman and Klum 2013).
22 Besides the moral implications and Bracking’s observation (2007) that the concept
23 of corruption is indeed ‘morally loaded’, there is also empirical evidence that links
24 lack of trust to higher levels of dysfunctionality in systems (Morris and Klesner 2010).
25 Boardman and Klum (2013) concur with this observation and, most importantly, for
26 services such as health care they emphasise the role of trust as instrumental: ‘Loss
27 of public trust can further undermine the ability of public sector agencies to provide
28 effective and equitable services, especially to those in need’ (2013:82). Morris and
29 Klesner develop this notion in their comprehensive study of Mexican political and
30 interpersonal trust, and suggest a ‘vicious circle’ of trust, wherein low level of
31 interpersonal trust nurtures corrupt practices, which in turn undermine trust in
32 government and other institutions (Morris and Klesner 2010). More rigorously, they

1 show that low trust in politicians joint with perception of corruption creates an
2 expectation of corruption, which in turn reinforces and feeds corrupt behaviour. If
3 this concept is to be applied to health care, the presumption would be that in our
4 context, low trust in healthcare officials joint with perception of grand corruption
5 creates an expectation of corruption and would in turn feed petty corrupt behaviour.
6 Similarly, if we expect to find a link between petty and grand corruption behaviour
7 on this spectrum, the presumption would be that awareness of petty corruption
8 would feed grand corrupt behaviour as well.

9 Kubbe in turn emphasises the instrumental role of interpersonal trust in thinking
10 about corruption in the modern sense- lack of interpersonal trust increases
11 perceived political corruption (Kubbe 2013). Political corruption, in turn, according
12 to Kubbe's research, lowers trust in political institutions. Therefore, it follows that
13 high degrees of political corruption foster low levels of trust in political institutions
14 and erode general trust in the whole community. High levels of trust in individuals
15 shows positive view of their democratic institutions, which has already been linked
16 to lower corruption levels. Kubbe (2013) ultimately concludes that trust is a key
17 phenomenon with regards to corruption, and argues that, overall, there is a strong
18 negative correlation between the two, whereby societies with more trust tend to
19 have less corruption (Kubbe 2013). However, Kubbe also emphasises the intrinsic
20 difficulty in fully grasping and measuring abstract and subjective concepts such as
21 trust. Additionally, Kubbe states that in light of this complicated relationship
22 between corruption and trust, corruption measurement cannot in itself realistically
23 encompass all kinds of corruption to be able to accurately quantify the pervasiveness
24 of corruption in the country.

25 Scholars clearly show that low levels of trust are both a cause and a consequence of
26 corruption, which firmly solidifies the role trust plays in corrupt practices (Rothstein
27 and Eek 2009, Morris and Klesner 2010, Kubbe 2013). Giordano (2013) concurs with
28 this conclusion and reinforces the notion that 'lack of trust in formal organizations,
29 of both the state and of civil society, will also characterize the future horizon of
30 expectations' (Giordano, 2013:14). It is this notion of expectations of others that
31 seems to be key to understanding the role of trust in the perpetuating dynamics of

1 corrupt behaviour. Warburton (2013) points to a mechanism of the corrupt parties
2 'locking' one another in a corrupt relationship as a result of trust, which, he
3 believes, is both the outcome but also a necessary predisposition for corrupt
4 practices, since trust is required to engage in informal or illegal activity but will also
5 result after a successfully carried out corrupt act (Warburton 2013). In this context
6 Luhmann (1979) describes trust as 'a generalised expectation that the 'other will
7 continue to behave in accordance with the way they have portrayed themselves' (in
8 Warburton, 2013:225). Kubbe similarly sees trust in the context of corruption as
9 defined by certainty of expectation, ie laying the basis for cooperation with people
10 who are not like oneself (Kubbe 2013). The detrimental effects of lack of trust
11 ultimately leading to corruption, as well as resulting in corruption, are what informs
12 the RQ3 of this investigation into corruption. We have established that trust is
13 explored as both a precondition and a result of corrupt practices, but the literature
14 has so far failed to determine which end of this spectrum interacts with trust more
15 prevalently- the origin or the result of corruption. The relating 'trust assumption' is
16 formulated to try and determine whether the notion of trust as a pre-requisite or a
17 result of corruption is more prevalent.

18 *Assumption about trust: Trust is understood as a condition of corrupt practice more*
19 *often than it is understood as a result of corrupt practice.*

20 Within the context of trust, on a theoretical level, the thesis investigates abstract
21 strategies of trust in corrupt practices, such as collective rules manoeuvring and how
22 these interact on both grand and petty levels.

23 On an empirical level it investigates the concrete role of trust in accessing
24 corruption, such as friendship networks, acquaintances, agreements. Trust is
25 therefore seen as one of the strategies that links grand and petty corruption
26 practice, as shown in Figure 1.1.

27

1 1.8 Corruption as a result of soviet/communist legacies

2

3 In his comprehensive study on corruption, 'Corruption around the World', Tanzi
4 (1998) addresses not only the origins and causes of corruption, but also the problems
5 with its measurement, generalisation of its causes, as well as insufficient measures
6 taken to counter corruption in various societies. Building on the previous sections of
7 the literature review, Tanzi shares his own classification of acts of corruption as the
8 following:

- 9 • Bureaucratic (or 'petty') or political ('grand')
- 10 • Cost-reducing (to the briber) or benefit enhancing
- 11 • Briber-initiated or bribee-initiated
- 12 • Coercive or collusive
- 13 • Centralised or decentralised
- 14 • Predictable or arbitrary
- 15 • Involving cash payments or not (Tanzi 1998).

16 Clearly Tanzi stays within the tradition of thinking of corruption in binary terms, but
17 also introduces yet another, incentivising dimension of petty and grand corruption.
18 Furthermore, Tanzi describes the need for corrupt practices in communism
19 specifically and links them to the breakdown of communism and to the requirements
20 of post-communist transitions. He points out that these corrupt phenomena become
21 more normalised as time progresses and they are emulated enough within society to
22 resemble a kind of 'contagious disease' (Tanzi, 1998:562). For this 'disease' to latch
23 on to society, specific incubation conditions have to be met, and post-communist
24 transitional societies, Tanzi argues, provide the best environment for the symptoms
25 of corruption to eventually present themselves. Specifically, Tanzi speaks of the
26 processes of privatization, the abuses of which 'appear to have been particularly
27 significant in the transition economies' (Tanzi, 1998:563) and other forms of asset
28 stripping and *nomenklatura* privatization practices; all specific for post-communist
29 societies. Other issues identified by Tanzi are, for example, the heavy regulations,
30 authorisations, and confusing taxation policies of post-communist transitional

1 governments, provisions of goods and services below market prices, non-transparent
2 party financing, and bad investment and spending decisions by governments with
3 little to no experience with capitalism. These are inseparably linked to challenges
4 such as low public sector wages, lack of transparency in rules and regulations, and
5 bureaucratic practices. Tanzi shows a clear negative correlation between rising
6 wages and decrease in corruption, but he does emphasise an important issue of not
7 being able to generalise corruption incentives, as realistically, 'not all officials
8 respond in the same way to the same incentives' (Tanzi, 1998:572).
9 Katsenelinboigen (1983) also suggests that income was a key issue in USSR corruption
10 and its legacy, contributing to his interpretation of corruption genesis (1983:234):
11 'The lower the ratio of the population's legal income to its semi-legal and illegal
12 income, the higher the amount of corruption' (Katsenelinboigen 1983).

13 Mirroring Tanzi's views of corruption being a specifically prominent phenomenon in
14 transitional societies are scholars such as Kostadinova (2012), Holmes (2006),
15 Haughton (2013) or Neuman Stanivukovic (2010). Holmes is more explicit in her
16 assertion, stating plainly that 'the very nature of post-communism encourages
17 corruption' (Holmes 2006), invoking habits of informal connections and distrust of
18 the state, specific for the communist era. Grodeland et al. (1998:655) concur with
19 this view and describe the 'total bureaucratisation which the socialist ideology has
20 tended to promote in practice [having] made the problem of corruption particularly
21 central to these regimes... problems associated with the individual behaviour of
22 Soviet officials- corruption, bribe taking, patronage, false reporting to superiors and
23 so on more closely reflected the rational responses of these officials to a
24 bureaucratic structure that logically encouraged such behaviour' (Grodeland,
25 Koshechkina et al. 1998). Kostadinova outlines in her literature review the 'rise in
26 corruption after communism' (Kostadinova 2012), and invokes Schmidt (2007) and
27 his view that the origin and spread of corruption are strongly linked to the ongoing
28 process of democratic and economic transformation, presenting new opportunities
29 for embezzlement when privatization and economic restructuring were launched,
30 while older 'practices managed to survive and adapt' (Schmidt, 2007 in Kostadinova,
31 2012). Kostadinova's main argument is that while the problem of corruption is
32 complex and realistically cannot be reduced to communist legacies alone, corruption

1 is indeed much more serious and systemic in transitional, than in consolidated
2 democracies. Sakwa (2012) explains this phenomenon, similarly to Ledeneva's
3 outlining of *blat*, by distinguishing between the fall of the Soviet *system* as opposed
4 to the fall of the Soviet *order*, which he believes survives in insufficient
5 democratisation processes and also in the corrupt practices that live on (Sakwa
6 2012). Interestingly, rather than a simple handing over of legacies from communist
7 leadership to the transitional governmental leadership however, Kostadinova
8 describes the 'multifaceted character of the transition, political, economic and in
9 some cases state-building, offering even more opportunities for improper behaviour
10 and enrichment' (Kostadinova, 2012:5). Therefore, the process of transition and
11 economic shift itself seems to be more important in this context for the
12 encouragement of corruption growth than the presence of explicit communist
13 legacies. In support of this view, Miller et al. (2001) suggest, on a theoretical level,
14 that the legacy of communist past has a strong impact on political corruption in CEE
15 countries (Miller 2001). They, however, specify on a practical level, that rather than
16 cultural attitudes, it is economic pressure that causes and encourages the most
17 widely-spread corrupt trend of gift-giving; a phenomenon already addressed by the
18 thesis as a gap in economic literature on corruption.

19 Tim Haughton (2013) concurs with this view and also perceives the main origins of
20 corruption in its current form in the Central European states in connection with
21 financial and economic transition and development, particularly with EU funds
22 embezzlement. He suggests that the Central and East European (CEE) countries are
23 still just 'reckoning with the past' and corruption is therefore politically mostly tied
24 to party financing and economically to EU funds embezzlement. He believes
25 transitional societies are forever stuck in a vicious circle of receiving funds to correct
26 the trends of the past and boost old infrastructure and outdated agricultural
27 systems, but not utilising them in the intended manner, therefore always needing
28 more (Haughton 2013). Scholars like Mungiu-Pippidi (2006) suggest that Haughton's
29 view is based on an expectation of these transitional systems moving from a
30 universalistic system (i.e., communism, socialism) to a particularistic system
31 (capitalism), but realistically they are all currently in the mid-stage of a
32 'competitive particularism' of this process. This mid-stage, Mungiu-Pippidi argues,

1 would economically situate the corruption practices we see today on a trajectory
2 moving away from communism, bound to eventually abandon the practices of
3 informality, but clearly requiring some time still before the process is complete
4 (Mungiu-Pippidi 2006).

5 In a more country-specific research, Neuman Stanivukovic (2010) focuses on the
6 former Czechoslovakia, suggesting that as far as democratisation and reforms are
7 concerned, these were much more turbulent in Slovakia than the Czech Republic
8 after their dissolution. She describes the weak character of the institutions in EU
9 applicant states, and therefore suggests Europeanisation has been a more cyclical
10 process than a static independent variable, occurring based on domestic
11 institutional and historical path tendencies (Neuman Stanivukovic 2010). She
12 suggests that while Europeanisation has tried to overcome a deeply-rooted societal
13 division in Slovakia, this has been unsuccessful precisely due to corrupt practices,
14 as shown by the constant division in the coalition governments of Slovakia (Neuman
15 Stanivukovic 2010). The Slovak process of transition and Europeanisation therefore
16 has been more cosmetic than substantial, and this raises questions as to whether
17 the theory that communist legacies are generically responsible for corrupt practices
18 in transitional democracies is merely a partial explanation, as some countries (e.g.,
19 the Baltic states) took to democratisation processes easier than others, albeit
20 sharing a communist past. The BTI report of 2018 suggests that Slovakia indeed
21 'remains split over the legacies of two authoritarian regimes (fascist and communist)
22 and the process of reconciliation has been more complicated than in neighbouring
23 countries' (BTI, 2018:35), further supporting the idea that legacies of the past have
24 the potential to strongly influence the current political and social climate. A more
25 detailed look into Slovakia's reckoning with corruption is explored in the second part
26 of the literature review.

27 Other scholars have an opposing view on communism as the origin for corrupt
28 practices. Krastev (2001) suggests that corruption is merely another tile in a
29 multifaceted mosaic of discourse in post-communist countries. He suggests that
30 while corruption is a way for the post-communist public to 'talk about politics,
31 economy, past and future', it is also a 'black myth of transition, an explanation of

1 last resort for all failures and disappointments of the first post-communist decade...it
2 is a set of discourses expressing painful processes of transition and social
3 stratification', but it is not a new phenomenon and not intrinsic to communism in
4 and of itself (Krastev 2004). Krastev raises an interesting sociological point of the
5 communist legacies explanation serving as a therapeutic mechanism and a scapegoat
6 for all negative occurrences within the young democracies, essentially stripping the
7 political leadership of their agency in their own policy-making decisions and
8 economical failures. Other scholars such as Gallina concur with this view and move
9 the focus away from a generic label of 'communist legacies' to individual
10 personalities that bear more of the responsibility (Gallina 2013), in Slovakia's case
11 the notorious 1990's Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar.

12 Bohn (2013) also tries to move away from shifting the responsibility purely onto
13 communist legacies and rather suggests that the transitional difficulties faced by
14 post-communist societies are associated with the youth of the democracy, rather
15 than the communist legacy. This, for example, includes issues such as low judicial
16 independence and prosecutorial ability (Bohn 2013). Strong judiciary, according to
17 Bohn, is always linked to stronger democracy and less corruption (Bohn 2013).
18 Interestingly, in connection to Slovakia, prominent political commentators, such as
19 Marián Leško counter Bohn's suggestion due to the relatively well-functioning
20 judiciary in the early 1990s Slovakia, before the government leadership had a chance
21 to realise and take advantage of the most important agent of the state- the
22 constitutional court. Until then, the judiciary actually functioned as the bulwark of
23 democratic values in the early 90s (Lesko 2017). He suggests that it is not until later
24 in the 90s where the judiciary starts to become ineffective, and judges are not
25 selected on merit but on political affiliation; suggesting that the true origins of
26 corrupt practices must lie somewhere between succumbing to communist legacies
27 and exploiting weak judiciary powers of young democracies.

28 Bracking (2007) suggests that corrupt legacies have everything to do with the wealth
29 of the country, and therefore levels of poverty are key (Bracking 2007). Bracking
30 claims that it is the continuous misappropriation of aid for poor countries which is
31 key and poverty is inseparably tied to corruption, as it will always inspire more donor

1 help and thus end up in a vicious circle of financial aid delivery and its
2 misappropriation. Bohn (2013) concurs with poverty and low GDP positively
3 correlating with corruption; especially considering over-complicated systemic
4 regulations as seemingly the highest predictor for creating what Bohn labels a
5 ‘rational-choice corruptor’ (i.e. someone who partakes in corruption because the
6 circumstances dictate it to be a rational choice, in order to receive what they should
7 normally be entitled to by a functioning system) (Bohn 2013). Zakaria (2012)
8 presents another dimension, for example, when she quite openly dismisses
9 communist legacies as being key for issues such as inactive civil society. Instead, she
10 suggests that communist legacies have not caused corruption, but that corruption
11 has emerged instead of communist legacies to fill the void in society that would
12 cause detrimental effects that the politicians could capitalise upon to seize and
13 maintain power (Zakaria 2012). It is necessary to point out here that the factors
14 mentioned by Bohn, Zakaria, and Bracking are not to be dismissed as they are
15 relevant to post-communist societies and societies of other young democracies,
16 where communist legacies often do not apply to the extent that they do in Central
17 and Eastern Europe.

18 While it is reductionist to imply that corruption could not exist without communist
19 legacies, as it is present and detectable in several mature democracies, there is
20 evidence that post-communist transitional societies face their own specific set of
21 challenges tied to their transition from centralised systems of governing that
22 influence the shape corruption has taken in these countries.

23 These challenges also include sustainability of other public sectors, such as
24 education. The BTI report of 2018 has shown that there is insufficient
25 implementation of progressive teaching and learning methods as well as total
26 spending on the education sector across all four Visegrad countries, with Slovakia
27 having the lowest spending in this regard (BTI, 2018). With regards to spending and
28 monetary issues relating to development in Central and East European countries,
29 Batory (2012) states that while corruption control has been high on the agenda of
30 all CEE countries, she targets large-scale privatization of state assets as a ‘hotbed
31 for corruption in most CEE countries’ (Batory, 2012:66). She further describes

1 frequent media reports of EU funds disappearance in these countries, politicians
2 resigning (or refusing to) based on corruption scandals in Poland and Hungary and
3 bribes extorted by the Czech police frequently (Batory 2012). Following on from the
4 economic argument connected with corruption in CEE, Batory invokes Kornai's term
5 'economics of shortage' (1980) as a common factor shared by CEE transitional
6 economies as a remnant of communist legacies, which is potentially the main reason
7 behind the rise of patronage, cronyism, nepotism, and an unhealthy 'symbiotic
8 relationship' between politics and business (Batory, 2012:68). It is, however, worth
9 noting that Batory's investigation relates primarily to the case study of Hungary,
10 which she chooses as a suitable case study to represent its neighbouring countries
11 and claims the theoretical approach can apply to all Visegrad 4 countries.
12 Nevertheless, hers is a compelling argument within scholarship, justifying the idea
13 that there is a more present communist legacy in the formation of corruption in the
14 CEE than elsewhere from an economic perspective. Dimitrova-Grajzl (2010) supports
15 this view and expands it to another specific feature of the CEE, which lends itself
16 well to the communist legacy argument- that of weakness of institutions and the
17 state which is in a unique position after communism (Dimitrova-Grajzl and Simon
18 2010). Howard (2002) also speaks of a 'peculiar apathy' in the region of citizens
19 toward 'joining civic associations' that would have the potential for curbing
20 corruption and notes that this is specific for the region precisely due to the
21 'communist legacy of distrust of organisations' (Howard 2002). Fazekas and King
22 (2018) speak of the typical 'sliding on measures of democracy and openness and
23 integrity' within the CEE region, again finding the cause to be specific to the
24 regression into communist legacies (Fazekas and King 2018).

25 Batory (2012) makes another interesting connection between the nature of
26 corruption in CEE countries and Slovakia specifically, which is the endemic problem
27 of 'gratitude payments' in health care- according to her, this is a prevalent issue in
28 the Hungarian health care as well (Batory, 2012:73). The research of the thesis,
29 therefore, is clearly relevant for the CEE region as well as for Slovakia specifically.
30 However, Batory calls for more 'comparative empirical evidence' to compare her
31 conclusions and this research responds to that need. Fazekas and King (2018) also
32 warn against any research into case studies within CEE region being able to apply to

1 the whole context and thus call for individual studies to be conducted, such as this
2 one into Slovakia's health care corruption.

3 Slovakia has had its own journey in this context and this country-specific problematic
4 will be addressed in a later section of the thesis.

5

1 **1.9 Measuring corruption**

2

3 The issues related to measuring corruption have become notorious over the years,
4 with a lot of criticism aimed at international perception-based indices such as TI's
5 Corruption Perception Index (CPI) or the World Banks' Index (WBCCI) (Miller 2001,
6 Kenny 2006, Knack 2006, Weber Abramo 2007). The perception-based indices such
7 as these fall within what the UN Office for Drugs and Crime, along with Education
8 for Justice, label as 'indirect' measurements of corruption. The main criticism is
9 that with the absence of any universal agreed-upon definition of corruption that
10 would encompass all kinds of corruption (as discussed in the previous section of the
11 review), the perception-based indices fail to account for any other than very select
12 kinds of corruption, such as bribery (Ko and Samajdar 2010). Ko and Samajdar
13 further point out that the CPI specifically is an index focused on measuring bribery
14 in particular, and to this end the CPI uses sources designed for a general or overall
15 assessment of 'country risk, competitiveness and governance' (Ko and Samajdar
16 2010). Weber and Abramo (2007) also emphasise the same bias towards economic
17 and financial corruption measurement, which leaves other forms of corruption such
18 as health care, the judiciary, education, and public services unaccounted for in the
19 perception indices (Weber Abramo 2007). Ivanov (2013) also questions the validity
20 of the CPI, 'given the clandestine nature of corruption' (Ivanov, 2013:33) and the
21 fact that the CPI 'reflects the prejudices of outsiders who misunderstand local
22 customs' (Ivanov, 2013:33). While some would argue that these indices can then be
23 applied to both generic and specific corruption studies, the critics point out the
24 obvious flaw in this logic- the perception of corruption is rarely the same as the
25 actual extent of corruption (Montinola & Jackman, 2002; Seligson, 2002 in Ko and
26 Samajdar, 2010). Olken (2009) emphasises the lack of accuracy of corruption
27 perceptions and the lack of transparency in which these are surveyed in the first
28 place (Olken 2009). Therefore, we inevitably face issues of validity, reliability and
29 definition problems that are dependent on political, cultural and historical contexts
30 of the respective corrupt environments. Knack (2006) points out that household
31 surveys such as the World Values Survey or the International Crime Victimization

1 Survey designed to counter the issues associated with perception indices are also
2 less than perfect, as they are of limited use and made public ‘only with a time delay
3 and suffer from comparability problems’ (Knack 2006). Ledeneva (2009) points out
4 that in addition to the aforementioned issues with indices such as the CPI, the data
5 of this composite index, made up of 17 surveys from 13 independent institutions, is
6 collected as opinions of businesspeople and country analysts (Ledeneva 2009). There
7 is an intrinsic bias to expert assessments, which should be reduced by combining the
8 opinions of experts and those directly experiencing corruption (Ledeneva 2009).
9 Ledeneva also points out that such a combination in approaches to data collection
10 can reduce the margin of error that exists for them. Ko and Samajdar concur that
11 perhaps the greatest shortcoming facing the indices, and the CPI specifically, is the
12 lack of consideration for the perceptions of lay people as opposed to analysts,
13 skewing the image of the country’s corruption levels in the eyes of the global fora
14 (Ko and Samajdar 2010).

15 Kubbe (2013) also supports the established view of CPI not being a suitable enough
16 measure of corruption, emphasising that the index ‘measures the perception of
17 corruption, not the actual level of corrupt activity and therefore the index includes
18 a highly subjective evaluation’ (Kubbe 2013). Even the limited reach of CPI into the
19 reflection of business and economic corrupt practices cannot take into account the
20 increasingly popular practice of engaging in corruption abroad, a practice preferred
21 by many businesses (Kubbe 2013). Instead, Kubbe suggests that a new approach
22 should be honed for the accurate measurement of corruption: a ‘multi-level
23 approach to analysing the predictors and outcomes of corruption and taking more
24 account of the individual level’ of data collection (Kubbe 2013). Other indices used
25 to measure corruption with different levels of focus and higher levels of accuracy
26 include, for example the Global Corruption Barometer, the Gothenberg Quality of
27 Government Institute reports, Index of Public Integrity, or the Bertelmann Stiftung’s
28 Sustainable Government Indicators which I refer to in later parts of the thesis. The
29 main strengths of these indices include their moving away from perception-based
30 measurements and moving towards more experience-based measurements. This is
31 why these measurements are classed by the UN as ‘direct’ measurements. Having
32 addressed their strengths, there are also weaknesses associated with these

1 measurements. For example, the Global Corruption Barometer is criticised for the
2 prevalence of bribery-based questions in their surveys, pointing towards the existing
3 financial bias in corruption measurement. The Index of Public Integrity, on the other
4 hand is perceived to capture more of a risk assessment than measurement of actual
5 levels of corruption (www.unodc.org). All of these measurements, while more
6 grounded in experience than the CPI or the World Bank rating, also lack the specific
7 qualitative data of individual, country-level approach.

8 It is worth mentioning that the call for country-level hard data on corruption analysis
9 is also supported and called for by other scholars (Bohn 2013) and the thesis aims to
10 aid in filling this specific gap in literature and corruption research demand. Goel et
11 al (2012) conducted an interesting study trying to determine the deterrent effect of
12 corruption awareness on corrupt acts through an internet survey and conclude there
13 is a considerable effect the awareness of corruption as presented by media has on
14 deterrence within corrupt acts (Goel 2012). The thesis takes this investigation one
15 step further into a focus on individual experience, as opposed to media presentation
16 thereof, and utilises qualitative methods to get a more rigorous set of results, as
17 opposed to internet surveys.

18 Gallina's study on the Czech Republic and Slovakia's anti-corruption measures from
19 the 90s to 2013 encompasses several country-specific issues of both corruption
20 definition and measurement. She provides a comprehensive overview of all Slovak
21 governmental anti-corruption measures taken and evaluates their respective
22 success. In Slovakia's case, these are most notably the dark years of Vladimir Meciar,
23 the 'wild privatization of the 1990s that culminated in high-scale scandals with a
24 huge financial loss for the Slovak state', Meciar's misappropriation of the
25 constitution, the Dzurinda government reforms, along with the creation of Special
26 courts designated for corruption cases (Gallina 2013). Gallina emphasises the
27 politicisation of anti-corruption measures and agencies in the country and
28 'dependent police presidents as well as state prosecutors and judges who close their
29 eyes at suspicious tenders' (Gallina, 2013:209) as some of the main problems facing
30 corruption measures today. She also underlines the lack of research conducted on
31 the subject with Slovak-specific focus, most notably the seminal work of Sicakova-

1 Beblava in 2011. It is this lack of country-specific data and the huge amount of
2 uncovered ground in terms of corrupt practices in Slovakia that, according to
3 Gallina, calls for Slovak-specific research, but also renders corruption ratings and
4 indices like the CPI immaterial in countries like Slovakia. Her language suggests that
5 whatever research the TI has conducted is not enough for this region, as
6 ‘undiscovered cases remain beyond corruption ratings such as Transparency
7 International’ and ‘further in-depth investigation is necessary’ to follow the long-
8 term development of political and other kinds of corruption (Gallina 2013). The
9 thesis responds to this need for a structured approach to corruption-specific data
10 collection on Slovakia and conducts a thorough in-depth investigation of petty and
11 grand corruption practices as a result.

12 In order to provide greater validity for the field work undertaken for this thesis, the
13 work takes the above recommendations and criticisms of perception-based studies
14 on board and approaches the study of corruption through a multi-level qualitative
15 means of interviews, combining in-depth interviews with ‘lay people’, with elite
16 interviews with experts in the field of health care, in order to reduce the margin of
17 error, as suggested by Ledeneva and recommended by Kubbe.

18

19 **1.10 Definition of grand and petty corruption**

20

21 This work’s definition of both petty and grand corruption is a response to Gallina’s
22 and Bracking’s call for more ‘composite explanations collecting a lot of factors
23 together’ (Bracking, 2007:7) and also a ‘case-by-case approach...based on a
24 combination of categories of informality’ (Gallina, 2013: 144). Bracking (2007)
25 differentiates between several kinds of corruption: Petty, administrative corruption,
26 graft, influencing, bureaucratic, political, patronage and nepotism, high-level
27 corruption and state capture, all comprehensively described in the table below and
28 also combining of several factors outlined in the literature review so far.

- 1 The definitions employed by Bracking (2007) as seen in the below Table 1.1, provide
 2 a comprehensive basis for summarising the different kinds of corruption discussed in

Table 1.1 Types of Corruption: Source: Bracking, S. 2007:5,6

Table 1.1: Different types of corruption

	Definition	Involves
Administrative corruption or bureaucratic corruption	Illicit payments required from users by civil servants in the (often distorted and arbitrary) implementation of existing regulations, policies and laws.	A wide constituency is usually involved, experienced by citizens as harassment in their efforts to obtain even small administrative goods. Companies typically seek tax advantages, licences or influence on the formation of rules and law.
Petty corruption	Refers to these small acts, or rent-taking actions, by civil servants. Bribery, influencing, and gift giving are sometimes seen as different forms of petty corruption.	Public administrators, particularly those with direct encounters with members of the public, who accept bribes for expediting documents or, in the case of the police, not charging a suspect.
Graft	Involves the utilisation of public resources to serve individual or private interests.	Use of resources, time or facilities by a staff member (without a transaction with an external person). Often used interchangeably with corruption.
Influencing	Forcing a decision in one's favour.	Political lobbying is a form of influencing and is legitimate, but secretive contacts or suspicion of favouritism or influence that are suspected to be disproportionate to public interest may be considered as corrupt.
Bureaucratic corruption		'[W]here individuals pay money . . . to get in or to get on . . . (and) a moneyless form of corruption, where officials insert friends, relatives, political supporters and so on into public jobs which, without the official's influence, they would not obtain . . . moneyless corruption, called "patronage" here, is important and insidious.' (U4, 2005)

(Continued)

Table 1.1: (Continued)

	Definition	Involves
Political corruption	Often conflated with grand or high-level corruption: the misuse of entrusted power by political leaders. More specific meaning is corruption within the political or electoral process.	The use of resources, machinery, personnel, and authority to perpetuate one's position, such as during electoral campaigns, corruption in political finance such as vote buying, the use of illicit funds, the sale of appointments and abuse of state resources (TI, 2004)
Political patronage (clientelism) and nepotism	Government resources are directed to patrons, clients, family or ethnic clan of office holders.	'[I]n many countries the "patron" can present himself or herself as a social altruist, discharging an obligation to political supporters, family members and others.' (U4, 2005)
High-level corruption	The misuse of high public office, public resources or public responsibility for private, personal or group, gain.	This term is often used interchangeably with grand corruption, or endemic corruption.
State capture	Private payments to public officials, and the 'capture' of their area of jurisdiction, in order to affect laws, rules, decrees, regulations or capture resources, for example, contracts.	Firms, who need to pay, and the public in general, whose interests are sidelined

- 3 the literature review so far. The definitions set out for the thesis below constitute
 4 a unique combination of approaches to corruption, with carefully distilled language,
 5 capable of addressing corruption as a holistic phenomenon and underlining the

1 similarities between grand and petty corruption, rather than differences. These are
2 of course anchored in the provision and the delivery of services for the public, and
3 are to be applied to the context of health care and the case study of Slovakia.

4 **Grand corruption**

5 *Abuse of power and/or distortion of policies or resources at an overseeing level*
6 *within public services, with the purpose of the few benefiting at the expense of*
7 *the many.*

8 *Example: Inflated prices for procurement of hospital equipment or outsourcing*
9 *hospital services such as a CT scan or an MRI scan by insurance companies to private*
10 *facilities for a much greater price than the market standard.*

11 **Petty corruption**

12 *'Everyday' customary payment of bribes, or other material and immaterial*
13 *means of motivating officials to amend their behaviour, in order to facilitate*
14 *higher quality or faster reception of service provision.*

15 *Example: Paying a bribe to a nurse/doctor to skip waiting times for check-ups or*
16 *minor procedures; offering a gift to the health professional for preferential*
17 *treatment in the respective hospital ward.*

18 My definition of petty corruption, based on the discussion outlined in this literature
19 review combines the economic side of petty corruption defended by Rose-Ackerman,
20 while also taking into consideration notions of behaviour, immaterial motivators,
21 and the desired benefit to be gained by corruption. The chosen language of 'amend
22 behaviour' and 'facilitate' encompasses elements of what Bracking in Table 1.1
23 describes under 'Administrative corruption', 'Influencing', 'Graft' and also
24 'Bureaucratic corruption'. Within this definition the strategies utilised to access this
25 corrupt behaviour are explored, as well as traditions altering behaviour, and trust
26 as an inseparable ethical dimension of corruption.

1 For grand corruption, rather than playing exclusively on the political notions, the
2 language of my definition includes both ‘power’ and ‘distortion of centralised
3 policies or resources’. In this way it includes connotations of what Bracking describes
4 under ‘High-level corruption’ as ‘misuse’ of both power and resources and also the
5 amending of ‘rules, decrees or regulations’ under her heading ‘State capture’ (see
6 Table 1.1). My wording is more suitable for the context of services such as health
7 care, as it implies a clear benefit of the resulting *status quo* and the word
8 ‘distortion’ is less loaded with implication, as opposed to Bracking’s ‘abuse’ of both
9 policy and resource. In that sense it is more suitable to enveloping administrative
10 and monetary side of corruption into one entity.

11 In effect, the definitions follow Larmour’s positioning of corruption as an antithesis
12 to the democratic norm (Larmour 2011). If, Larmour argues, the democratic norm is
13 ‘the inclusion of those affected by a decision in deliberations about it’, then
14 corruption ‘lies in the exclusion that is both duplicitous (hypocritical) and harmful
15 (to the interests of those excluded, and the legitimacy of the system more
16 generally)’ (Larmour, 2011:52). It is the objective of the thesis to investigate the
17 strategies utilised to carry out such duplicitous and harmful exclusion of the many,
18 which by proxy erodes the system as a whole; more specifically, health care in
19 Slovakia. Based on the distilled definitions of grand and petty corruption, these two
20 levels will be investigated individually as to their sociological motivators and
21 intricacies, but also in conjunction with each other to show similarities in
22 approaching corrupt practices within their remit; and finally, the potential for one
23 to justify/influence the other.

24

1 **1.11 Conclusions**

2

3 The literature review has presented several dimensions of the corruption
4 phenomenon. It has laid out the difficulty in defining corruption comprehensively
5 enough to encompass all of its separate aspects, as well as its complex nature which
6 stems from its culturally, historically and politically-bound roots. No one case of
7 corruption is the same as another, nor is the perception of corruption the same from
8 one country to another. The review has emphasised the need to treat corruption
9 with rigour and conduct country-specific research and the essential need not to
10 confuse perception of corruption with real-life experience of corruption. The review
11 has presented the popular scholarly tendency to classify corruption in sets of binary
12 terms, most importantly the distinction between petty and grand corruption levels,
13 although these also receive multifaceted interpretations. It has also emphasised the
14 need to eradicate this artificial distinction and instead search for a theoretical
15 similarity in corrupt activities, mechanisms and strategies utilised in grand and petty
16 corruption alike. A more holistic approach to the phenomenon, while maintaining
17 the need for appreciation of country-specific aspects of corruption seems to be
18 necessary.

19 This section of the review has shown the importance of combining several fields of
20 study, such as economics, sociology and anthropology in order to encompass all
21 facets of corruption. Corruption was presented as both a subsection and a dimension
22 of these fields and the discussion of corruption within these frameworks has
23 informed several research questions of the thesis. The review highlighted the role
24 of trust, ethics, and informality when discussing corruption and this discussion has
25 then informed the definitions for grand and petty corruption for the purposes of the
26 thesis. These include ideas discussed in the individual understandings of corruption,
27 i.e., monetary as well as immaterial motivation for corruption; trust and rule-
28 manoeuvring in order to tap into informal networks of friends or acquaintances; and
29 finally, the notions of resource manipulation and power wielding.

1 The review has further tied the understanding of corruption together with the
2 discussion on the origins of corruption as perceived today. Several scholars have
3 made persuasive cases for corruption being either predominantly a legacy of
4 communism or at least communism contributing strongly to the emergence of
5 corruption in transitional societies. There seems to be strong evidence to support
6 the statement that post-communist societies (more specifically for us, those of
7 Central and Eastern Europe) have greater experience with informality due to the
8 forced, centralised system of socialist rule and this experience has survived to adapt
9 to capitalist structures. While western societies also present themselves with
10 corruption, scholars argue that the scale of corruption in post-communist societies
11 is significantly higher, more endemic, and perceived as a coping mechanism of the
12 development of young democracies. Other scholars, however, present opposing
13 views, showing factors such as poverty, political agendas, or the process of
14 transitioning from centralised to market economies as much more important factors
15 in corruption spreading. The answer undoubtedly lies somewhere in the middle of a
16 Venn diagram of all factors contributing to corrupt practices and it is important not
17 to discount any of the theories, rather interpret them as a part of a complex whole.

18 The literature is clear on the difficulties that the measurement of a complex
19 phenomenon such as corruption presents. The established perception indices appear
20 to be insufficient when addressing corruption in an experience-based, qualitative
21 manner. They also often work with a skewed sample of respondents, focusing on
22 experts and pundits, rather than citizens. The literature review views this as a
23 significant gap in the literature on corruption, which it aims to fill with a rigorous
24 qualitative investigation of real-life corruption observations. The aim of the
25 perception indices commissioned by supranational and transnational bodies is often
26 to target a specific sector of investment potential in the respondent countries, which
27 then causes issues with survey questions being focused on economy, finances, or
28 banking possibilities. An effective measurement of corruption must therefore be
29 country-specific, sector-specific, and comprised of a combination of quantitative
30 and qualitative measurement tools, in order to provide as objective and as
31 comprehensive a reflection of corruption practices as possible.

1 Chapter 2: Literature Review Part 2

3 2.1 Corruption in Central European states

5 *2.1.1 Market transition in the CEE*

6 While elements of communist legacies have been introduced in Part 1 of the review
7 as possible explanations of corrupt practices today, there is a wealth of information
8 on the topic available from different vantage points. These mostly begin at the point
9 of transition from centralised economy to market economy and all the social and
10 policy changes this brings along in the respective countries (Ellman 2005, Kornai
11 2006, Cox 2013). Cox (2013) argues that the social inequalities that manifest
12 themselves in the CEE countries in the form of rampant corruption today have origins
13 in the state-managed system already. He argues that sources of inequality regarding
14 income policies and also privileged access to certain goods and services, based on
15 the individual's positioning within the system, were always present but are
16 augmented by the transitional policies (Cox 2013). Cox further argues that all CEE
17 states experienced a dilemma of the government to impose transitional reforms and
18 policies that would inevitably face a lot of unpopular feedback, due to pressures for
19 'reduction in employment and cuts in expenditure on social services, but on the
20 other hand too afraid to cut too deeply from a fear of losing electoral support' (Cox,
21 2013:243).

22 These pressures and subsequent misallocation of resources and finances to sectors
23 in an inefficient manner, paired with the corrupt practices employed in the
24 privatisation and lustration processes (Kornai 2006), resulted in demographic
25 changes and inequality rise in the society. Grochová and Otáhal (2011) concur with
26 this assessment and point out that the privatisation processes led to the 'legalization
27 of the ex-communist private property claims', reinforcing the theory of communist

1 legacies as breeding ground for corruption. Ellman (2005) notes significant increase
2 in mortality rates due to drop in social security and medical care funding as a result
3 (Ellman 2005) and Cox (2013) notes the rise of poverty across the region⁶, as well as
4 unemployment (Cox 2013). The scholars mostly agree that it is this particular
5 economic climate which prompted the 'increase in corruption' due to vast
6 'opportunities for enrichment and the widespread failure to introduce and enforce
7 appropriate legal and cultural measures' (Ellman, 2005:601). Cox notes that the
8 strain on economy which gave rise to kleptocracy is best demonstrated by the ratio
9 of the working to the pensioner, which by the late 1990s has risen to two pensioners
10 for every three workers in most CEE countries and to a 'ratio of around one to one,
11 or worse, in Ukraine and Albania' (Cox, 2013:245). Cox concurs with Ellman's
12 conclusion that not only has crime and widespread criminalisation of society
13 (Ellman, 2005:602) come as a part of the economic transition, but also that the
14 deepening of the income gap, whereby opportunities were created for a very 'small
15 number of people to become very wealthy' (Cox, 2013:252) caused the creation of
16 a 'grey economy'. By this Cox means an economy that has been labelled as 'informal'
17 or 'shadow' in Part 1 of this review; completely dependent on unregistered casual
18 work or growing own food to complement the official insufficient income of the
19 populace (Cox 2013). Koudelková et al (2015) also refer to the 'grey economy' as an
20 umbrella term, describing corruption from an alternative perspective as a 'tax on
21 the profits of the productive sector...increasing efficiency and helping economic
22 growth' (2015:28). This theory comes back to the 'grease in wheels' argument,
23 whereby corruption is in fact beneficial to economic growth and reinforces the
24 impetus for CEE societies to safeguard communist legacies which secure this
25 economic continuity. Koudelková et al (2015) reinforce this claim by stating that
26 eastern countries like 'Bulgaria, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania and the Czech Republic
27 have a higher shadow economy than 'old' countries like Germany, Austria, Belgium
28 and Italy (2015:32). More worryingly, Cox (2013) makes a generalisation for all the

⁶ Ellman puts the statistic of the share of the poor in the total population of former Eastern Europe and former Soviet Union in the 1990s as rising from 3% to 25%, or in real numbers from 7 to 89 million (Ellman, 2005:600).

1 CEE countries which works in favour of the communist legacies argument, whereby
2 the seeds of modern corruption in the CEE region can be found in the conversion of
3 political capital into economic capital, thus becoming the new economic elite and
4 thus the ruling class of the new capitalist system. Ellman (2005) believes that for
5 this region the somewhat 'textbook economics' that has been employed has failed
6 to take into account specific traditions within the region and failed to tailor
7 transitional policies to the respective countries. As much as transitional economy in
8 a vacuum was imagined to be a straight-forward and linear transformation of one
9 state of economy to another (Kornai 2006), within this region there are 'important
10 differences between countries and multiple outcomes possible' that should have
11 been taken into account in the first place, in order to avoid detrimental effects such
12 as corruption (Ellman, 2005:612). I, naturally, do not expect the participants to have
13 this level of expert insight, but the thesis is interested in what their real-life
14 experiences are, especially in the 50+ age bracket, as these participants would have
15 experienced and remembered both regimes.

16 With regards to economic transition, Kornai (2006) makes a valid observation about
17 the intertwined mutual dependency of democracy and good governance and
18 capitalism. Kornai (2006) describes the efforts of the CEE countries, and especially
19 the V4 countries, having worked under the pressure of the EU conditionality on their
20 rushed economic reforms, along with the inherent loss of leverage post accession to
21 push for the enforcement of the reforms. The issues of inequality and grey economy
22 that can and have progressed in the shape of corruption (Cox, 2013; Ellman, 2005),
23 are, according to Kornai, issues that are inherent to capitalism, which is necessary
24 for the fostering of corruption. In other words, in order to progress with democracy,
25 a country needs to be able to cope with the negative elements of capitalism, such
26 as 'economic winners and losers, unemployment, and also excessive advertising'
27 (Kornai, 2006:238). For these and other factors related to capitalism, Kornai (2006)
28 believes that while corruption used to be in the background much more in the
29 previous regime, in this new economic era it has come to the forefront and has
30 become 'ubiquitous' in the CEE countries, permeating all strata of society. This
31 includes the 'economic and cultural sphere, private transactions, low and highest
32 levels of the governmental and social hierarchy' and it is becoming almost impossible

1 for these countries to carry out any social or economic transaction without a ‘shady’
2 practice or a ‘phony’ scheme of some sort (Kornai, 2006:232).

3 **2.1.2 Development of corruption in the CEE and V4 region**

4 Grochová and Otáhal (2011) develop the argument of communist legacies being valid
5 as the reasoning behind the growth of corruption in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.
6 They point out that it was the slow rate of privatization and retaining control over
7 legislature and law enforcement in the process that ultimately put Slovakia’s
8 corruption rate at a much higher level than that of the Czech Republic. They note
9 that informal institutions have in fact not changed face much in the period of the
10 countries’ independence and while the Czech Republic started off with a better
11 outlook on curbing corruption, the development of corruption became the ‘same
12 level throughout the period from 1998-2006) (2011:133). One of the notorious
13 arguments of supranational bodies such as the EU having a strong impact on curbing
14 corruption is dismissed by the authors as having only a ‘slight and temporary impact
15 on corruption perceptions in the short run’ (2011:134).

16 With regards to the countries’ own definition of corruption for their legislative
17 purposes, the definitional debate appears to be particularly fruitful. The countries
18 put the theoretical typologies and classification of corruption to practical use and
19 empirically prove that the definition for corruption is not only impossible to be
20 reduced to the popular TI version, but also show the need for regional specifications.
21 Grochová and Otáhal (2011) note that the ‘malfeasance connected with corruption
22 is defined by the Czech and the Slovak law as the misuse of power by state officials,
23 disturbing the objectives of the governmental officials through malpractice,
24 receiving bribes, bribery and indirect bribery’ (2011:124). Koudelková et al (2015)
25 are even more specific than that, citing the Czech Interior Ministry which offers a
26 more detailed definition: ‘corruption can be characterised as a relationship between
27 two subjects, both individuals and institutions, in which one party offers, or serves,
28 the other party some form of remuneration for providing or committing to provide
29 an unjustified favour. The providing party then expects some form of tangible or
30 intangible favour for the favour it provided’ (2015:26). It is therefore obvious that a

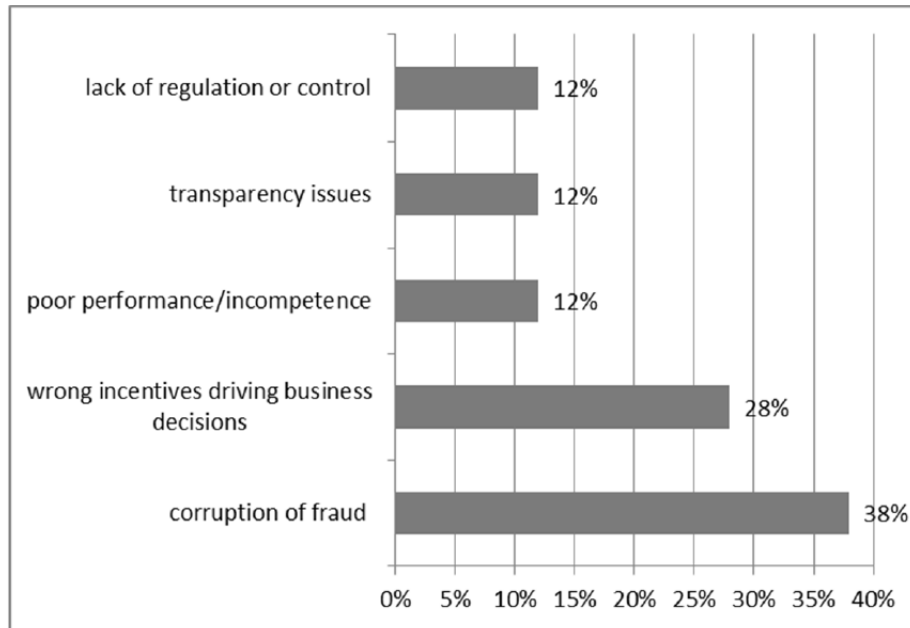
1 more nuanced approach to corruption is not only necessary but has also already
 2 begun to emerge in these countries on an official level, independently of watchdogs
 3 or overseeing supranational bodies. Koudelkova et al (2015) make a further
 4 observation that, while this may be the case, most of academic research into
 5 corruption focuses on state-level corruption and ‘very few’ researchers study
 6 corruption at the firm level or any other micro level. This is a direct call for further
 7 research into the topic on a micro level in the region and the thesis addresses this
 8 literature gap of micro research through its case study of one public sector.

No	year 1998	year 2001	year 2002	year 2003	year 2006	year 2009
1	offices	offices	offices	offices	offices	politician parts
2	judiciary	judiciary	health service	health service	police	offices
3	health service	police	police	police	government	ministry
4	police	health service	judiciary	judiciary	politician parts	government
5	service	ministry	customs	customs	ministry	judiciary
6	education	customs	ministry	ministry	business community	business community
7	hotel industry	banking	education	education	judiciary	police
8	army	army	banking	banking	health service	health service
9		education	army	army	customs	army
10					education	education
11					army	customs
12					non-profit sector	non-profit sector
13					banking	banking

9
 10 **Table 2.1 Areas with the largest share of corruption in the Czech Republic, Source: GfK 2010,**
 11 **in Koudelková et al, 2015:33**

12 In the post-communist Czech Republic, according to Koudelková et al (2015),
 13 corruption is still a ‘deeply rooted problem’ (2015:32). This can be seen in Tables
 14 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 (overleaf) which showcase the level of distrust caused by corruption
 15 in the country and also provide a helpful breakdown of the most affected sectors by
 16 corruption; data that are difficult to find in a similar format on Poland and Hungary.
 17 However, as a similar-sized economy with a very similar transition journey to that
 18 of Slovakia, the data on the Czech Republic provides by far the most valid
 19 comparison in sectoral corruption. From Table 2.1 it is obvious that the trends are
 20 similar to those of Slovakia (described in further sections of this review), including
 21 corruption in the judiciary, the police, education, customs, and health service.
 22 Grodeland et al. (1998) concur with this in their study into corruption in Slovakia,
 23 the Czech Republic, Ukraine and Bulgaria, indicating that the scope for corruption

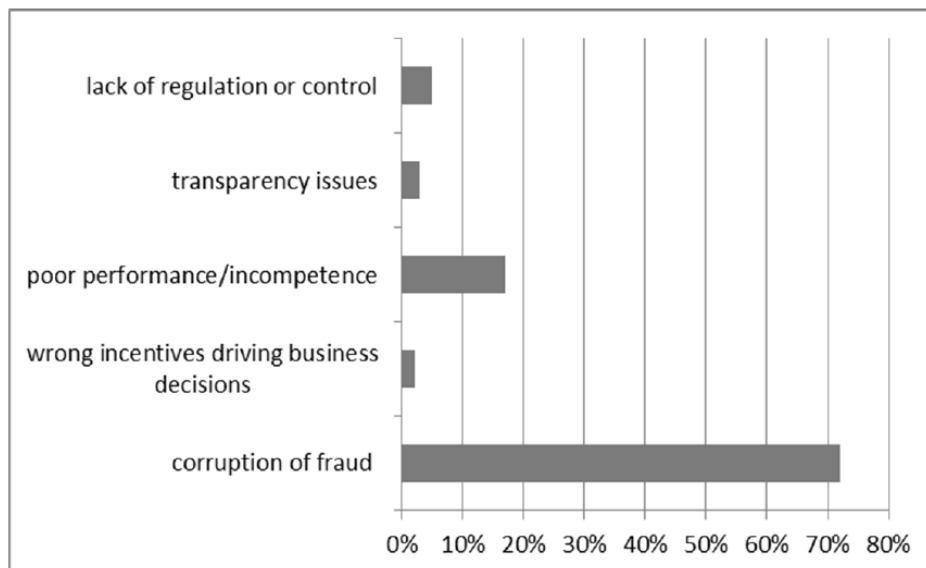
1 is most prevalent within the health sector, social sector, educations, housing, law
2 enforcement and local administration. It would appear that the scope for corrupt
3 practices is therefore fairly similar across the CEE region. However, there is a
4 marked increase in corruption share in the governmental and political sectors as
5 well as the judiciary and a drop in corruption share in the health service, indicating
6 an interesting and significant level of heterogeneity of sectoral corruption in the
7 region of CEE and the V4 more specifically. Grodeland et al. (1998) conclude that
8 corruption is on the whole more widespread in Ukraine and Bulgaria than in the
9 Czech Republic and Slovakia for example. Most importantly for the thesis however,
10 Naxera (2015) and Karklins (2005) indicate that in post-communist Central and
11 Eastern Europe, there is not only a high level of small-scale corruption, but also that
12 in some cases the public's belief that the elite are corrupt is sometimes used to
13 justify their own involvement in small-scale corrupt transactions (Karklins 2005,
14 Naxera 2015). This is essentially at the core of the interest of the thesis, which takes
15 this finding a step further, looking for an inverse link between the elite's belief that
16 small-scale corruption justifies their involvement in grand-scale transactions.
17 Moreover, however, the thesis follows through with this notion to explore how
18 exactly this is done in practical terms for corruption to be carried out by both the
19 public and the elites on their respective levels.



1

2 **Table 2.2 Corruption/fraud as a reason for distrust in business and government in the Czech**
 3 **Republic, Source: Edelman 2013, in Koudelkova et al., 2015:35 ('corruption of fraud' sic)**

4



5

6 **Table 2.3 Corruption/fraud as a reason for distrust in government in the Czech Republic,**
 7 **Source: Edelman 2013, in Koudelkova et al., 2015:35 ('corruption of fraud' sic)**

8 While all the countries share the similarities of corrupt practices in individual
 9 sectors, different sectors are more affected respectively, which once again
 10 underlines the argument for more rigorous micro-level sectoral research into
 11 corruption in these countries. This phenomenon is clearly culturally and socially
 12 specific to the given country and society affected- it is not enough to generalise

1 based on quantitative outputs produced and commissioned to give an overarching
2 picture of corruption in the region; the problematic is in fact much more complex.

3 Having said this much, however, there are scholars who place the V4 countries into
4 an acceptable and successful bracket, quoting Bulgaria as a comparative study which
5 exhibits four times higher individual corruption than the average in the Czech
6 Republic, and public procurement corruption 1.77 times higher than the Czech
7 Republic (Placek et al, 2018:12). Plaček et al (2018) quote that there is a culture of
8 'scarcity' dominated by unsatisfied demand for goods and services and corrupt
9 practices provide the quickest route to the supply of such services- this culture
10 according to them is greater in countries beyond the V4 but also present in the region
11 itself (Plaček, Puček et al. 2018). Lee and Guven (2013) support this statement by
12 singling out the Ukraine as the country with the highest probabilities for being asked
13 for a bribe (29 % for females and 38% for males) and also the highest probability for
14 offering a bribe (14% for females and 16% for males) (2013:290). The authors believe
15 that this trend which manifests itself most in the Ukraine is also present in the
16 Visegrad Group (V4) countries since all post-communist countries struggle with the
17 discrepancy between internal values against external pressures (Lee and Guven
18 2013).

19 Puček (2014) identifies the most frequented areas of corruption emergence in the
20 Czech Republic, which are congruent with those in the rest of the V4 with varying
21 levels of corruption prevalence across the four countries- health care, traffic
22 violations, preference given to child for nursery acceptance, driver's licence tests
23 and driving schools, preferential processing of mortgage, higher education grades
24 (Puček 2014). All of Puček's data comes from official state sources, so there are
25 issues of reliability when taking his report at face value. However, he makes an
26 interesting observation, whereby Germany or Austria have comparable state costs
27 per employee to those of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, related to social security
28 and pension payments, but much higher quality of institutions and better results in
29 corruption perception studies (Puček 2014). This raises questions as to the true
30 motivators behind corruption involvement, as systemic care for employee is similar
31 in terms of expense pro rata in the respective countries, so the scarcity argument is

1 clearly not the entire picture for the countries with high corruption levels. Puček's
2 recommendations are in line with this discovery, suggesting that the best way to
3 tackle corruption on a systemic level in the region is firstly to increase oversight
4 measures⁷, secondly to penalise any sign of corruption radically, and in third place
5 to increase salaries for state employees (Puček 2014). This is in direct contradiction
6 with an earlier work conducted by Theobald (1990) in which he implies it is precisely
7 job security and stability that are the most effective counters to corrupt activity of
8 officials (1990:86): 'insecurity and instability are hardly conducive to high levels of
9 morale and efficiency, to the development of a strong ethic of service... Under such
10 circumstances it is inevitable that those who are able to resort to informal influence
11 get what they want. Strings are pulled where personal contacts exist, bribes placed
12 where they do not' (Theobald 1990). Naxera (2015) concurs with Puček's findings
13 however, and interestingly points out that in the Czech Republic the awareness of
14 corruption has been spurred on by the media and television in a period of growth for
15 reports and articles on the topic, culminating in 2012; suggesting that a grown
16 economy still has not curbed corrupt activity despite greater job security and
17 economic stability across the board (Naxera 2015).

18 Wiercinski (2017) reviews the changes and corruption perception within the Polish
19 healthcare sector and identifies the primary care physicians as those most affected.
20 He specifically says that the true reason behind the rampant corruption is the
21 'distorted' reforms of the healthcare system from the transitional period, which
22 require primary care physicians to be subjected to a huge amount of bureaucratic
23 proceedings and thus become the 'gatekeepers' to the healthcare system as a
24 whole, as opposed to only physicians (Wierciński 2017). The respondent doctors
25 specifically referred to 'endless adaptations to new directives' and a smothering

⁷ Grodeland et al. (1998) had suggested however that oversight is not a deciding factor since there are always two sides to any official's behaviour, depending on the respondent's view; i.e. some think officials have gotten better with their work efficiency and lack of bribe-induction because of high levels of competition and unemployment in the labour market serving as natural oversight, and others think that officials are worse nowadays because of less formal oversight that used to be stronger in Communist times.

1 effect of new legislature, which has had the opposite effect to ridding them off of
2 the ‘outdated centralised healthcare’ (Wierciński, 2017:45). Wysmulek (2017)
3 conducts a similar interview and survey-based research into corruption in Polish
4 schools and concludes that based on a victimisation survey data, 7% of respondents
5 gave a bribe in the healthcare sector and 32% agree that corruption is prevalent in
6 the local healthcare system, which is a much higher figure than that declared for
7 corruption in local schools (Wysmulek 2017). Her research therefore indirectly shows
8 the salient need to address health care as a matter of urgency not only for the
9 chosen case study of Slovakia, but for the region alike. Wysmulek makes an
10 assumption that further touches upon the core reasoning behind the investigation of
11 the impact of grand corruption on petty and vice versa, when she suggests that ‘the
12 perception that grand corruption on a country occurs on a high level may in itself
13 create a “culture of distrust” towards some institutions, even without personal
14 experiences of petty corruption. This could constitute the justification and
15 acceptance of corrupt practices on “lower levels”’ (Wysmulek, 2017:42). The
16 literature gap between the mutually-impacting levels of grand and petty corruption
17 on one another is therefore not only obvious in her work, but openly highlighted,
18 and the thesis responds to this gap identified in a Polish context by addressing it in
19 the relevant sector in the same region. The potential for the results obtained in
20 Slovakia to be valid cross-border is strongly suggestive of the pressing relevance of
21 this project.

22 Leven’s (2005) research into corruption in the Polish medical sector further
23 buttresses the correct selection of sector for the investigation of corruption in this
24 region. She suggests that, in line with the idea of communist legacies, corruption in
25 the sector became prevalent because of wage (in)equality, whereby in the previous
26 regime, wages of factory workers often matched, or exceeded, those paid to doctors
27 and other health care providers (Leven 2005). She states that corruption in the
28 healthcare sector in Poland is a response to scarcity in a ‘mutually reinforcing
29 dynamic of health care scarcities, political expediency and societal expectation that
30 has outlived Polish socialism’ (2005:449). She confirms the methodological choice of
31 health care as a suitable case study for corruption investigation due to its ubiquitous
32 nature, since ‘little is so fundamental in a person’s life than good health and the

1 demand for it remains steady' (2005:449). While overly focusing on the monetary
2 side of corruption, Leven's investigation of the phenomenon in the Polish
3 environment is invaluable for this thesis as a whole. She identifies the impetus for
4 patients to pay bribes due to the never-ending and overlapping circle of insufficient
5 funding, lack of institutions overseeing medical conduct, and low sectoral wages.
6 This results in bribes being accepted and facilities still being overcrowded, long
7 delays being endured for several procedures, and sub-standard care being provided
8 to patients (2005:450). Leven addresses the idea of receiving expedited health care
9 and quicker referrals by the 'gatekeeper' physicians and broaches the idea of
10 'gratitude payments', all of which is addressed in a more organised and rigorous
11 fashion in this thesis.

12 Fric (1999) addresses the problematic from a Czech-centred perspective, which
13 emphasises the giving of bribes or 'presents' and 'kickbacks' without the bribed
14 party even having to request one; instead this is done 'out of habit' and is encoded
15 into society (Fric 1999). Leven's investigation does not provide the reader with any
16 recommendations as to curbing corruption short of 'meaningful sanctions' applied
17 to corrupt conduct (2005:454). These have since been worked into the legislation of
18 all the V4 countries but without proper enforcement, it would seem that the
19 regulations remain toothless and there is need for a more rigorous level of research
20 to be able to truly uproot corruption on a deeper, societal level. This view is
21 reinforced by Naxera (2015) who states that the necessity to combat corruption and
22 remove 'old corrupt elites' has appeared as a flagship issue in the programmes of
23 several newly-formed Czech political parties (e.g. Veci Verejne, ANO), but these
24 have not provided any specificity past non-binding declarations. Grodeland et al.
25 (1998) also invoke the idea of the 'old elites', or *nomenklatura*, as detrimental
26 because they are the virtually uncontrolled arbiters of the distribution and use of
27 state property' (1998:651).

28 With regards to reform evaluation in health care, Lawson et al (2012) conducted a
29 seminal study into the health care reforms in the Slovak and the Czech Republics in
30 the period 1989-2011. Their work focuses on the evaluation of access, quality and
31 costs and these are also at the heart of my investigation of corruption in health care.

1 They describe the reforms undertaken by several governments of the Czech and
 2 Slovak Republics in the time period and present in detail the pros and cons of each
 3 (see publication for further details). The most important trends they pick out are
 4 those of bringing the private health insurance companies into the picture, the need
 5 to produce healthcare systems ‘clearly different’ from the communist era model,
 6 and also the difficulties of marrying public interests with private interests of some
 7 ‘significant government supporters’ of the time, especially in light of the
 8 privatisation efforts of both governments in the 1990s (Lawson et al., 2012:23). As
 9 a result, health care administration became highly decentralised and created
 10 discrepancies in health care delivery- for example, in the case of Slovakia, out of
 11 172 hospitals in 2009, 67 were state owned, 22 were run by local governments and
 12 83 were privately owned and run on either profit or not-for-profit lines (Lawson et
 13 al., 2012:24). From the following evidence (see Table 2.4, 2.5), which shows the
 14 progression of healthcare expenditure from early 2000s up until 2018, it is obvious
 15 that Slovakia stayed within the general trends of the V4 countries in terms of its
 16 health care expenditures and resources per capita.

**Table 2.4 Resources for health care in Central Europe (2008), Source: OECD, 2010, in
 Lawson et al., 2012:26**

	Czech Republic	Slovakia	Hungary	Poland	EU
Doctors (1)	3.6	3.0	3.1	2.2	3.3
Nurses (2)	9.7	6.3	8.7	5.2	9.8
Hospital beds (3)	7.3	6.6	7.0	6.6	5.7
Average hospital stay (4)	7.5	7.7	5.9	5.6	7.2
Per capita GDP (5)	21.5	19.0	16.9	14.8	25.4
Average expenditure (6)	1.5	1.5	1.2	1.0	2.2
Public share (%)	82.6	69.0	71.0	72.2	73.6
Drugs share (%)	21.1	28.2	31.5	22.9	20.5

Source: [20].

Notes: (1), (2), (3). Per 1000 population.

(4) In days.

(5), (6). In thousands of euros at PPP per capita.

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Table 2.5 Overall rate of change for current healthcare expenditure 2012-2018 (%), Source: Eurostat

	Financing			Functions			Providers			
	Government schemes	Compulsory schemes and saving accounts (*)	Other financing agents (including unknown)	Curative and rehabilitative care	Medical goods (non-specified by function)	Other functions (including unknown)	Hospitals	Providers of ambulatory health care	Retailers and other providers of medical goods	Other providers (including unknown)
Belgium	121.5	-1.4	20.1	14.3	17.5	20.8	18.0	17.7	4.1	22.2
Bulgaria (*)	22.4	57.3	8.0	36.9	19.5	31.1	42.6	21.6	19.2	36.8
Czechia	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Denmark	16.7	0.0	17.5	14.5	6.3	24.3	16.6	22.9	6.3	14.4
Germany	22.7	32.1	16.8	22.8	27.8	40.4	23.1	29.2	28.1	37.3
Estonia (*)	39.4	62.8	87.2	61.8	43.1	103.4	54.8	73.0	42.9	183.3
Ireland	22.5	159.3	12.2	25.9	5.7	16.9	27.8	21.0	4.8	17.8
Greece	-22.9	-26.1	3.2	-14.5	-19.3	-4.0	-16.9	-12.3	-19.3	9.8
Spain	11.7	12.8	21.5	14.1	16.6	13.3	16.7	9.9	16.6	11.6
France	21.6	23.7	-22.9	13.8	6.0	14.4	12.4	17.2	4.0	15.3
Croatia	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Italy	4.6	-30.4	16.1	4.4	14.8	8.0	2.6	17.5	4.4	10.5
Cyprus (*)	5.2	-63.3	19.3	8.1	23.2	16.6	13.9	12.7	23.1	-3.5
Latvia	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Lithuania	30.4	42.9	43.0	49.6	22.0	55.6	42.4	73.8	19.2	46.6
Luxembourg (*)	46.9	30.0	19.7	30.9	18.2	30.5	37.9	31.5	9.6	25.9
Hungary (*)	19.5	29.1	6.9	28.7	0.8	42.2	37.8	19.9	0.8	35.1
Malta	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Netherlands	42.2	10.1	12.5	20.8	-0.1	5.7	20.2	17.3	-1.5	7.6
Austria	18.9	25.0	22.3	22.2	22.5	22.9	20.6	26.9	23.5	20.7
Poland	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Portugal (*)	12.6	153.3	37.0	22.6	12.5	37.5	22.9	16.9	13.0	54.5
Romania	190.9	72.2	59.0	117.0	24.5	107.7	123.4	88.2	24.0	115.1
Slovenia	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Slovakia (*)	-63.4	28.5	-22.9	21.3	1.1	-16.1	38.7	2.8	1.1	-18.5
Finland (*)	8.6	4.3	16.0	17.5	11.9	-6.5	22.4	-0.1	11.9	1.2
Sweden	12.3	0.0	4.9	9.1	8.1	15.2	12.3	12.4	7.8	9.6
Iceland	104.4	0.0	74.2	115.1	50.4	94.5	109.7	120.6	50.4	92.2
Norway	6.9	.	.	5.2	0.9	8.9	4.9	16.0	1.2	0.1
Switzerland	18.0	29.1	35.3	28.3	30.7	27.7	26.6	39.5	16.0	25.2

(*) Compulsory contributory health insurance schemes and compulsory medical saving accounts.

(*) Break in series.

1

2 Slovakia is, however, experiencing the greatest cost control problems among the

3 Visegrad countries, in regard to hospital solvency and medicines (Lawson, Nemeč et

4 al. 2012). In fact, they show Slovakia to be having one of the highest shares of

5 pharmaceutical costs to total health expenditure in any OECD country (2012:27).

6 The final table (see Table 2.7 overleaf) presents Slovakia and Hungary as the two

7 out of the four V4 countries with the highest prevalence of unofficial payments and

8 Slovakia also as the highest percentage of respondents wishing more public spending

9 went into health care as a priority (2012:29). This further reinforces the point that

10 from a financial and a functioning perspective the sector leaves a lot to be desired

1 and serves as breeding ground for informal practices in order to obtain adequate
2 service.

	Czech Republic	Slovakia	Hungary	Poland	Western Europe (1)
% Satisfied respondents (2)	66	64	59	62	80
% Change from 2006 survey	+6	+7	+9	+16	n.a.
% Prevalence of unofficial payments (3)	11	22	42	8	3
Health as 1st priority for extra spending (4)	n.a.	49	40	43	n.a.

Source: EBRD, 2010.

(1) Average of responses for France, Germany, Italy, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

(2) % of respondents who were satisfied or strongly satisfied with public health care services.

(3) % reporting that unofficial payments were always or usually needed to access services.

(4) % selecting health as the first priority for any extra public spending, over spending on education, housing, pensions, assisting the poor, the environment, or public infrastructure.

Table 2.6 Patient health care experience, perceptions and preferences: 2010, Source: EBRD, 2010, in Lawson et al., 2012:29

3 Several scholars (see Batory 2012) agree that Hungary presents with rampant
4 corruption in similar sectors to those most impacted in Slovakia, i.e., health care,
5 the police, and the judiciary. Other authors (Kohlami 2013) tend to focus on a more
6 political angle of corrupt practices in Hungary. Kohlami (2013) divides corruption
7 into ‘everyday’ and ‘political’ spheres, one referring to a ‘small gratuity tip’ or a
8 sum in an ‘envelope’ to a police officer or warden by a civilian, and the other as a
9 ‘betrayal of norms that serve public interest’ (2013:68).

10 It is therefore obvious, that within the CEE, and namely the V4 region, while certain
11 experiences are shared and there are similarities in the sectoral spreading of
12 corruption, there is still a marked variability in the understanding of corruption, the
13 perception of corruption, and in the manifestation of, and research into, corruption.
14 There is little recent research into corruption mechanisms and what research exists
15 tends to be conducted in the respective mother tongue, which limits its reach into
16 the general corruption literature. From what I was able to find and derive from
17 original language sources, research into the mutual impact of grand and petty
18 corruption on one another is original for the region and fills a literature gap created
19 by investigating corruption on a disaggregated basis. It is clear that corruption in
20 health care exists in all of the V4 countries and is seen to be problematic for the
21 society in the region. It is therefore apparent that research into corruption in health

1 care can produce valuable information on the mapping of the phenomenon and
2 unique results for an entire region, as opposed to just the case study itself.

3 **2.2 Slovakia-specific literature on corruption**

4

5 *‘In countries characterised by systemic corruption the problem is that almost*
6 *everything needs to change, and needs to change more or less simultaneously with*
7 *a “big bang” (Rothstein 2011).*

8 A study conducted by Associated Slovak Press (SITA) found corruption and
9 perceptions of corruption to be growing in Slovakia. 43% of respondents identified
10 corrupt practices to be increasing and 18.5% admitted to having been involved in
11 some level of corrupt practice. The survey carried out by the Slovak Business
12 Association in 2017 shows that over 47% of respondents have called for an easier way
13 to report and prove corruption and greater whistle-blower protection, and 59% of
14 respondents have called for greater transparency in corruption prosecution (SITA
15 2017). The Global Perception Index for 2021 shows that 11% of respondents have
16 paid a bribe for a public service and public clinics and hospitals are in second place
17 right after the police force in bribery rates for 2021 (transparency.org). What is
18 more, respondents in another survey, conducted by the BTI in 2018 have linked their
19 perceptions of corruption to the quality of democracy- 43% think the quality of
20 democracy has worsened in the past five years and 40% consider democracy in
21 Slovakia to be in bad shape (BTI 2018). Clearly, there is no question that Slovakia is
22 a country with near-endemic presence of corruption and that a further investigation
23 into corruption is sorely needed. Moreover, as stated by the analysts in BTI,
24 effectively tackling corruption is a way to effectively counter ‘social pessimism and
25 passivity’, which have also been linked to further societal issues in a domino effect,
26 such as increasing polarisation of the society, widening distances between social
27 groups in Slovakia, as well as fear of migrants and other social groups (BTI, 2018:17).

1 The main shortcoming identified with regards to corruption research on Slovakia is
2 that it is relatively sparse and difficult to access. Currently there is little published
3 research available in international journals on this issue. Only in anonymous reports
4 for supranational bodies such as the European Commission and transnational bodies
5 such as the World Bank, or in Slovak exclusively, are there data on the subject.
6 There is a considerable literature gap with regards to Slovakia in several fields of
7 expertise, not only corruption: be it Slovakia's involvement in EU flagship policies,
8 such as for example the Neighbourhood Policy, or with regards to its role within
9 regional sub groups, such as the Visegrad Four (V4).

10 Even within regional structures such as the V4, Slovakia is mostly observed as a point
11 of comparison for the three bigger players (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic),
12 rather than a point of focus for its individual involvement in policy-making
13 processes. This is mostly due to the relatively smaller size of the country and
14 economy, compared with the other three, and due to the relative sparsity of data
15 published, which usually makes for a good set of comparatives but is not sufficient
16 for a concrete focus. Slovakia's position seems to be ambiguous- for example, Tim
17 Haughton's chapter in *Developments in Central & East European Politics (2013)* lists
18 Slovakia among 'The Other New Europeans' with geographically distant Estonia,
19 Latvia, Lithuania, Romania and Bulgaria, rather than in a chapter with its immediate
20 neighbours of Central Europe with whom Slovakia shares its EU and NATO accession
21 journeys and similar historical, ethnographic, and demographic makeup (Haughton
22 2013). Another chapter in the same publication introduces Central European states
23 listing Poland, Czech Republic, and Hungary, but leaving Slovakia out, albeit its
24 geographical position would be more appropriately classed with these countries than
25 the southern Slavic states or the Baltics (Millard 2013). It is worth questioning why
26 Slovakia has proven so problematic to categorise in this manner and what the
27 individual features that underline this taxonomical difficulty are. There is a clear
28 lack of publication efforts and qualitative research to date for the V4 members and
29 their corruption-specific efforts (EU-commissioned macro reports notwithstanding)
30 but an even more accentuated lack of these conducted with Slovakia as a centre of
31 focus.

1 Gallina's 2013 publication provides an exception from this norm with her specific
2 study of Slovakia and the Czech Republic's anti-corruption measures. Gallina (2013)
3 argues that these corruption measures have been, and continue to be, heavily
4 politicised and therefore depending greatly on single personalities, rather than a
5 serious political base to bring these to effect. She states that all the measures taken
6 to date- be it government strategic plans, special courts establishment, the
7 restructuring of regional administrative directors, or the National Memory Institute
8 instatement conducted mainly by the Dzurinda government⁸- have all been
9 implemented inefficiently at best. This is because these have not translated into
10 any significant improvement in Slovakia's position in the CPI, nor have they ensured
11 a significantly greater prosecution of corrupt cases (Gallina 2013). As testament to
12 this, Transparency International offers some interesting statistics. Even though
13 corruption is perceived to be endemic on the grand scale and corruption scandals,
14 such as the Gorila scandal⁹, or the most recent Bonaparte development complex
15 scandal¹⁰ (both widely covered by popular press and include politicians, abuse of
16 power, and EU funds embezzlement), it is still more regular citizens that are charged

⁸ The most pro-European government Slovakia has had, which implemented the reforms needed for the early 2000s accession to both NATO and EU.

⁹ The Gorila scandal is a corruption scandal containing files spanning from 2005 onwards, implying partial state capture by a single oligarchic group embedded in the government. It outlines the opaque party financing of the government leaders, offered in exchange for: specific rulings in civil and criminal proceedings, specific individuals sympathetic to the goals of financial groups or organised crime to be embedded in governmental structures, specific projects receiving amounts of EU funding, the 'dealing with' uncomfortable members of the public, and much more. For more details, see <https://slovensko.hnonline.sk/2024714-gorila-prepis-spis-gorila> [last accessed 17/3/2021].

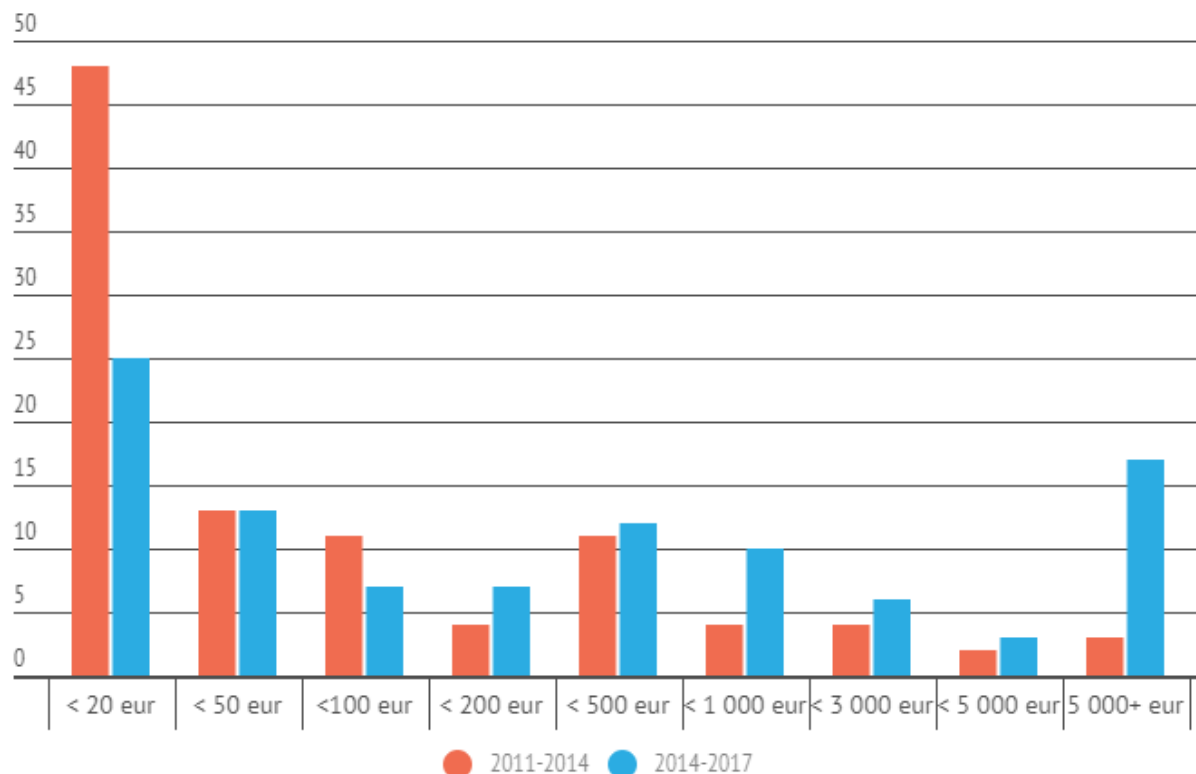
¹⁰ The Bonaparte scandal is a corruption scandal involving embezzlement of funds by the financier and developer L. Bašternák, currently serving his prison sentence. The flats of the Bonaparte building complex were bought and rented by government officials and members of organised crime groups. Most famously, the ex-PM Fico and ex-Chancellor Počiatek rented a flat from Mr Bašternák, as well as Marian Kočner, the named defendant in the murder case of journalist Ján Kuciak, who is currently also serving a 19-year sentence for financial fraud. For more information, please visit <https://www.trend.sk/spravy/kocnerov-byt-bonaparte-je-opat-predaj-stoj-takmer-4-29-miliona-eur> [last accessed 17/3/2021].

1 with corruption, as seen in Figure 2.1. A 2018 BTI report states that ‘no political or
2 businessperson was sentenced or convicted up to now’ (BTI, 2018:4).



4 **Figure 2.1 The ratio of ordinary citizens to public figures charged with corruption in Slovakia.**
5 **Black colour represents ordinary citizens, orange public figures. Source: Transparency**
6 **International, 2017**

7 The thesis responds to this trend by focusing on real-life experiences with petty
8 corruption and with putting greater emphasis on the number of in-depth interviews
9 conducted with ordinary citizens- expecting around 40 in-depth interviews to around
10 20 elite interviews. An even more interesting statistic is that which depicts the bribe
11 amount that people are usually charged for- these are prevalently small sums of up
12 to 20 EUR, as shown in Figure 2.2 overleaf, again pointing towards petty corruption
13 as a more frequent phenomenon in the eyes of the respondents. This is emphasised
14 by the BTI report (2018), which states that ‘high-level corruption seems almost non-
15 punishable in Slovakia, the courts may easily catch a “small fish”, but big ones go
16 on unpunished’ (BTI, 2018:12).



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Figure 2.2 Corruption cases ordered by the size of the bribe in Slovakia. Orange columns represent the period of 2011-2014 and blue columns show period 2014-2017. Source: Transparency International, 2017

6 The decrease of prosecution of corruption cases of up to 20 EUR and an increase in
 7 those of over 5,000 EUR however, in the later examined period, does show some
 8 potential for the cases of grand corruption to receive greater attention in the future.

9 Shortcomings in the corruption prosecution can be seen in the lack of transparency
 10 shown by the Slovak Special Court in its relatively fast (most cases get sentenced
 11 within 1 year), but closed, way of sentencing. Three quarters of sentencings end in
 12 a court order or by an agreement between the court and the accused on guilt and
 13 punishment; most perpetrators get a probationary period and a fine (Šípoš and
 14 Šimalčík 2017). However, neither of these types of sentencings includes any factual
 15 basis or objective justification for the sentencing, and there is also no legal
 16 requirement for any transcripts or witness statements to be released, which makes
 17 the court proceedings appear non-transparent and subject to manipulation (Šípoš
 18 and Šimalčík 2017). Over 90% of those sentenced for corruption never see any prison

1 time (Šípoš and Šimalčík 2017), which, according to Transparency International's
2 analyst Gabriel Šípoš (2017), does not create enough of a deterrent environment.

3 For comparison, Batory (2012) makes a very similar observation with regards to
4 Hungary, whereby criminal statistics for 2009 show 1,237 registered investigations
5 in corruption-related cases, i.e. less than 0.03% of all investigated crimes (Batory,
6 2012:71). The same endemic issue of 'lenient penalties such as fines or suspended
7 prison sentences' is at the root of lack of accountability in Hungary, too (Batory,
8 2012:72). Therefore, even though there are several 'layers upon layers' of anti-
9 corruption legislation (Batory, 2012:69) present in Slovakia and other CEE countries
10 that are a result of EU accession conditions and other standardised international
11 regulations, there is a significant problem with compliance and implementation of
12 these effectively. Despite my project focusing on only one case, the broader findings
13 and lessons could travel across the broader CEE region¹¹. A 2018 BTI report shows
14 that over 60% of respondents do not find courts trustworthy in Slovakia (BTI 2018).
15 A different approach to tackling corruption is necessary, as legislative attempts at
16 curbing corruption only act as a cosmetic façade for the international community.
17 The thesis targets this need for a bottom-up approach to corruption and rather than
18 looking at sweeping, generalised measures that fail at the implementation stage, it
19 looks at the motivations behind corruption to be able to produce a Slovakia-specific
20 mapping of the phenomenon, which could potentially deepen our understanding of
21 what anti-corruption measures could eventually make a difference.

22 Gallina (2013) presents Slovakia as having made excellent strides towards
23 international standards of anti-corruption measures during the two ex-PM Dzurinda
24 governments, but presents ex-PM Fico and the social democrats most recently in
25 power as reversing these by drafting laws to restrict media freedom (Gallina 2013).
26 Gallina points out that the running trend of corrupt behaviour in governmental
27 structures is first and foremost the needs of elites. This view is also supported by

¹¹ Although my findings cannot be strictly speaking generalised, they could serve as a framework for analysing petty and grand corruption across other CEE countries.

1 several political commentators from Slovakia openly stating that the efforts of
2 individual governments are forever tied to personal agendas, most visible in the
3 ‘greatest economic crime’¹² in the history of the country- the privatisation scandals
4 of Mečiar’s nineties that were supposedly controlled by Mečiar personally (Lesko
5 2017). Leško claims these have robbed the country, in his humble estimate, of at
6 least a hundred million Slovak crowns that could subsequently not have been
7 invested to education and healthcare - sectors the country is still lagging behind in
8 comparison to its closest neighbours and the rest of the EU (Lesko 2017). Leško states
9 that Slovakia is still ‘bailing hospitals out’ because of the privatization stunts of the
10 90s that redirected cash flow from vital sectors to private political and economic
11 agendas of the few, promoting an oligarchic rule of very few governmental
12 stakeholders (Lesko 2017). Gallina states that these needs of elites act as
13 determinants for corrupt practices, similarly to Della Porta’s (1999) work on Italian
14 corruption networks gathering exclusively around individuals (Della porta and
15 Vannucci 1999). The BTI report of 2018 underlines this trend and defines the
16 ‘traditional polarisation between the government and the opposition’ as the real
17 reason why there is no longevity to legislative measures, no governmental
18 cooperation, and why the actions of governmental individuals become ‘completely
19 unpredictable’ (BTI, 2018:15). This ‘structural weakness in Slovakia’s party system’
20 (BTI, 2018:33), along with self-interest of elites, is presumably the reason behind
21 the failure of elites such as PM Fico to propose effective measures to fight
22 corruption. These have predominantly been focused on ‘prohibition and prosecution,
23 as opposed to prevention’ (BTI, 2018:34).

24 Gallina suggests that the reason her article is better informed about the Czech
25 Republic’s anti-corruption measures than the Slovak ones stems from the fact that
26 there is a ‘methodological disadvantage of a distorted media landscape in Slovakia
27 and most information therefore comes from TI, Freedom House, or Czech sources’,
28 rather than original work on Slovakia itself (Gallina 2013). It is therefore obvious

¹² Translations of Mr Leško’s quotes are my own.

1 that there is need for further research into the field of corruption, in the interest of
2 anti-corruption measures advancement for the Slovak-specific context. Gallina also
3 points out a paradox between the corruption measures taken by the Czech Republic
4 and Slovakia, whereby Slovakia first adopted the Czech measures of corruption
5 repression post-1993, while the Czechs realised that Slovak measures of corruption
6 prevention were more effective and adopted those; indicating their lack of
7 experience with democratic, anti-corruption measures implementation in the 1990s
8 and a very 'hit or miss' strategy employed by both countries. Gallina emphasises
9 that 'further in-depth investigation is necessary' (Gallina 2013) and the thesis aims
10 to address the need for in-depth research by employing in-depth interviews and a
11 rigorous NVivo analysis of data obtained.

12 Gallina (2013) states that there is only one truly comprehensive, Slovak-specific
13 corruption publication, that of Sičáková-Beblavá et al. from 2011. The study employs
14 a simple but effective linguistic coding analysis of election programme declarations
15 of individual election seasons and parties from the 1990s to 2011, identifying the
16 governments with the most and the least amount of dedication to battling corruption
17 and advancing democratic values in the country (Sičáková-Beblavá, Šípoš et al.
18 2011). While this report shows the expected results, with ex-PM Mečiar (1990-1991,
19 1992-1994, 1994-1998) and ex-PM Fico's (2006-2010, 2012-2018) governments
20 trailing far behind that of ex-PM Dzurinda (1998-2006) and the most reform-driven
21 and anti-corruption focused government of ex-PM Radičová (2010-2012), it is
22 relatively inaccessible, as it has not yet been translated into English. Its relatively
23 out-of-date information (capped at the end of year 2011) not encompassing all of
24 PM Fico's second government for example, only adds to its difficulties in validity,
25 applicability, and reliability. Nevertheless, it provides valuable material for the
26 thesis in the original language, which expands the richness of data by a linguistic
27 dimension, analysing in detail the phrases used and promises made from government
28 to government. This then enables the thesis to trace governmental agenda into anti-
29 corruption much more effectively. However, this will only provide a part of the
30 picture, as the report does not address any original data collection from citizens or
31 experts, nor any analysis of media outlets.

1 In addition to the work by Sičáková-Beblavá (2011), the efforts to publish research
2 on corruption in Slovakia have been mostly undertaken by the team employed by
3 the Slovak chapter of Transparency International, who publish short reports on anti-
4 corruption measures, and have also published a report on health care corruption in
5 2016. Additionally, Alexa's 2007 paper evaluates the effectiveness of the anti-
6 corruption measures taken up to the year 2006; Alexa labels these as merely dealing
7 with 'surface symptoms', rather than addressing the underlying causes of
8 corruption, which, according to her, have roots in the governmental structures
9 (Alexa 2007); as confirmed by Gallina in her later work (2013).

10 Overall, it is clear that research on corruption is lacking specifically with regards to
11 individual member states, especially in relation to Slovakia. Such research is close
12 to non-existent, predominantly marginal, and always presented in comparison with
13 other countries, as there is not enough material and data collected yet to conduct
14 a rigorous project on Slovakia itself. The thesis aims to overcome the language
15 barrier by publishing in English, while at the same time ensuring the richness of data
16 collected by conducting field work in the original Slovak language, thus preserving
17 cultural and linguistic authenticity and overcoming language limitations with
18 translation. The thesis aims to fill indisputable gaps in literature on Slovak anti-
19 corruption measures, corruption experience and corruption structures, as well as
20 contribute to the research on corruption in Central Europe and globally as a whole.

21 **2.3 Corruption in the healthcare sector**

22

23 Having established why corruption is a phenomenon that needs further investigation,
24 it is necessary to present why health care constitutes the ideal case study for close
25 inspection of corrupt behaviour in Central Europe. The 2006 Lancet editorial entitled
26 'Corruption in health care costs lives' demonstrates clearly the severity of the issue.
27 The editor speaks about health care not only as a service, but also from an economic
28 point of view as an 'enormous business affecting people's lives', worth an estimated
29 US\$ 3 trillion per year worldwide, a business which is strangely 'exempt from

1 scrutiny' that other business sectors receive in order to tackle corruption. The
2 author warns that very little is known about the extent to which corruption affects
3 health-care systems and providers and the word 'corruption' in health care is too
4 frequently softened to 'unethical or unprofessional behaviour' (Lancet 2006).

5 Mackey and Liang (2012) concur with the view that health care is a part of the global
6 market, estimated to be worth 10% of global gross domestic product in 2009 (Mackey
7 and Liang 2012). They emphasise that health care corruption not only leads to waste
8 of scarce financial resources, but also has an adverse effect on health care access
9 and provision. Their article establishes the principle of a 'global health governance'
10 with a unified set of rules that would be applicable to all healthcare systems and
11 transferable across borders in order to improve health care provision worldwide.
12 They define health care corruption as 'bribery of health professionals, regulators
13 and public officials; unethical research; diversion/theft of medicines and medical
14 supplies; fraudulent or overbilling for health services; absenteeism; informal
15 payments; embezzlement; and corruption in health procurement' (Mackey and Liang
16 2012). From this definition, it can be argued that corruption in health care is a
17 perfect medium for investigating corruption itself because, just like corruption
18 alone, health care corruption encompasses several phenomena and cannot be
19 limited to only bribery, theft, or unethical behaviour. It also has to include the
20 tackling of grand corruption, ie embezzlement and health procurement. Health care
21 corruption is, of course, not solitary in the corrupt trends it exhibits. While health
22 care and the business sector are classified as the most corrupt of all sectors, the
23 police force and the judiciary, along with administrative corruption and education
24 are not far behind (as seen in Figure 2.4 towards the end of this section). Since both
25 petty and grand corruption walk hand in hand in health care, according to Mackey
26 and Liang (2012), it follows that comprehensive research into corruption strategies
27 and their complex interplay between petty and grand corruption is ideally situated
28 in the healthcare sector (Mackey and Liang 2012). The authors claim that as much
29 as 56% of Russian Federation total health expenditures are informal payments and
30 emphasise that transitional economies like those of the former USSR are most
31 affected in the healthcare sector and should therefore receive special focus. The
32 thesis fulfils this need by providing a close investigation of health care corruption in

1 the transitional economy of Slovakia, which fits the authors' profile of the most
2 affected countries (Mackey and Liang 2012).

3 The authors present a model of global governance of health care, whereby
4 corruption uncovered by a whistle-blower should be verified by an independent
5 auditor and national judicial commission that would detail misappropriation,
6 forgeries, nepotism, and lack of accountability (Mackey and Liang 2012), as was the
7 case of the Global Fund misappropriation in Uganda. However, the fundamental
8 issue in trying to achieve such a model of international cooperation is the lack of
9 any global, legally-binding, corruption-tackling instrument in place. They emphasise
10 that while the presence of corruption has been recognised by the U.N. Office on
11 Drugs and Crimes 2003 document and in the U.N. Convention against Corruption
12 (2003), there has not as yet been any delineation of a global anti-corruption health
13 care instrument (Mackey and Liang 2012). What they call for in their article is a
14 comprehensive approach to corruption in health care that would include the
15 following:

- 16 • Transparency and audit policies
- 17 • A common framework for corruption monitoring and evaluation of public health
18 programs and funding
- 19 • Codes of Conduct for public and private sector actors
- 20 • Minimum standards for member state laws to specifically prevent and prosecute
21 health-based corruption
- 22 • Health financing improvements to curtail the need for an informal health sector
- 23 • A centralised surveillance and data repository system to report and investigate
24 global health corruption
- 25 • Multilateral processes to freeze proceeds from corruption and aid in recovery of
26 diverted assets
- 27 • Commitment to earmark portions of seized assets to fund and develop these anti-
28 corruption systems among members (Mackey and Liang 2012).

29 While the proposed model of the authors seems all-encompassing and rigorous, the
30 sheer scale of such a mechanism to be applied to a global setting is beyond any
31 notion of practicality. Such a global governance would require a standardisation of

1 all anti-corruption strategies that vary country to country, due to corruption being
2 a culturally and a historically bound phenomenon that manifests differently in
3 individual settings. It is interesting to see the general outline of what a global-scale
4 anti-corruption mechanism would have to include, but the ambiguity of the language
5 and the lack of definition of what 'minimum standards' or 'Codes of Conduct' should
6 entail for each country, the lack of country-specific application, and most of all, the
7 reconciliation of these measures with country-specific corruption perceptions, puts
8 the model firmly in the realm of the fantastical.

9 Bernd and McKee (2009) emphasise the need for health care anti-corruption
10 strategies to be stronger in the former USSR and point out that there is very little
11 evidence for whether health reforms have achieved their intended results. They
12 make the point that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) display great
13 'diversity in socioeconomic development, culture, and politics, extending to their
14 health systems and capacity for and direction of reforms' (Bernd and McKee 2009).
15 Their article conducts a selective overview of health reform in the CEE countries
16 from the fall of the USSR and provides an interesting insight into the provision of
17 health insurance in the CEE countries (for the case of Slovakia a competing fund, as
18 opposed to an entirely national fund of Croatia or Latvia). The authors conclude that
19 corruption and 'under-the-table payments' pose the greatest challenges to
20 healthcare and are pervasive in CEE- however the real extent and magnitude of
21 these is still 'unknown and incomplete', calling for more research to be conducted
22 into the corruption in the healthcare sector of the CEE (Bernd and McKee 2009).
23 They identify the greatest problems of corruption, endemic within the healthcare
24 systems of the CEE countries as the 'failure of governments to enforce regulations,
25 weak systems of accountability, and confusion of patients about which payments are
26 official and which are not' (Bernd and McKee 2009). It is therefore apparent that
27 Bernd and McKee focus on both the systemic failure of effective reform-making of
28 these countries, and on the petty side of corruption, mostly involving informal
29 payments. They identify specific problems with primary care practice and the
30 general confusion of progress of health care in these countries, which were
31 encouraged to abandon all previous established avenues of health care perceived as
32 socialist in nature, for example the use of polyclinics. The same concept of

1 polyclinics has paradoxically later been adopted by the UK Health Service as a
2 modern, practical solution to cooperation between primary and secondary health
3 care. The authors believe more research from the specific countries needs to be
4 conducted into health care reform and anti-corruption mechanisms because the
5 involvement of foreign health care experts in the early 90s concentrated on the
6 ‘transfer of ideas rather than on building domestic capacity for policy analysis and
7 planning’, with these experts equipped with ‘little insight into local situations’ at
8 the time (Bernd and McKee 2009). The thesis responds to the issue raised by the
9 authors by conducting a rigorous, country-specific research into these “local
10 situations” of health care provision, as seen by both the recipients of health care
11 and the providers.

12 Ensor (2004) also focuses primarily on the petty corruption encountered in the CEE
13 healthcare systems and concludes that there are elements of communist legacy in
14 health care corruption. According to Ensor, this suggests that in the Soviet Union
15 prices and outputs were strictly regulated and queuing, rather than price, was the
16 normal way of rationing (Ensor 2004). Individual connections and barter deals were
17 much more important than the actual cash paid for the product, a system already
18 introduced in Part 1 of Literature Review as “*blat*”, which has laid the foundations
19 for the in-kind payment of service rendered in contemporary corrupt practices
20 (Ensor 2004). Ensor believes that this informality is most pronounced in the
21 healthcare sector and that is why there was still 60% of respondents paying for public
22 care in Slovakia in 2004 and why there has been an absolute reduction for funding
23 for health facilities in rural areas, increasing the need for rural inhabitants to
24 receive and pay for healthcare informally (Ensor 2004). Ensor’s primary point is
25 centred around the petty corruption of payments made because resources are
26 inadequate, with patients even having to purchase medical supplies in many cases.
27 He speaks of informal payments being a sophisticated operation, sometimes
28 involving a broker, sometimes made directly to medical staff, who either keep the
29 payment or even share between other staff (Ensor 2004). These payments, Anon
30 (1999) argues, invoking a Bulgarian example, are higher the more specialist
31 procedures are required, for example heart surgery being one of the most expensive
32 (Anon 1999). He suggests that there is an entire market of informal payments

1 existing in parallel to the official healthcare market, thriving off of the constraint
2 for official medical services funding (Ensor 2004). Thompson and Gorbunova concur
3 and argue from a Kazakh perspective, that the ability to pay for medical services is
4 much less important than the willingness to pay, creating an inequity between the
5 rich and the poor, with the rural households spending significantly more than those
6 in urban areas (Thompson and Gorbunova 2003). Ensor concludes that it is not only
7 the formalisation and the standardisation of some of the informal payments that will
8 create positive impact, but also increasing the competitiveness within the market,
9 motivating specialists to remain in the country and thus relieving the pressure of the
10 vast patient numbers and insufficient facilities, which motivates informal routes of
11 receiving adequate care (Ensor 2004). Most importantly, Ensor concludes that while
12 corruption research exists, little of it is 'health sector specific, which means it does
13 not address the nature of much of health care corruption, such as the essential
14 nature of health care, the difference between corruption and survival strategies etc'
15 (Ensor 2004). Therefore, more health sector specific corruption research,
16 determining the validity of concepts such as standardisation of informal fees, is
17 necessary and called for in the CEE countries.

18 Habibov's 2016 work on health care corruption satisfaction raises similar points to
19 those of Ensor (2004). His investigation also focuses on petty corruption, mostly
20 informal payments, and concludes that corruption in health care exists as a rampant
21 issue specifically in post-socialist countries, with literature notably lacking
22 consensus regarding the effect of corruption in developing and transitional countries
23 and within health care in particular (Habibov 2016). Habibov notes that petty
24 corruption in health care is more likely to be prevalent than other public sectors due
25 to the necessity of accessing health care, compared to the options of circumventing
26 other sectors through personal connections. He also points out that corruption is
27 associated with lower propensity of using health care when needed and bribes often
28 constitute 'catastrophic expenditures for the poor' (Habibov 2009; in Habibov 2016).
29 Habibov points out the incomplete nature of corruption in health care, often being
30 only associated with 'petty' corruption, 'rather than large-scale corruption
31 schemes' and calls for the need to investigate both at the same time, which is the
32 focus of this thesis (Habibov 2016). From the perspective of satisfaction with health

1 care, Habibov investigates an interesting notion of corruption falling under either
2 the “grease in the wheels” theory, whereby corruption produces positive results and
3 facilitates satisfaction with health care, or the opposite, “sand in the wheels”
4 theory, whereby corruption has a negative effect on health care satisfaction. His
5 investigation concludes that the “grease in the wheels” notion is rejected in favour
6 of the “sand in the wheels” notion, emphasising the need for reducing corruption in
7 health care (Habibov 2016). Grodeland et al (1998) reach the same conclusion,
8 despite presenting the view that a case can be made for corruption being functional
9 to the process of building capitalism (Grodeland, Koshechkina et al. 1998).
10 Eventually the authors agree that corruption within the CEE context is ‘dysfunctional
11 and is both a moral and an economic problem’ (1998:652).

12 Stepurko et al. (2013) conducted a study into several CEE countries, including
13 Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Poland and Lithuania, as well as Ukraine, but do not
14 include a section on Slovakia or the Czech Republic. They conclude that informal
15 payments are indeed an ‘important payment channel’ which facilitates the
16 avoidance of waiting lists and reduces waiting times, as well as ensures the obtaining
17 of better care and more attention from the medical staff (Stepurko, Pavlova et al.
18 2013). The key idea in Stepurko’s research is that the communist past of the
19 countries in question has brought the collision of ‘new and old values’ and the
20 informality of payments is an old value that survived in order for patients to be able
21 to receive ‘adequate’ quality of health care to date (Stepurko, Pavlova et al. 2013).
22 The idea of ‘adequate quality’ is recurrent throughout Stepurko’s work and also
23 mentioned in the data collected through in-depth interviews in the thesis, which
24 lends credence to the idea that perceptions of the quality of health care match the
25 citizen expectations of what they should be entitled to within their health care
26 provision. Since Stepurko’s article does not include Slovakia within its case study,
27 the thesis fills this gap by providing insight into what the Slovak health care recipient
28 considers ‘adequate’ health care provision and to what extent they feel they must
29 pay for it informally. Stepurko makes an important and a very interesting distinction
30 between cash payments and in-kind gifts, and shows that the perception of in-kind
31 gift giving is much less negative than that of hard cash (78% of respondents see hard
32 cash payment as negative, only 51% see in-kind gifts as negative) (Stepurko et al.,

1 2013), which however poses theoretical problems of defining where corruption ends
2 and a mere token of gratitude begins, and how the society's perception of this
3 distinction is formed. The thesis tackles this issue in the following sections by
4 providing an analysis of the distinction between gift giving and informal payments,
5 as expressed by the participants of focus groups and in-depth interviews. Stepurko's
6 research seems to show a clear distinction between the negative perception of
7 corruption by those who have been requested to pay informal payments, as opposed
8 to those who have volunteered them, with the latter group seeing this as a less
9 negative phenomenon than the former. There is also an important distinction
10 between gift giving before and after the service provision- Stepurko stipulates that
11 while informal gifts after health care provision cannot be encouraged, they do not
12 'adversely affect efficiency in healthcare provision' (Stepurko, Pavlova et al. 2013)
13 and as such should not be viewed as a traditional, detrimental corrupt technique.
14 The article concurs with all previous research presented that the main reason that
15 gift-giving and informal payments are considered necessary is the low funding of the
16 public healthcare sector. The key to tackling informal practices in health care
17 corruption, according to Stepurko et al (2013), is the creation of public opposition
18 which can in turn enable the effectiveness of policy strategies aimed at eradicating
19 corrupt practices. As a point of comparison to the Slovak case study of the thesis,
20 Batory (2012) invokes Hungary as another CEE country that struggles with health
21 care corruption, with 26% of Hungarian respondents claiming to have either made
22 a bribe themselves or someone they know, to a healthcare professional (2012:74).
23 Comparisons such as this make the research and potential results of the thesis even
24 more relevant for not only Slovakia but also comparable economies, such as
25 Hungary.

26 Investigating the same gift-giving phenomenon in Slovakia, a 2016 article by Rudolf
27 Straka outlines in detail the legal measures taken and the implications of gift giving
28 in the healthcare sector in Slovakia. Legally the article outlines the conditions that
29 have to be fulfilled for a transaction to become legally covered as a gift- these are
30 the voluntary nature of the transaction, the exclusion of any monetary element out
31 of the transaction, and that the transaction has to always have two sides: the gift
32 giver and the gift receiver (Straka 2016). Straka reports that the healthcare sector

1 is rigorously regulated in general and that these regulations apply to gift giving too.
2 Technically, doctors are only allowed to receive gifts in an informal capacity (such
3 as birthdays) and with a strict rule applied that these gifts should not be from
4 current patients and should not constitute an incentive of any kind to provide
5 preferential care to the gift giver (Straka 2016). However, there are already obvious
6 issues with this reasoning, as there is no way to monitor gift giving in private
7 settings, nor is there any restriction on past and/or future patients giving gifts.
8 Theoretically, once the patient is released from a doctor's care, there is no longer
9 any restriction on gifts legally and there is also no restriction on a verbal agreement
10 as to the timeline of gift giving, which creates several loopholes for the gift giver
11 and the gift receiver to access. The knowledge of the process acquired by the gift
12 giver can then also be transferred within underlying corrupt networks to any future
13 patients, thus eradicating the need for doctors to have similar conversations in the
14 future; making the process much opaquer and more difficult to track down. Straka
15 lists several legal measures in Slovakia that are in effect supposed to be preventing
16 any gift giving of this nature, for example the directive 2001/83/ES and
17 the regulation number 726/2004 of the Law on medicines and the Law on commerce,
18 which outline strict rules that protect doctors from prescribing specific drugs and
19 prevent the lobbying of companies with individual doctors to prescribe based on
20 a bribe (Straka, 2016:397). Furthermore, Straka also invokes the rules of the Ethical
21 code of a healthcare worker number 578/2004 as a part of the Law on service
22 providers and also the Law on health care provision number 577/2004 that all outline
23 ethical behaviour, but, Straka notes, no punitive measures in terms of gift reception
24 are mentioned. Straka notes that the Czech Republic has recently included
25 such measures (Straka, 2016:398). The greatest problem, according to Straka, when
26 it comes to punishing gift giving is the opaque nature of the transaction and the
27 presence of already-existing networks of patients who pass information along as to
28 the specific strategies of gift giving to specific healthcare professionals. He states
29 that there is not always 'sufficient room' to investigate gift giving and that the
30 patient is by nature in a 'subservient' position to the physician who holds a particular

1 monopoly over a vital resource (Straka, 2016:398)¹³. As a point of comparison, Batory
2 (2012) states that similar ‘gratitude’ payments and gifts are perhaps the ‘most
3 common type of petty corruption in health care’ in Hungary as well and that in a
4 recent survey only a ‘third of the public and a tenth of surveyed physicians’ found
5 giving and accepting such payments as morally reprehensible (Batory, 2012:76).
6 Once again, this problematic is relevant for the region of Central and Eastern Europe
7 as a whole¹⁴. Straka urges the society not to taboo the subject of gift giving but
8 instead calls for research to bring this subject to light, in order to tackle it head-on,
9 which is the aim of the thesis.

10 A 2014 European Commission report on Slovakia as a part of its country-specific Anti-
11 Corruption Initiative concurs with Straka’s and Stepurko’s findings and calls for the
12 fortification and protection of the actions of the free press and civil society
13 initiatives, all of which provides the foundation for tackling corruption from the
14 bottom up, through public opposition. According to the 2013 Special Eurobarometer,
15 90% of Slovak respondents believe that corruption is widespread in their country,
16 with the EU average being 76%. Petty corruption is more widespread than grand, the
17 report argues, with 40% of respondents claiming to have been affected by petty
18 corruption, with the EU average being 26% (Eurobarometer 2017). However, with
19 regards to grand corruption, especially in the field of public procurement, 57% of
20 respondents of those who participated in public procurement in the past three years
21 before the report was published said that they were prevented from winning because
22 of corruption. In the healthcare sector, there have been several public procurement
23 scandals in recent years and the report states that Slovakia’s healthcare system is
24 ‘particularly vulnerable to corruption’ (Eurobarometer, 2013:9). A more recent 2017
25 Eurobarometer shows the problem of corruption in health care is not improving

¹³ The legal implications and realities of gift giving are addressed further in Chapter 8.

¹⁴ Grodeland et al. (1998) further confirm this and provide examples of the most frequent gifts given; such as ‘chocolate, coffee, bottle of wine, flowers etc’ as the most frequent ones (Grodeland et al. 1998:662).

1 despite steps taken on a governmental level - it lists Slovakia among the seven
 2 'striking' exceptions of countries (Greece, Cyprus, Lithuania, Romania, Slovenia and
 3 Slovakia) where health care is most frequently mentioned as the sector with greatest
 4 levels of corruption (Eurobarometer 2017). This is reflected in Figure 2.3 below
 5 which lists doctors as the largest group of public officials charged with corruption.

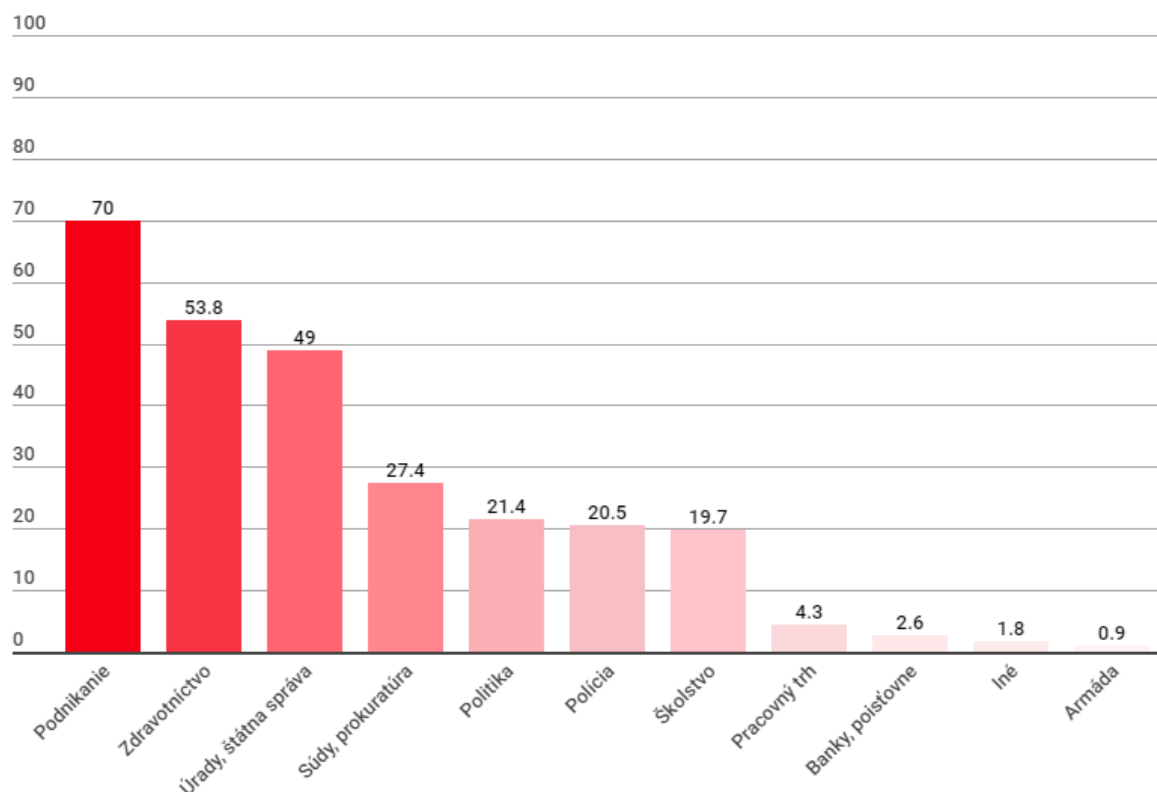


6

7 **Figure 2.3 Ratio of those charged with corruption in Slovakia. Light blue- doctors, orange- civil**
 8 **service, black- the police, yellow- local administrative services, dark green- elected officials,**
 9 **light green- prison staff, purple- universities, red- lawyers. Source: Transparency International,**
 10 **2017**

11 The Slovak branch of the European Commission has published a summary of the
 12 results of the latest Eurobarometer 2018 on corruption. According to the survey, 83%
 13 of respondents think corruption is most prevalent in public services and institutions
 14 and 55% think corruption is most endemic in health care (EC 2018). 24% of
 15 respondents think it is acceptable to give money to motivate behaviour and 43%
 16 think it is acceptable to give a gift with the same objective (European Commission,
 17 2018). Finally, over 48% of respondents believe that corruption has increased in the
 18 country in the last three years (EC 2018). The Slovak Business Association (PAS) 2017
 19 poll has mirrored this alarming rate of corruption spreading, with over half of
 20 respondents having encountered corruption particularly in the healthcare sector,
 21 only beat by its presence in the business sector, as seen in Figure 2.4 overleaf (Slovak
 22 Business Association 2017). The most recent BTI (2018) report also states that even
 23 despite 'spectacular corruption scandals, most notably in the healthcare sector'
 24 (BTI, 2018:4), there are no signs for a reform of public expenditures in health care,
 25 social affairs, or education at all. A possible explanation behind the patterns as
 26 shown in Figure 2.4 overleaf is potentially the large increase in entrepreneurship in
 27 the CEE countries, eager to move away from state structures and 'shortage'
 28 economy into market economy and the promise of capitalism, using the 'grease the

1 wheels' economy practice (Kornai, 2006:232). While there are some who would
2 suggest that transition into market economy should therefore curb corrupt practices
3 in the CEE as rejuvenation of economy inevitably happens, Grodeland et al. (1998)
4 suggest that bribes can take a different form, for example goods in short supply.
5 Therefore, market reforms may not eliminate corruption entirely: they may simply
6 monetarise it (Grodeland, Koshechkina et al. 1998). The healthcare pattern, also
7 connected with privatisation and inefficient handling of health care funding which
8 suffered more than other sectors from an economic decline, suffered what Ellman
9 calls a 'surprise of transition' it is still trying to find its way out of (Ellman,
10 2005:599). Ellman claims that the remnant of socialist legacies of informal payments
11 marries itself with a badly funded public care system which requires more direct
12 payments on top of the indirect (taxes) payments already made to the healthcare
13 sector- the increasing need to pay directly for medicines and better (or faster) care
14 has in turn created a 'sharp socio-economic differentiation' in access to quality
15 medical care (Ellman, 2005:606). Such differentiation presents itself in the
16 economic prowess of the citizens and, in a domino effect, prevents them from
17 accessing quality service in other sectors as well- corruption therefore sustains itself
18 in a vicious circle, whereby unofficial payments cause poverty, which causes lack of
19 access to tax-funded services, in turn calling for more unofficial payments.



1

2 **Figure 2.4 The prevalence of corruption by sector in Slovakia. Descending order- Business,**
 3 **Health care, State administration, Courts, Politics, The Police, Education, The Labour market,**
 4 **Banks and insurance companies, Other, the Army. Source: Richard Duchaj PAS, 2017**

5 There is no question that the research on corruption in the healthcare sector is
 6 incomplete worldwide. This section leaves no doubt that a more rigorous
 7 investigation of health care corruption will inevitably lead to tackling corruption
 8 more effectively as a whole. Most importantly, within the Slovak context, health
 9 care corruption is addressed sparsely and with the official recommendation of the
 10 European Commission specifically, health care provides a rich environment for
 11 investigating corrupt practices of petty and grand nature and presents itself as a
 12 suitable case study for the investigation of the phenomenon of corruption as a
 13 whole.

14

1 **2.4 Conclusions**

2

3 The review has by this point justified why more research is needed into corruption
4 and why the to-date measurement of corruption has not proven to be complete. The
5 review ties the need for further corruption research with the prevalence of
6 corruption in CEE countries and proposes Slovakia as a feasible case study for
7 corruption research. This claim is justified by Slovakia sharing the legacies of post-
8 communism, thus feasible for testing the validity of the ‘corruption as communist
9 legacy’ interpretation, as well as its unique position as a transitional economy, a
10 new EU member state, and a member of all aforementioned supranational and/or
11 transnational bodies commissioning anti-corruption reports (ie the EU or the World
12 Bank). In a study conducted by Grodeland et al. (1998) Slovakia has come out as
13 higher than other studied countries (Bulgaria, Ukraine, the Czech Republic) in the
14 percentage of personal experience with bribe givings, using contacts to circumvent
15 the system and others (Grodeland et al. 1998:661). This suggests that there is
16 a potential for respondents in Slovakia to have a particularly rich awareness and
17 knowledge on the subject of strategies utilised for corrupt activities, relevant to the
18 CEE region as a whole. Slovakia is also generally understudied in several fields of
19 expertise, be it as a member of sub-regional groups such as the V4 or as a member
20 of CEE countries generally. There is little research conducted into Slovakia on its
21 own, as the country is mostly presented as a point of comparison to its neighbouring
22 Czech Republic; and there is also a vast problem of research conducted in Slovakia
23 on Slovakia rarely reaching audience abroad, due to lack of translation facilities.
24 Last but not least, Slovakia is one of the leaders in negative corruption perception
25 and has some of the least effective anti-corruption measures, which some scholars
26 argue seem to be contingent upon separate political personalities, rather than
27 displaying longevity by effective measures from one government to another. The
28 need for corruption research in Slovakia is therefore socially relevant, important for
29 its international standing and reputation, and essential for the country’s proper
30 systemic functioning for its future generations.

1 The most rigorous part of the review is presented in the last section of ‘Corruption
2 in health care’. This section shows in no uncertain terms that while there has been
3 a lot of theoretical research conducted into corruption, health care specific
4 corruption is an understudied field which lacks international consensus,
5 international legislative support, and tackling mechanisms. Since the review shows
6 that such international mechanism would require an immense generalisation of the
7 phenomenon and the opposite of country-specific measures, the need for country-
8 specific health care anti-corruption measures is emphasised. Health care is
9 presented as an ideal case study for the investigation of corruption as a whole due
10 to its ubiquitous nature, its need to be accessed by the largest amount of
11 respondents, and the most varied demographic makeup, providing for as objective
12 an investigation of the phenomenon as possible. Moreover, due to its nature of
13 operating on a lower level of patient-doctor interaction, as well as a upper level of
14 equipment procurement and embezzlement, it presents itself as a feasible case
15 study for the investigation of grand and petty corruption interaction. Finally, the
16 review presents health care to be internationally classed as the most corrupt sector
17 in Slovakia, beating the police, the judiciary, or education in corruption perception
18 polls. An official 2014 European Commission report makes a specific call for health
19 care corruption to being the key sector within which to tackle corruption practices
20 (not merely bribery but also the widespread gift giving), which would in turn
21 potentially produce recommendations for tackling corruption in other public sectors
22 and also across borders (EC 2014). An in-depth investigation of Slovakia’s health care
23 corrupt practices will have beneficial implications for the country’s anti-corruption
24 research, as well as for the investigation of corruption as a worldwide phenomenon.

25

1 Chapter 3: Conceptualising and Measuring

2 Corruption

3

4 3.1 Introduction

5

6 In order to produce an effective measurement of corruption, it must first be
7 defined in measurable terms; however, because of its ill-defined nature,
8 corruption is historically difficult to quantify.

9 Brooks (2016) suggests that this is due to corruption ranging from unethical but
10 legal acts (such as lobbying by pharmaceutical companies with doctors in the
11 United States) to illegal acts, and can therefore be considered deviant and/or
12 criminal (2016:2). As such, corruption should be understood on a 'continuum'
13 (Brooks, Walsh et al. 2013), as it encompasses not only criminal acts but also
14 immoral acts such as nepotism. This means that corruption is not always a simple
15 matter for the explicit study of criminology or legal measure enforcement, but a
16 more nuanced set of challenges, which do not have to transgress legal rules, but
17 perhaps just societal rules; or a way of life practiced and accepted in respective
18 societies. Some scholars suggest, that similarly to criminal behaviour, corrupt
19 behaviour is observed and taught and is subject to key influences, namely that of
20 institutionalisation, rationalisation and/or socialisation of corrupt behaviour
21 (Ashforth and Anand 2003). Others suggest that there need be no negative
22 influence, merely enough of an opportunity and return value; and that such actions
23 are subsequently neutralised through avenues such as denial of responsibility,
24 denial of injury to others, disbursement of blame, and similar (Sykes and Matza
25 1957). It would therefore be erroneous to always equate what is corrupt with what
26 is illegal, because social norms are defined by values similarly to laws, but these
27 do not necessarily emerge from equal ideologies or foundations (Brooks, Walsh et

1 al. 2013). This concept becomes relevant in practice especially when discussing
2 the difference between normal lobbying and unethical forms of trading in
3 influence. The managing director for the European Healthcare Fraud and
4 Corruption network makes this point when evaluating the status of healthcare
5 corruption in Europe and explains the individual nature of healthcare corruption
6 ‘within a country largely depends on the extent to which corruption is embedded
7 in the economy and society’ (Vincke 2016). He emphasises there is no hard data
8 available on this embedding of corruption within individual societies and that a
9 change in healthcare will only be able to stem from general changes in norms and
10 attitudes, inclusive of a bottom-up as well as top-down approach.

11 There is a call among corruption scholars to recalibrate our understanding of
12 corruption (Heywood 2014, Heywood 2014, Brooks 2016). The role of context is
13 constantly emphasised as the main ingredient in how people interact in corrupt
14 exchanges. The difficulty in capturing context is where qualitative methods step in
15 to be able to encompass the many different forms that corruption takes. These are
16 often mistaken for the political science premise of understanding corruption in a
17 principal-agent role of monetary transactions (Drugov, Hamman et al. 2011). Such
18 understanding fails to capture the different forms of corruption and also assumes
19 that bribes are only given if requested, rather than proactively, to secure a social
20 contract (Heywood 2014). Principal-agent frameworks often assume that the
21 interests of the principal and the agent are divergent and that one is corrupted by
22 the other, as the principal typically prescribes the rules and sets the tone of the
23 transactional relationship (Groenendijk, 1997). This model fails to address the fact
24 that many corrupt exchanges occur as a part of a collective effort, involving more
25 members than just the principal and the agent and that often the separate parties
26 can have convergent interests, as opposed to one corrupting the other. Facilitators
27 to corruption, such as third parties or brokers, can take part either directly or
28 through dissemination of relevant information to others. The thesis aims to
29 contribute to this recalibration of corruption understanding through comparing the
30 theoretical delineation of corruption to its real-life understanding.

1 The literature review has already outlined the numerous definitions that
2 corruption has adopted across several fields; these are most frequently based on a
3 distinction between the public and the private capacities of individuals or
4 institutions. The limitations of partitioning corruption into these individual
5 elements fails to consider that corruption in a real-life setting is likely to permeate
6 multiple strata of society, including both the public and private sectors at grand
7 and petty levels alike.

8 The assumption of the thesis is that the real-life understanding depicted on a case
9 study is likely to erase the notion of corruption delineated into binaries. On the
10 contrary, it is likely to show that no matter what form corruption assumes within a
11 given sector, service, or interpersonal exchange, it is possible to identify it based
12 on societally embedded understanding of fairness. Conceptually this would mean
13 that corruption can start being investigated in a qualitative manner more
14 frequently and habitually, focusing on cultural nuances and specific historical and
15 economic conditions of a given case study through empirical research. The thesis
16 gives foundation for corruption to be studied in a manner that addresses the
17 problem at its roots of societal understanding of the concept, as opposed to
18 focusing on the resulting effects of corruption, such as embezzlement schemes or
19 bribery scandals, which are often presented and investigated in a socio-cultural
20 vacuum.

21 In this section, the thesis outlines the importance of corruption perception when
22 generating models for measuring corruption, the roles of both quantitative and
23 qualitative methods in the evaluation of corruption, discussion of the complex
24 social challenges inherent within corruption research, and final evaluation of
25 current and previous corruption measurements employed within Central and
26 Eastern Europe to date.

27

1 **3.2 Consideration of the perception of corruption**

2

3 The subjective nature of perceptions is at the crux of the problematic nature for
4 effective and objective measurement of corruption. It cannot be presumed that
5 perceived and measured corruption are directly proportional to one another, and,
6 indeed, Olken (2009) highlights this in his study of local villagers' perceptions of
7 corruption on a road construction project, taking place in a rural setting. His
8 findings confirm that the correlation between perceived corruption and actual
9 corruption observed in the project is actually quite weak. However, even Olken's
10 conclusions of the downfall of corruption perception in this context are made on
11 mostly a monetary perception of bribes or embezzlement within this project. As
12 Weber Abramo (2007) points out, this bias towards financial corruption
13 measurement within perceptions of corruption, such as the Corruption Perception
14 Index (CPI), The Business International Index (BII) or the World Governance
15 Indicators (WGI), constructs a meta-analysis problem, whereby not only are there
16 issues of perception inconsistencies from one respondent to another, but also
17 issues of these perceptions ignoring other corrupt practices within, which might
18 not bear a monetary character. These may instead manifest in different ways (such
19 as exchange of services or gifts in health care, the judiciary, or education).
20 Emphasis is placed on the role that social relationships play in low-level corrupt
21 practices precisely for this reason. The issues most prevalent are the informal
22 networks accessed, patronage, gift-giving, reciprocal exchange, kinship and
23 clientelism (Jancsics 2013). The CPI particularly is criticised most among the
24 scholarly community, recently also from a neo-colonialist perspective, suggesting
25 that it can be used to undermine public administration in favour of Western
26 economic interests (De Maria 2008). The argument here is that perception-based
27 operational definitions of corruption are used to produce annual indices (CPI, WGI,
28 BI) that are commissioned with a clear agenda at their centre. This is visible when
29 examining the incentivisation of foreign investment into some countries, while
30 discouraging investment in others (Wei 1997). It has been shown that a rise in tax
31 rate on multinational firms, as well as rise in corruption levels of a host country,

1 reduces the inward foreign direct investment (FDI) (Wei 1997). There is impetus
2 now for corruption indices to be conducted and published at least four to five
3 years apart rather than annually, in order for any anti-corruption measures to have
4 the necessary time to bear fruit. However, it is worth pointing out that corruption
5 levels are not the only factor considered and oftentimes other factors such as
6 common linguistic ties between the source and host countries, as well as
7 geographic proximity can be associated with positive trends in FDI flow that could
8 outweigh the impact of corruption levels (Wei 1997). These perception-based
9 indices also constitute merely a fraction of corruption measurement indices and
10 there are more accurate, experience-based measurements available, such as the
11 Global Corruption Barometer which is able to identify global trends and
12 comparisons- however, even these indices are criticised for overly focusing on
13 petty bribery focus and are unable to draw causal links between reforms and their
14 impact (Johnson and Hardoon 2012).

15 The perceptions of corruption and the physical extent of corruption rarely overlap
16 (Montinola and Jackman 2002; Seligson 2002 in Ko and Samajdar 2010). In light of
17 this, the objectivity of measurements based on surveys and expert questionnaires
18 is called into question and the subjectivity of answers to these is the greatest flaw
19 in perception-based corruption measurement (Kubbe 2013). That is not to say that
20 any qualitative data collected within this or other projects will not suffer from
21 several accounts of subjectivity, be it the accounts given by the participants or the
22 data analysis filtered through the researcher's interpretation. However, the
23 research conducted within this thesis does fill a void of qualitative data collected
24 from lay people and elites alike (rather than separately) and will present an angle
25 of investigation with a depth of inquiry, language and text analysis not yet
26 encountered. The research accepts and embraces the impossibility of capturing
27 objective reality (Denzin and Lincoln 1998) and that within cultural studies of any
28 nature, the most accurate observation of corruption can only be attempted by
29 qualitative research due to its 'interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary [and] a
30 multipragmatic approach' (Nelson, Treichler et al. 1992).

1 To complicate matters further, despite its connotations, corruption is not always
2 necessarily viewed in a purely negative light. As already outlined in the literature
3 review, Grodeland et al. (1998) show that at first revisionists would have
4 advocated the 'grease in the wheels' theory, whereby corruption can at first
5 glance appear to be functional in the building of a new capitalist economy. For
6 example, in a partially privatised healthcare system like that of Slovakia, this
7 would mean that if a state-run surgery can provide a service at an expediated rate
8 for a small bribe of around 20EUR, the private practices which charge more for the
9 same service or another state practice which does not charge, would need to
10 compete for patients with increasing the service quality and/or decreasing waiting
11 times. On the other hand, the opposing 'sand in the wheels' rationale indicates
12 that the opposite may be the case, whereby those willing to act in a corrupt
13 manner may simply be the ones most willing to compromise on the quality of the
14 service or goods received (Brooks 2016). Using the example of Slovak healthcare
15 again, the competitiveness between aforementioned surgeries would not occur,
16 due to the patient not caring about the quality, but only about waiting times- this
17 may particularly be the case for routine check-ups, which are mandated by private
18 insurance companies, but not seen by patients as a medical necessity/emergency.
19 As a result, corruption may therefore lead to a skewed image of economy, fuelled
20 by shadow economy, and may also lead to public investment in overall
21 unproductive sectors. This gives foundation for research such as this thesis
22 outlines, which looks into the mechanisms of petty corruption to identify clearly
23 whether it is bribes, use and misuse of contacts, as well as exchange of immaterial
24 goods such as services, that affects the proper functioning of the given society. My
25 respondents in several linguistic variations alluded to corruption being practiced as
26 a way to 'even the keel' or 'get the same standard of care as everybody else' and
27 therefore the principle of inequality and 'grease' or 'sand' in the wheels of the
28 public sector embeds itself as a central tenet of the phenomenon. Grodeland et al
29 (1998) also rightly point to this inequality being subject to cultural norms and
30 traditions; in other words, there is no one face of inequality across the board.
31 Based on this assumption, a study of people's opinions on the subject is bound to
32 provide invaluable insight into the individual manifestation of corruption in the
33 given country, culture, and sector.

1 **3.3. The Role of brokerage in corruption**

2

3 The traditional definitions of corruption tend to present corruption as exchange
4 transaction between two actors. However, in the real world there are often third-
5 party intermediaries present. The role of brokerage in corruption research is
6 integral to its holistic understanding. Perceptions of corruption often mention a
7 third party within a corrupt exchange, be it as a directly engaged intermediary of
8 a corrupt deal, or as a facilitator who relays information that leads to a corrupt
9 exchange. Brokerage in corruption is most frequently described as the flow or
10 exchange of valued resources from one actor to another via an intermediary
11 (Gould and Fernandez 1989, Stovel and Shaw 2012). This perspective of a
12 corruption ‘middleman’ or ‘broker’ is in direct opposition to the principal-agent
13 model, because it considers a third party in the corrupt exchange. There are, of
14 course, other conceptualisations of corruption beyond the principal-agent model,
15 which consider the role of several actors, such as the collective action theory,
16 whereby group dynamics and notions of trust are emphasised. In this theory the
17 individual’s decisions are conceptualised as a result of group dynamics, with the
18 specific emphasis on the role of trust in the collective corrupt concept, and
19 reforms are deemed to be less effective if corruption is thus ‘normalised’ within a
20 collective setting (Rothstein and Teorell 2014, Marquette and Peiffer 2015). There
21 is also the social exchange theory, which posits that customarily internal dynamics
22 created by social structures reduce uncertainty and risk; however, in the specific
23 corrupt context, the opposite is the case which results in destabilised trust within
24 social structures and increased probability of additional illicit exchanges (Lawler
25 and Hipp 2010). In the remit of social exchange theory, corruption is seen as a
26 repeated pattern of socially embedded exchanges, dependent on ongoing networks
27 and ties among members of social groups. This is congruent with the theoretical
28 conceptualisation of corruption by the thesis more broadly, except for the missing
29 emphasis on the broker figure as outlined by my participants.

1 Therefore, brokerage seems to be a more pertinent conceptualisation for the
2 Slovak understanding of corruption. This is due to every Slovak governmental legal
3 and regulation guideline on corruption specifies that in order to fulfil the criminal
4 and civil code definition, a corrupt act has to be carried out either directly by
5 public or private person(s) or through a ‘sprostredkovateľ’, broker. The role of the
6 broker becomes even more integral to determining the variation of sentences that
7 the criminal code specifies, ranging anywhere between 2-8 years of imprisonment
8 across the various branches of the crime (Trestné činy korupcie podľa zákona
9 č.300/2005 Z.z. Trestný zákon, §328-336a).

10 It is obvious that for this particular case study, brokerage is a concept that should
11 not be overlooked and there are several questions included in the list of questions
12 in Appendix 3, which tackle the role of the broker. For example: How do you think
13 corruption is carried out? Who do you think gets approached for a corrupt
14 transaction to take place? How do you think the behaviour of healthcare
15 professionals facilitates corruption? The idea of a broker was also tackled from a
16 socially more acceptable perspective, more akin to that of ‘blat’ (Ledeneva 2009),
17 whereby informal practices are carried out through a network of exchanging
18 favours brokered through contacts. This question: ‘Do you consider the use of
19 personal contacts and connections to be a form of corruption?’ addressed this
20 angle of inquiry into corruption by the field work.

21 The assumption is that for post-communist societies the model of brokerage is
22 more likely due to the historical necessity for informal networks to help one
23 another as a survival technique in a bureaucratic systemic overload. A thorough
24 study of corruption should therefore include the ideas of entrepreneur brokerage,
25 gatekeeper brokerage, extra service brokerage, representative brokerage and
26 multiple insider brokerage models within corrupt exchanges (Jancsics 2015)¹⁵. The
27 key principle to bear in mind when discussing brokerage types is the discovery of

¹⁵ For definitions of these types of brokerage, see Jancsics, D. (2015) “A friend gave me a phone number”- Brokerage in low-level corruption, *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice* (Elsevier).

1 an ever-expanding, complex blueprint of corruption, which in reality strays beyond
2 a straight-forward principal-agent understanding. Jancsics's suggestion of personal
3 relationships reproducing socio-cultural systems outside organisations lays bare the
4 fundamental need for a better understanding of corruption and the structures and
5 micro-dynamics of actual corrupt exchanges in a real-life setting. Empirically, this
6 means that direct questions were asked about how one administers a bribe-
7 whether this is given directly or through an intermediary- and also how one finds
8 out about the necessary sum or form of a bribe- be it directly from the recipient or
9 via intermediaries. My findings relating to the role of the broker in the corrupt
10 exchange are among the key findings of the thesis and are explored in depth in the
11 latter chapters, as well as the discussion chapter. I conceptualise corruption from
12 a holistic perspective, presuming that the broker will be present and potentially
13 significant, as corruption tends to thrive in an environment of networks (Jancsics,
14 2015) and networks tend to conduct themselves based on societal norms. As such,
15 my conceptualisation does not discount the role of the broker and does not anchor
16 itself only within financial terms, but sees corruption as adaptable to its
17 surroundings and capable of capitalising on material as well as immaterial terms.

18 **3.4 Measurement of corruption**

19

20 The thesis defines grand and petty corruption as follows:

21 **Grand Corruption**

22 ***Abuse of power and/or distortion of policies or resources at an overseeing level***
23 ***within public services, with the purpose of the few benefiting at the expense of***
24 ***the many.***

1 Abuse of power- understood by drawing on the definition presented in the Oxford
2 reference¹⁶: misuse of a dominant position to undertake unlawful activities. The activities
3 here do not necessarily have to be unlawful but can be in breach of social rules and
4 regulations of good practice.

5 Distortion of policies or resources- understood as any action that misappropriates resources
6 from their intended destination or alters/bends rules set out by policy to be different from
7 their intended purpose.

8 *Example: Inflated prices for procurement of hospital equipment or outsourcing*
9 *hospital services such as a CT scan or an MRI scan by insurance companies to*
10 *private facilities for a much greater price than the market standard*

11

12

13 Petty Corruption

14 ***‘Everyday’ customary payment of bribes, or other material and immaterial***
15 ***means of motivating officials to amend their behaviour, in order to facilitate***
16 ***higher quality or faster reception of service provision.***

17 Material means- understood to be any tangible means of payment, be it bribe or ‘gift’

18 Immaterial means- understood to be any service or favour exchange, information provision
19 that leads to a corrupt activity or is provided/supplied as a return for corrupt
20 engagement.

¹⁶ For full details, visit

<https://www.oxfordreference.com/search?q=abuse+of+power&searchBtn=Search&isQuickSearch=true> [last accessed 18/3/2021].

1 *Example: Paying a bribe to a nurse/doctor to skip waiting times for check-ups or*
2 *minor procedures; offering a gift/favour to the health professional for*
3 *preferential treatment in the respective hospital ward.*

4 As with all fields, the designs for measuring corruption can be both qualitative and
5 quantitative in nature, with both methodologies having strengths and weaknesses.

6

7 **3.4.1 Benefits of quantitative measurements**

8 Quantitative research is vital for the study, monitoring, and measurement of
9 corruption and similar phenomena. Blumer's early 20th century observations set
10 out that such techniques are extremely useful as a stepping-stone towards the
11 further elaboration on the subject by qualitative research. He suggests that
12 quantitative approach (and in this case perception-based approach, and other
13 quantifiable questionnaires, surveys, reports etc) is an important 'preliminary
14 instrument' (Blumer 1928) and it suggests 'possible significant factors [and] in
15 suggesting a relation...it makes it possible to come back to the individual case
16 within the aggregate and study them in the light of the suggested relation'
17 (Blumer, 1928:395). Transparency International and the World Bank alike have
18 been effective in raising awareness about corruption worldwide, embodying
19 precisely what Blumer describes here and suggesting significant factors influencing
20 and/or fuelling corruption and relations between them. However, these indices
21 have no possible way of covering these suggested factors in sufficient depth
22 without including the dimension of qualitative research. As an example, he
23 presents the theoretically arbitrary basis for selecting variables to be measured
24 within quantitative research on social phenomena- oftentimes selected *because*
25 they can be easily measured and are quite generic in nature and irrespective of
26 context (Blumer 1939). Most importantly, the main failing of quantitative research,
27 in light of the Chicago Tradition's observations, is the oversimplification and
28 operationalisation of sociological concepts. By this, Hammersley (1989) means the
29 quantitative research breaking down complex concepts to those parts that can be

1 measured, but subsequently erroneously applying these incomplete measurements
2 in reverse to the original wider concept, when interpreting results (Hammersley
3 1989).

4 This understanding applies perfectly to the concept of corruption, as demonstrated
5 by the literature review, whereby corruption is also continuously being pulled
6 apart to its individual facets and therefore continues to be studied on a reduced
7 scale and inherently deconstructed. In the same thread of thought, Heywood
8 (2014) argues that this deconstruction of corruption has also led to the issues of
9 'no authoritatively agreed-upon definition of what counts as corruption and why'
10 (2014:137). Rothstein and Teorell (2014:82) take the matter further by suggesting
11 that, synonymously to Blumer's understanding nearly a century ago, one must
12 move away from the simplistic strive to identify causality of phenomena such as
13 corruption, and instead, one must be able to 'unravel the social mechanism that
14 gave rise to it' (Rothstein and Teorell 2014). In that sense, theories and research
15 approaches should act as complementary, since neither can work on its own to
16 provide a satisfactory explanation of a given phenomenon.

17

1 The thesis addresses the aforementioned disaggregation-based measurement
2 limitations of quantitative studies by not discriminating against any one definition
3 of corruption and does not prioritise any one corruption mechanism as more
4 prevalent than others. Instead, it seeks to deepen the conceptual understanding of
5 corruption in real-life terms based on real-life examples, demonstrating the
6 respondents' thought processes through textual analysis of qualitative interviews
7 and focus groups.

8 **3.4.2 Benefits of qualitative measurements**

9 Qualitative studies approach corruption by studying phenomena in their 'natural
10 settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the
11 meanings people bring to them' (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998:3). Denzin and Lincoln
12 (1998) indicate that there are multiple reasons for qualitative methods being
13 beneficial for social science research and especially for socially embedded
14 phenomena, such as corruption. Qualitative research combines several approaches,
15 including semiotics, narrative, phenomenology, discourse, archival and phonemic
16 analysis, deminism, rhizomatics, ethnographies, interviews, cultural and
17 participant observation, hermeneutics and others (Denzin and Lincoln 1998).
18 Subsequently, it is able to encompass several facets of research, such as case
19 studies, personal experience, interviews, and also visual text. Grodeland and
20 Aasland (2011) successfully conducted 85 in-depth-interviews in conjunction with
21 quantitative surveys to indicate that post-communist societies compensate for
22 systemic shortcomings in transitional societies with the use of informal practice-
23 both out of habit and to secure favourable outcomes (Grodeland and Aasland
24 2011). Similarly, Miller et al. (2001) were able to investigate the culture of gift
25 accepting through interviewing junior officials and state employees in Ukraine,
26 Bulgaria, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. Their conclusions suggest that gift
27 giving and accepting is culturally embedded but also depended on bargaining
28 power vis-à-vis clients. Helpfully, their chosen example of such illustration is that
29 of a doctor-patient relationship and their conclusion is that attitudes of patients
30 who offer gifts are more related to their sense of powerlessness than their sense of
31 gratitude to the doctor (Millet et al. 2001). Miller et al. in fact conducted

1 numerous studies into health care corruption with focus on post-communist
2 countries utilising focus groups and interviews as preferred methods of data
3 collection in order to illuminate the allegations against healthcare staff taking
4 bribes indicated by previous studies (McKee 1991, Tishchenko and Yudin 1996). It is
5 therefore obvious that multiple elements of what the thesis focuses on have
6 successfully been investigated with the use of qualitative methods before. This
7 flexible approach appears well-suited to an inquiry into a socially embedded and
8 societally constructed corruption, as opposed to the widely used quantitative
9 approach that so often focuses on the monetary side of corruption, rather than
10 other immaterial facets of the corrupt mechanism such as facilitation, brokerage,
11 networking, connections, trust and others.

12 Conversely, quantitative research into corruption (such as polling techniques or
13 distribution of surveys) seems to be more focused on the tangible results of
14 corruption, such as its impact on the state economy and/or foreign investment of
15 the respective country (Iloie 2015), as well as strong focus on the banking sector
16 and illicit financial cyber corruption. On top of the tangible effects that are
17 targeted, the study of corruption also attracts a vast amount of corruption
18 perception study, illustrated by indices such as the CPI and WBCI. As outlined in
19 the literature review, the vicious circle of no generalised definition impacting on
20 the effectiveness of measurement and vice versa, precludes the quantitative
21 surveys and questionnaire studies from producing universally acceptable and
22 ratifiable data, due to the breadth of variation in perception indices and the
23 criteria used for measurement. To reiterate, the main criticisms can be
24 summarised as:

- 25 • an overly strong reliance on bribery and the general interchangeability of
- 26 corruption with bribery in the language and perceptions of respondents,
- 27 • the lack of verifiable replicability in individual perceptions of corruption,
- 28 • a sample of respondents mostly consisting of pundits and experts on corruption or
- 29 bribery within respondents of each country.

30 The thesis tackles these criticisms by approaching the study without the
31 assumption that bribery is the only measurable or visible form of corruption, and

1 by looking for challenging, in-depth understanding of the concept, rather than just
2 perceptions of its form or results derived from media and public discourse.

3

4 **3.5 Social pressures and challenges of corruption research**

5

6 Aside from the issues faced by corruption research, which are of a practical
7 measurement nature, there are also issues the research must face because of
8 corruption's clandestine nature. Researchers often home in on the economic side
9 of corrupt consequences because of its most tangible manifestation in terms of
10 monetary cost; i.e., what corruption actually costs the state economy, what the
11 differences are between wages and bribes in private and public sectors¹⁷, or what
12 the general awareness of the populace sees as most prevalent in publicised
13 corruption incidents. Warner (2014) describes the popular assumption of
14 economists who believe that entry into the EU would expose the CEE states to
15 competitive pressures and shared rules and regulations that would force the
16 politicians and individual actors to become less corrupt. Instead, she states, it
17 appears that not only did the new structures not reinvigorate the economic
18 corruption of countries such as Slovakia, but instead the 'new competitors from
19 other states were drawn into local corrupt practices' (2014:121) and eventually
20 such dynamic has led to increased corruption and lower EU institutional
21 accountability (Warner 2014). Research suggests that access to EU funds since
22 accession in early 2000s has also encouraged institutionalised grand corruption by
23 both: providing additional public resources for corrupt rent extraction, and also by
24 changing motivations for and controls of corruption as a result (Fazekas,

¹⁷ Peter (2007) suggests that controlling for education, hours of work, job security, fringe benefits, job satisfaction and secondary employment, public sector workers in Ukraine received 24-32 percent less income than their private sector counterparts (Peter 2007, in Olken and Pande 2012:11).

1 Chvalkovska et al. 2013). In fact, Pierson (2004, in Warner 2014) suggests that
2 fraud is an unintended consequence of creating new institutions, propelled by
3 joining new collaborative bodies such as the EU. In Fazekas et al (2013), the latter
4 effect described is entirely driven by Slovakia in their three-country study of Czech
5 Republic, Hungary and Slovakia, which further underlines the need for a detailed
6 study of corruption in Slovakia itself (Fazekas et al. 2013). Olken and Pande
7 (2012:37) explain that this phenomenon thrives due to the ‘resilience of corrupt
8 officials: over time, they adapt to changes in their environments, in some cases
9 offsetting anti-corruption policies with new avenues for seeking out rents’ (Olken
10 and Pande 2012).

11 It is difficult to know whether a study is picking up perceived costs of corruption or
12 distortions of initial prices presented, stemming from corruption. Using an example
13 of corruption in health care, the true cost of corruption may not merely be the
14 embezzled money from procured equipment ex-post, but may also include the
15 pricing estimate, which was skewed before it even entered official books. There
16 are often several, obscured transactions involved in one corrupt activity, which
17 make the tracing to the original source of corruption very difficult. Such
18 distortions, Olken and Pande (2012) suggest, can be traced back to the very nature
19 of corruption being a secretive activity, as procurement officials may purposefully
20 substitute the types of goods that make hiding corruption easier, making it
21 impossible to trace the original intention and types of goods better fit for purpose.
22 These facts that are lost in the corrupt apparatus due to individuals making opaque
23 decisions on behalf of institutions are all the more reason to doubt the ability of
24 realistically quantifying corruption with such unreliable data. On the other hand, it
25 is all the more reason to employ qualitative methods to the study of corruption-
26 only individuals, rumours, opinions, and collective knowledge of society can
27 provide a truly comprehensive and in-depth study of corruption.

28 Methodologically, the research into corruption faces several challenges. There is a
29 valid assumption that all research into corruption bears a certain amount of bias
30 from the very beginning, as researchers are likely to purposively choose cases to
31 study where corruption might be already popularly overstated and thus home in on

1 situations where they expect to find it (Olken and Pande, 2012:13). It is no
2 different in this study of corruption, which has already explained that its interest
3 in using health care in Slovakia as a case study of corruption lies in its rampant
4 presence within the Slovak health sector. However, while this may appear as bias
5 to the public, there are no other effective ways to approach corruption in its
6 clandestine nature, but to follow the leads already set out by independent reports,
7 the media, and general feeling of the populace.

8

1 **3.6 Measurement of corruption in CEE**

2

3 The majority of corruption study in the CEE region tends to focus on economically
4 larger actors, leaving smaller countries like Slovakia out of the focus of studies.
5 Moroff and Schmidt-Pfister (2010) conduct a study into anti-corruption movements,
6 focusing on Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria and Romania, addressing the role of
7 external, as well as domestic factors in the development of corruption. In so doing
8 their results contribute to the lack of 'well-conceptualised and empirically
9 grounded studies on the range of anti-corruption efforts' in the region (2010:90).
10 The authors polemicize as to whether governments of most corruption-affected
11 countries act out of their own moral impetus, or whether their efforts are
12 motivated by attracting foreign and domestic funding to generate income (Moroff
13 and Schmidt-Pfister 2010); concluding that the EU provides nothing more than
14 'vague blueprints rather than effective tools' (2010:96) in the fight against
15 corruption. The greater success of measures implemented as 'coincidental or
16 spontaneous' (2010:89) that bear societal support is emphasised and societal
17 support itself is seen as essential. As a result, the research design for the thesis
18 contributes to this empirically grounded compendium of studies, which address the
19 role of societal customs and understandings as a vital pre-requisite for successful
20 anti-corruption efforts.

21 Therefore, while the impression might be that quantitative tools for measuring
22 corruption are in place in order to raise awareness and make a positive difference,
23 in reality these can be seen as creating the illusion of fluctuating stability of
24 governmental and legal structures. Such stability is what the external actors are
25 really concerned with, as the administrative continuity and smooth transitions
26 around elections and staff rotations are more beneficial to them than systemic
27 change. In the spirit of administrative continuity, it is suggested that the Soviet
28 heritage seems to prevail in countries of the Central and Eastern bloc and that in
29 these countries 'corruption as well as shadow economy are deemed socially
30 accepted forms of resistance against an all-encroaching state' (Moroff and

1 Schmidt-Pfister, 2010:96). Jancsics (2015) concurs with this view and invokes
2 Ledeneva's concept of the post-communist countries utilising corruption to 'get
3 things done' in a dysfunctional system (2015:69). However, it is important to bear
4 in mind the varied, communist experience across the former Soviet bloc countries
5 and the impossibility of generalising completely one country's development of
6 corruption to others. It is only possible to pick out trends that may apply to
7 countries of similar circumstances and conditions, as is the essence of analytic
8 generalisation, specific for qualitative research (Falk and Guenther 2007)- these
9 are always subject to verification by further research, however. Similarly, while
10 recent research (Jancsics 2015, Ledeneva, Bratu et al. 2017) suggests that
11 corruption is still utilised as a manner of resistance to any current regime, the less
12 tolerant view is that of using corruption as a way of enrichment, 'not a resistance
13 to totalitarian power but its effective reinforcement and proliferation into micro
14 and macro social relationships' (Tishchenko and Yudin 1996). It is important not to
15 take these evaluations that dismiss corruption as a mere Soviet legacy at face
16 value, and instead focus on the direct agency of current societal norms and
17 understanding of the concept in empirical field work studies, such as this one.
18 Having outlined the conceptualisation of corruption and its measurement as
19 performed by previous research, the following chapter will further explain and
20 solidify the design of my research, anchored in qualitative methods descriptive
21 statistics.

22

23

1 Chapter 4: Research Design

2

3 **Main research question (RQ):** To what extent is the theoretical difference between
4 grand and petty corruption reflected in the real life understanding of corruption in
5 Slovakia's health care?

6 4.1 Outline

7

8 To answer the main research question, I adopted a qualitative framework, utilising
9 the single case study. Interviews and focus groups were used to generate data to
10 answer the research question. Subsequent data analysis comprised of thematic and
11 textual analysis of the transcripts utilising the NVivo software. Participant
12 recruitment was carried out through volunteer sampling via social media and fliers
13 put up in select locations was initiated in the spring of 2019 and the bulk of data
14 collection was conducted in the summer-winter of 2019. The investigation of grand
15 and petty corruption was conducted through a case study of Slovakia's healthcare
16 sector, identified as the sector with greatest potential for participant exposure and
17 greatest recorded presence of corruption. The participants consisted of the general
18 public, and also elites, defined for this thesis as those working in the healthcare
19 sector or with expert insight into the workings of the healthcare sector. The study
20 carried out 5 focus groups of nearly 20 participants in full and another separate 22
21 in-depth interviews (including elite interviews), resulting in over 1000 recorded
22 minutes of data. The methods elicited narratives from participants through a set of
23 over 30 semi-structured questions (see Appendix 3 for all questions) on their
24 understanding of corruption in real-life, having been exposed to the Slovak
25 healthcare sector in their lifetimes.

26

1 **4.1.2 Single case study**

2 The thesis literature review identified Slovakia as a feasible case study. This is due
3 to the uniquely pressing nature of corruption in Slovakia, and the specific nature of
4 corrupt practices in post-socialist societies of Central Europe. Slovakia is able to
5 uncover corruption practices that may not be seen elsewhere in the region, due to
6 its unique position among EU countries, according to the EC 2017 Report on
7 corruption in the healthcare sector. Here, Slovakia, as the only country within the
8 region of the V4, and also as the highest-ranking within the EU, is listed as a country
9 with the greatest percentage of patients experiencing frequent payment of bribes
10 for treatment (41%). For comparison, the EU average is listed as 19% in the same
11 category (EC Updated Report on Corruption in the Healthcare Sector, 2017:10).

12 The advantages of approaching topics through a single case study are widely
13 recognised within literature (Yin 2015, Gustafsson 2017). While criticised for
14 shortcomings in replicability and reliability, there are features which make the
15 single case study an obvious choice for this project. This is because single case
16 studies are particularly suitable for approaching issues rarely accessible to social
17 scientists, such as illicit activities (Yin 2015). Slovakia's healthcare sector is a
18 relevant case study of illicit activities and this is why it presents a suitable
19 environment for corruption study. Investigation of this sector assumes common
20 features with other public sectors in the country and the region, such as law
21 enforcement, the judiciary, or others. As such, it is a representative and logistically
22 manageable case study to select and has the potential to provide deeper
23 understanding of corruption within all public sectors.

24 Secondly, corruption constitutes a study of a topic inaccessible and private to most
25 research, and this study will contribute to the understanding of a largely clandestine
26 phenomenon. At the same time, the phenomenon is sufficiently institutionalised to
27 be amenable to systematic analysis. In line with this rationale, single case studies
28 such as this have the potential to support research in carrying out a qualitative
29 analysis, as opposed to the statistical generalisation which is more suited for
30 multiple case studies (Gustafsson, 2017). Levy (2008) suggests that case studies can

1 be particularly useful when explaining cases which do not fit an existing category or
2 to refine/replace an existing hypothesis or perhaps specify its scope of conditions
3 (2008:5). The single case study was selected due to such emphasis on contextual
4 nuance which defines the individual's understanding of corruption, and therefore
5 aims to specify the scope of conditions particular to corruption in public sectors,
6 like that of healthcare (Willis 2014). This is in turn reflected in the emphasis on
7 situational factors within the questions asked in the field (see Appendix 3, questions
8 on the role of trust, the behaviour of patient or staff, or the scenarios presented to
9 participants to gauge their opinion on concrete examples).

10 While a field experiment might present itself as a viable alternative method to use
11 due to its higher plausibility of establishing a causal relationship, and potential for
12 greater external validity, the design of an experiment to include corrupt behaviour
13 presents with great ethical and logistical challenges. There is also the ethical
14 challenge of inevitably deceiving the participants in order to be able to gain sight of
15 genuine corrupt interaction (Gerber and Green 2011). In order to observe genuine
16 and unfiltered behaviour of such an experiment, one would have to mislead the
17 participant into thinking that the research is focused on something marginal to what
18 is actually getting observed- if participants knew that corrupt exchanges will be
19 observed, they may not act as they normally would in such circumstances. For
20 example, recent research by Shaw (2015) into memory and psychology adopted
21 deception by making participants think that the study was focused on their ability
22 to recall memories, when in reality the study was testing the probability of
23 implanting false memories into participants' minds (Shaw and Porter 2015). If the
24 participants had knowledge of the real purpose, the study would not be able to
25 proceed with valid results. Furthermore, my research does not concern itself with
26 the issue of causality at its centre, but rather the real-life understanding of
27 corruption operating within Slovakia's healthcare system. Therefore, the methods
28 chosen are interviews and focus groups, which, rather than inferring causality,
29 encourage the understanding of concepts through the medium of spoken language-
30 the most natural form of expression (Barr and Feigenbaum 1981, Seidman 1998,
31 Lindquist, MacCormack et al. 2015). This is linguistically preferable to the use of
32 questionnaires or surveys, which have more potential for external factors to alter

1 responses, potential for self-censorship of language, and for superficial answers
2 (Eaden, Mayberry et al. 1999, Cresswell and Cresswell 2018)

3 The research followed Robert Yin's (2015) definition of single case study as 'an
4 empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within
5 its real-life context, especially if the boundaries between a phenomenon and
6 context are not clearly evident'. Further to the suitability of this method, the single
7 case study here also provides elements of convenience due to its location and
8 financial manageability of research within a given time frame (given only one
9 researcher and limited resources). While there are inevitable limitations of case
10 studies, (namely the subjectivity of the views collected), if transparency is upheld
11 within the given project, then acquiring contextually rich data into sensitive topics
12 compensates for the lack of generalisability (Leung 2015). The research therefore
13 does not see the limited generalisability within the case study of Slovakia as a
14 weakness, but instead highlights the in-depth particularity of study and the
15 inevitable colour and dimension that this adds to the interpretation of data in this
16 thesis. As Greene and Caracelli (1997) point out, it is particularity rather than
17 generalisability that is the hallmark of good qualitative research (Greene and
18 Caracelli 1997). Following on from this discussion, the single case study was selected
19 as the empirical approach most suitable.

20 **4.1.3 Qualitative theoretical framework**

21 It has been suggested that quantitative corruption-measurement designs work
22 better if based on clearly delineated qualitative themes and areas of focus
23 (Duncan 2006). Quantitative survey research, for example, with its numeric
24 description of trends and attitudes is too reductionist for an in-depth investigation
25 of corruption. Experimental research is also borderline impossible to conduct, as
26 corruption is too complex and too difficult to isolate its individual facets. Scholarly
27 consensus across the literature suggests that the very best approach is that of
28 mixed methods (i.e. the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods), and
29 there is no doubt that ideally the complementation of qualitative and quantitative
30 techniques would be most beneficial here as well (Levy 2008). The thesis does

1 employ descriptive statistics, for example: picking out trends in the breakdown of
2 demographics connected to frequent answers. However, the rationale for selecting
3 a primarily qualitative approach is in its demonstrably lower frequency of use
4 compared to quantitative measures in corruption research, its manageability for
5 this particular design, and also in its indisputable potential to unveil a more
6 nuanced understanding of corruption. It is established practice that most
7 quantitative studies into corruption focus on measurable, monetary-based
8 manifestations of the phenomenon (see Chapter 2 & 3). As this research
9 investigates corrupt practices that are not just monetary in nature but can exist on
10 the basis of exchanging services or gifts, quantitative measures would be less
11 effective in capturing the nuances in participant narratives. The impossibility of
12 measuring corruption directly, but rather having reports or measuring by proxies is
13 also why quantitative measures cannot produce the desired accuracy within
14 corruption research (Duncan 2006). Following this logic, qualitative methods of
15 focus groups and in-depth, semi-structured interviews were selected. This is in
16 order to obtain nuanced narrative results that can delineate how the participants
17 understand corruption from their unique points of view, and in their own words.
18 The limitations of subjectivity and difficult replicability are present within these
19 qualitative methods. However, the assumption is for interviews and focus groups
20 to be able to elicit an invaluable cross section of common themes in the
21 understanding of corruption in a real-life setting.

22 Qualitative methods are more suitable in this situation, where the topic is sensitive,
23 or the existing theories don't fully apply to the situation at hand, as is demonstrated
24 by the misconception that corruption in healthcare should necessarily be understood
25 in financial terms and can only have a primarily financial impact on society (Morse
26 1991, Morse 1994). To provide further rationale for selecting interviews and focus
27 groups, usage of these has been an accepted practice for the investigation of several
28 corruption-related informal networks research conducted to date (Miller, Grodeland
29 et al. 2000, Miller 2001) The methods of interviews and focus groups, as well as
30 textual NVivo analysis are consistent with the criteria for conducting rigorous
31 qualitative research (Creswell & Cresswell, 2018:18).

1 4.2 Methods

2

3 The project addressed the understanding of corruption in a real-life setting. The
4 objective was to maximise the depth of information acquired, while also minimising
5 the threat of a low number of responses to a sensitive topic. As sociological research
6 shows, there can be quite a variation of responses and cooperation levels within
7 group settings, and researcher-respondent productivity varies based on same or
8 different-sex interactions (Balliet, Li et al. 2011). It was therefore obvious that the
9 potential for best results would be in a combination of methods that provide the
10 greatest variation of these group sizes and interactions, while also producing
11 qualitatively rich results, with a low opportunity for language censorship.

12 Focus groups and in-depth interviews were selected as the most fitting
13 methodological approach to collecting data. Similarly to research conducted by
14 Grodeland et al (1998) and Miller et al. (2001), there are drawbacks that are
15 inevitable. The participants were selected through volunteer sampling and
16 snowballing recruitment and were over 40 in total. In order to both increase the
17 sample size and provide a rich set of results (and to increase levels of comfort and
18 security), the participants were given the choice of participating in either focus
19 groups or in-depth interview, with the option of following up from the focus group
20 in an interview as well. Only a fraction of participants took advantage of this option,
21 however. The decision to combine these methods stems from not being able to
22 ascertain whether the participants would feel more comfortable to share their views
23 on corruption in a group, or on a one-to-one basis. From previous research into
24 sensitive topics (Brannen 1988, Lee 1993, Dickson-Swift, James et al. 2008) the
25 assumption was that in-depth individual interviews would be a more popular choice
26 for the participants. However, the ratio of participants in focus groups and
27 interviews was a nearly even split, 20/22. This however, includes the elite in-depth
28 interviews as well as those conducted with the general public- without elite
29 interviews the split is weighted towards focus group participation, 20/14. As a
30 result, the research was able to conduct both focus groups and interviews alike and

1 both presented a different but a valuable set of results. These varied in length of
 2 response and nature of response¹⁸. There is also the practical factor of one
 3 researcher not possibly being able to engage the number of participants that they
 4 would like to work with, and therefore the combination of focus groups and in-depth
 5 interviews had the potential to produce more data for analysis.

6

Method	Focus groups	Interviews
Male	12	6
Female	8	16

7

Table 4.1 Method preference split for interviews and focus groups. Source: Author

8

9 There were four focus groups conducted in total. The focus groups generally
 10 consisted of 3- 5 participants each. There was one larger focus group of 7
 11 participants but there was no discernible difference to me between running the
 12 larger and smaller focus groups; they appeared to function in a similar manner and
 13 yielded similar length of responses. The gender split across participants overall was
 14 22 females and 18 males but the focus groups had a split more significantly weighted
 15 towards men, with a 12/8 split. For interviews however, women were by far the
 16 larger group, 16/6. This is consistent with sociological research and evolutionary
 17 theories on male interaction in research, whereby men tend to value groups in
 18 defining their self-concept (Baumeister and Sommer 1997) and women tend to find

¹⁸ For example, the group tended to bounce ideas off of one another more, or there were always a few participants who seemed to enjoy the role of a contrarian to others. Whereas the interviews tended to be more sombre in nature; more serious and with a greater depth of thought and length of response.

1 closer interpersonal relationships more important in the same endeavour (Cross and
 2 Madson 1997). However, this can also be due to the higher discovered rate in
 3 cultural norms for women being more cooperative, when it comes to mixed-sex
 4 interactions than men (Balliet, Li et al. 2011). Two females from the focus groups
 5 also acted as participants for interviews. This indicates a trend, which showed a
 6 tendency for men to participate in group discussion, as opposed to the individual
 7 interviews. The opposite was the case for women.

8

Age range	20+	30+	40+	50+	60+	80+
Male	2	6	5	3	1	1
Female	4	2	4	9	3	0

9

Table 4.2 Age split within interviews and focus groups. Source: Author

10

11 Ages of participants ranged from 20-80+ but there was only one participant of 80+,
 12 which indicates a non-representative sample with regards to age. The greatest
 13 cluster of participants was in the 50+ range, as shown in Table 4.2.

14

Education	Primary school	High school	University
Male	1	6	11
Female	1	9	12

15

Table 4.3 Education levels split within interviews and focus groups. Source: Author

1

2 The education level split for focus groups was weighted more heavily towards high-
3 school educated participants, as opposed to university-educated participants, in a
4 13/6 split. Overall, the educational level split was 16 high-school educated
5 participants, 23 university-educated participants and only 2 primary-school
6 educated participants. Such a split poses challenges of demographic sample
7 representativeness, but, due to volunteer sampling, also realistically indicates a
8 greater willingness to tackle complex issues by participants of higher education
9 levels. It is important to point out that within the 23 university-educated
10 participants there are 8 elite participants included, which inflates the number of
11 university-educated participants.

12

13 **4.2.1 In-depth interviews¹⁹**

14 Interviews are an accepted practice for inquiry into sensitive topics (Grodland,
15 Koshechkina et al. 1998), as well as inquiry into informal networks specifically (Miller
16 2001). Interviews with open-ended and semi-structured questions were designed to
17 elicit as much information on a given topic as possible and the research needed a
18 wealth of data and individual respondent's language to be able to draw on linguistic
19 and semantic similarities/ differences within the corruption understanding of
20 participants. Moreover, the semi-structured interview is seen as a flexible resource
21 which may be used in conjunction with other research techniques, such as focus
22 groups (Byrne 2012) which was the case here. My assumption was that interviews
23 would provide the necessary environment of confidentiality and security of a one-

¹⁹ Defined as 'Conversations with a purpose' Burgess, J., C. Limb and C. M. Harrison (1988).

"Exploring environmental values through the medium of small groups: 1. Theory and practice."
Environment and Planning A **20**(3): 309-326.

1 on-one conversation. Equally, I hoped that they would be more conducive to sharing
2 potentially controversial views that might carry elements of self-judgment for
3 condoning or even participating in petty corruption. Finally, the assumption was that
4 while conducting interviews I would be able to more effectively track my own
5 processes as an interviewer and conduct rigorous reflexivity on these as a result.

6 What an interview produces is a particular representation or account of an
7 individual's views and opinions (Byrne 2012). It provides access to attitudes, values
8 and feelings; flexibility; exploration of suppressed views; sensitive issues; it has the
9 potential to achieve depth; and also reflect complexity. In-depth interviews give the
10 respondents 'less opportunity to stay silent on a topic' (Grodeland, 1998:661), which
11 is a good tool to push the participants for responses, in order to acquire a rich
12 qualitative dataset to analyse. The methodological advantages of semi-structured
13 interviews, as opposed to structured or unstructured interviews are laid out below
14 and explain why the semi-structured model was selected²⁰.

15 **4.2.2 Researcher bias and reflexivity in interviews**

16 One of the main criticisms of interview techniques is the difficulty of detaching one's
17 personal views as a researcher from the interviews and the respondent's answers.
18 Following the well-documented emphasis on the researcher's role in interviews
19 (Oakley 1981) I had to be mindful of personal involvement in the interviews:
20 'Personal involvement is more than just dangerous bias- it is the condition under
21 which people come to know each other and to admit others into their lives' (1981:41,

-
- ²⁰ Semi-structured interviews allow for questions to be substantially modified for individuals or different groups of respondents to allow the researcher to improvise follow-up questions. In this sense the thesis employed a post-modernist approach to interviewing, which, through the ability of the researcher to dynamically respond to the participant, allowed for the interviewer and the interviewee to construct through dialogue a view of social reality Scott, G. and R. Garner (2013). Doing Qualitative Research: Designs, Methods, and Techniques. NJ, Pearson..
 - Structured interviewing allows the researcher to impose their own framing and categories on to the questions, but therefore constrains the way the respondents can address the topic.
 - Unstructured interviews offer great scope for employing grounded theory and letting themes emerge on their own, but pose significant problems with regards to translation, transcription and hypothesis testing.

1 58). It is crucial not to detach oneself too far but find the right balance in the
2 interviewing technique. Previous researchers characterise interviews as ‘stylised
3 social events’ and underline the importance and relevance of reflexivity when
4 undertaking interviews (Holland, Ramazanoglu et al. 1994). Reflexivity involves
5 critical self-scrutiny on the part of the researchers, who need, at all stages of the
6 research process, to ask themselves about their role in the research. Following this
7 accepted practice, I had to accept that it is necessary to move away from the idea
8 of researcher as the neutral, detached observer that is implied in much classical
9 survey work. It involves acknowledging that the researcher approaches the research
10 from a specific position, and this affects the approach taken, the questions asked,
11 and the analysis produced. Rigorous approach to reflexivity was paramount in the
12 interviewing process undertaken, in order to mitigate researcher bias.

13 After conducting their own research, Grodeland et al (1998) state that a detailed
14 schedule of questions in interviews allows for a ‘more structured analysis than focus-
15 group discussions, because respondents are less likely to avoid questions by staying
16 silent, while also allowing for a degree of privacy’ (1998:656). I concur with this
17 view and in light of the discussion on interviewing techniques presented here, a
18 structured set of themes and questions to address was produced and pilot tested
19 prior to interviews. The questions included the following, in order to cover the
20 themes such as: awareness of corruption levels, grand corruption impacting on petty
21 and vice versa; the rationale behind gift giving, the view of using personal contacts
22 to get ahead of the rest, the conditions necessary for corruption to take place, the
23 kinds of environments most likely to foster corrupt strategies and others:

- 24 • Have you ever heard the terms grand and petty corruption? What do you envisage
25 under each of these terms? Do you think this is a useful distinction to apply?
- 26 • What do you think is worse in general, grand or petty corruption? Does your answer
27 alter when addressing health care?
- 28 • Are you aware of the levels of corruption in health care in this country? Do you think
29 corruption is widespread in Slovakia? If so, why?
- 30 • How do you feel when you hear about a corruption scandal in the news or read about
31 it in the paper?
- 32 • What do you think are the conditions needed for corruption to take place in real life?

- 1 • Where in health care do you think is corruption at its highest level? Within GPs,
2 specialised health care clinics, specialty doctors, state or private facilities?
- 3 • How do you think corruption is carried out?
- 4 • What do you think is the importance of contacts in receiving quality of healthcare?
5 Do you consider the use of personal contacts and connections to be a form of
6 corruption?
- 7 • How do you understand the difference between a token of ‘thanks’ and inducement
8 of preferential behaviour?
- 9 • Where in health care do you think is corruption at its highest level? Within GPs,
10 specialised health care clinics, specialty doctors, state or private facilities?

11 **4.2.3 Focus groups²¹**

12 Building on existing theories about differences in effectiveness of participant
13 interaction with the researcher based on sex, and size of group (see Balliet et al.
14 2011 for a comprehensive overview), focus groups were selected to offset any
15 potential shortcomings arising from interviews. These related to sampling, as well
16 as participant involvement. The assumption was that focus groups may be easier for
17 participants to get involved in conversation on sensitive subjects, and that for
18 certain demographics (males) this may be their preferred medium of participation,
19 which was confirmed (Balliet et al., 2011). Not wanting to miss out on any
20 participants, and for the purposes of a truly varied sample, focus groups were the
21 ideal medium. Secondly, should the assumption that interviews may be a more
22 popular choice for participation not be confirmed, focus groups were an alternative
23 way to maximise data collected and minimise time consumption that redesigning
24 the research would inevitably cause. Focus groups were also selected in order to
25 provide varied kinds of expression in comparison with interviews. Stewart et al
26 (2011) state that focus groups are particularly useful for topics considered to be

²¹ Defined as: ‘A group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on the topic that is the subject of the research’ Powell, R. A. and H. M. Single (1996). “Methodology Matters V: Focus Groups.” *International Journal for Quality in Health Care* **8**(5): 499-504.

1 sensitive and socially undesirable- corruption undeniably belongs in such a category
2 (Stewart, Shamdasani et al. 2011).

3 Additionally, participants may not have felt comfortable speaking about a largely
4 taboo topic by themselves with the researcher; the security of a group may provide
5 for a coaxing quality. Corrupt practices may indeed have ingrained themselves in
6 societal and public discourse in post-communist societies (Ledeneva, 2009).
7 However, the actual labelling of what people might consider to be a simple
8 mechanism for getting by as 'corrupt' came as an uncomfortable label to most
9 participants, with many combatting it. The assumption was that focus group
10 dynamics may incite further discussion on the topic and generate questions or
11 insights that were previously not considered by the researcher. Following Grodeland
12 et al (1998) I recognised that a purely interview-based approach excludes the
13 possibility of one person's 'confession' encouraging the speaking up of another
14 participant, which is the main advantage of focus group research. Morgan (2011)
15 points out that for many participants, the best part about a focus group is the ability
16 to 'share and compare' their views or experiences.

17 This method, which has its roots in the 1940s corporate and state-commissioned
18 research into mass media and the public's view of products or broadcast (Stewart,
19 Shamdasani et al. 2011), can sometimes be alternated with other group methods
20 such as participant observation, the nominal group technique or brainstorming
21 (Morgan 2011, Stewart, Shamdasani et al. 2011). While these methods may be valid
22 for several other topics of research, they all require specific criteria to deliver
23 efficacy. These criteria make the methods unsuitable in comparison with the
24 selected focus groups method²².

-
- ²² The Nominal Group Technique- requires that the group is a group only in name, but participants are in fact interviewed as individuals and summaries of their responses are then presented to the following participants. This method would however counteract the main purpose of focus group use which is the group acting as a catalyst for eliciting answers.

1 **4.2.4 Interviews and focus groups combined**

2 The research followed the logic of Merton (1990) and Kitzinger (1994). They suggest
3 that rather than trying to separate the individual and group method, the participants
4 should be engaged with both methods in order to present behavioural differences
5 between how people behave alone and in groups, as well as present different quality
6 of responses and discourse (Merton, Fiske et al. 1990, Kitzinger 1994). This research
7 set the gathering of a variety of behavioural patterns, as well as richness of
8 discourse, as the paramount value in the deeper understanding of corruption.
9 Morgan (2011) goes as far as to suggest that individual interviewing *should* in fact
10 be combined with focus groups, one as a follow-up to the other, to provide precisely
11 the balance that this research was looking for. He suggests that one can either start
12 with a set of preliminary interviews to give the participants a feel for what will be
13 discussed or vice versa (Morgan 2011). For this research, I started with focus groups
14 and offered the option of volunteering for a further interview. This order was
15 selected from an ethical perspective, in order to provide for a group dynamic first,
16 in case participants feel more comfortable listening at first and then joining in later,
17 due to the topic sensitivity. While there is potential for limitations to arise from this
18 approach, whereby, for example, the focus group experience could have influenced
19 answers during interviews, the risk taken was compensated for by the breadth of
20 topics covered and the wealth of material acquired. No theoretical assumptions in
21 case of qualitative research involving real-life applicants can ever be 100% certain
22 and therefore a flexible approach such as this was selected, in order to

-
- Participant observation- this method is invaluable in order to be able to observe participants in their naturalistic setting Corruption (which is by essence a clandestine endeavour), would be borderline impossible/dangerous to study using this technique.
 - Within the brainstorming technique, the participants are encouraged to generate ideas, approaches or solutions without regard to cost, practicality or feasibility Stewart, D., P. Shamdasani and D. Rook (2011). Other Group Methods. Focus Groups. Thousand Oaks, SAGE Publications, Ltd.: 153-161.. It is my belief that a good focus group with an engaged set of participants will generate elements of brainstorming regardless of the format.

1 methodologically counter as many shortcomings as possible, while also prioritising
2 the value of the material acquired.

3 **4.2.5 Elite interviews**²³

4 The procedure and execution of the elite interviews resembles that of in-depth
5 interviews with the general public. The research followed Smith's (2005) reasoning
6 that elites are often problematised too much for their assumed positions of
7 superiority and power, creating categories of 'elite' and 'non-elite' or 'powerful'
8 and 'vulnerable' (Smith 2005). This is why the research identified elites not as
9 necessarily holding a lot of power and holding a factor of intimidation, but for their
10 unique professional insight into the problematic- i.e. doctors, nurses, healthcare
11 professionals on the same level as managerial executives with access to budgets
12 and procurement schemes. The only variations made for the elite interview
13 technique have been the phrasing of questions. This was done in order not to
14 antagonise elites from responding, or including just elite-specific questions, as well
15 as ensuring a dynamic and flexible response to the participants' language and nature
16 of their expertise. Such elite-specific questions or altered questions include for
17 example:

- 18 • Have you got insight into the factors allowing for corruption to survive in this sector?
- 19 • In your professional capacity and experience, how do you see corruption today?
- 20 • ** Alteration from 'Do you think health care authorities are corrupt?' to 'Have you
21 ever heard of any corrupt activity within the health care authorities?'

22 These interviews were still semi-structured, in-depth, and of a similar length (on
23 average 35 minutes per interview). To gain a more complete and multi-faceted
24 insight into corruption in healthcare, elites from the health care, business, and law-
25 enforcement sectors were approached via email, phone or social media. Anonymity

²³ Defined as a facet of in-depth interviews: '*The focus of a qualitative elite interview is on specialised knowledge that the interviewee possesses*' Dexter, L. A. (1970). *Elite and Specialised Interviewing*. IL, Northwestern University Press.

1 for these participants has been paramount and ethically the research had to be held
2 up to the highest standard to counter potential danger that comes with disclosing
3 sensitive and potentially harmful information.

4

1 4.3 Fieldwork

2

3 Fieldwork was conducted in Slovakia, with rigorous protocols in place to comply
4 with the requirements of the risk assessment. I checked in regularly with my
5 supervisors, kept diligent field notes, and reflexivity logs to mitigate any loss of
6 information.

7 Focus groups and in-depth interviews were carried out in the capital of Slovakia and
8 in Central Slovakia²⁴, where the presumption was that with the varied nature of
9 health care available (not only hospitals or clinics, but also private practices, GP
10 practices, specialist clinics), access to health care would be frequent and
11 ubiquitous. The fieldwork was conducted primarily on the premises of the
12 PanEuropean University in Bratislava, which had officially agreed to this during the
13 summer of 2019. The reason for selecting this particular venue was its relative
14 neutrality of setting- ie it had no connection to the topic studied and presented with
15 a tranquil environment without distractions in the summer months. As much
16 travelling to carry out in-depth interviews in Central Slovakia as possible was
17 undertaken. However, expectations had to be realistic with the number of resources
18 available to this self-funded project. The data collection methods selected were
19 designed to collect primarily from the public audience. This approach was utilised
20 in order to counter unrepresentative data collection for macro
21 reports (Transparency International or World Bank), focusing solely on the opinions
22 of experts, rather than the public (Ko and Samajdar 2010).

²⁴ Since several grand corruption scandals have been detected in health care establishments of central Slovakia (namely cardiology equipment procurement in the Banska Bystrica Rossevelt hospital), it presents the region as relevant for investigation, as participants are likely to be aware of grand corruption. Therefore, if possible, conducted interviews and focus groups were concentrated in this region, making the study more relevant and valid on a multi-regional level.

1 The participants were invited to attend a focus group for approximately 45 minutes,
2 with the possibility to either continue on to in-depth interviews on a different day
3 to tackle issues of fatigue. The in-depth interview also required at least 45 minutes
4 of time from the participant. After initial volunteer sampling, the participants were
5 also able to make recommendations to the researcher of other potential participants
6 to approach, thus facilitating the recruitment process.

7 While there are selection shortcomings connected to snowball recruitment,
8 according to Jancsics (2015), this approach is advocated as very effective in the
9 scholarly community for its advantages with regards to recruitment for sensitive
10 subjects which outweighs the downside of potential bias (Burgess, Limb et al. 1988,
11 Holbrook and Jackson 1996, Gibson, Cameron et al. 1999). The questions asked in
12 interviews and focus groups, along with the consent form and plain language
13 statement templates can be viewed on request as part of the approved ethics
14 application.

15

4.4 Recruitment of participants, sampling, and related challenges

Type of method	Expected participants	Expected location	Type of recruitment
Focus groups	Target: 10 x3 participants per group	Bratislava region (neutral location of empty classrooms or public hire venues)	Information notices, internet postings, social media, snowballing from personal contacts
In-depth non-elite interviews	Target: 30 participants	Bratislava and Banska Bystrica (central SVK) region (neutral location of empty classrooms or public hire venues)	Information notices, internet postings, social media, snowballing from direct participants and snowballing from focus groups
Elite interviews	Target: 15-20 participants	Bratislava region (as convenient for the elites)	Acquaintances, approaching local hospitals for access to doctors and health professionals, cooperation with NGOs in gatekeeping access to ex-directors of regulatory financial bodies for health care institutions, cooperation with Transparency International Slovakia, Academy of Sciences

Table 4.4: Recruitment breakdown, Source: Author

Recruitment followed the guidelines of equitable selection, respect for privacy, unbiased presentation of information on the research and lack of pressure on potential participants. Due to the sensitive nature of the research and vulnerable

1 position of the patient in a doctor-patient relationship, bias was reduced by not
2 recruiting in health care establishments by a method of direct recruitment. Such
3 establishments like hospitals or clinics would present the research with an inevitably
4 biased sample of respondents currently dealing with several frustrations of the
5 healthcare system (such as lack of staff, long waits, insufficient medical equipment
6 etc), not exclusive to corruption and could inject a negative attitude to responses
7 overall. Therefore, accessing such a participant pool or issuing letters for referrals
8 by healthcare professionals would present a skewed sample and was avoided.

9 Instead, the recruitment branched out to two potential avenues: volunteer sampling
10 from social media notices and physical flyers, and snowballing from thus acquired
11 participants. The aim was to try and get as wide a demographic sample as possible
12 with varying levels of education, without gender or age bias but excluding vulnerable
13 groups such as children and minors or the disabled, purely for gaining as standard
14 and objective a sample as possible of the majority of those who access health care
15 typically. The convenience and time restrictions put on the study were also
16 considered- to include vulnerable groups would mean a vast amount of extra
17 preparation and measures to mitigate bias and counter vulnerability and would
18 require an amendment to research methods, as well as to data analysis. The study
19 could not afford to conduct such a wide-ranging research in its time frame, and it
20 was beyond the capabilities of a self-funded researcher to encompass such a large
21 sample.

22

23 ***4.4.1 Volunteer sampling***

24 The research therefore produced information notices and internet postings on social
25 media (Facebook, Twitter public forum ads) to attract subjects and also posted up
26 fliers in neutral and widely frequented settings such as educational facilities,
27 libraries, and town hall notice boards in districts of Bratislava. The social media
28 postings were posted on several popular and publicly accessible

1 Facebook groups, Twitter addresses and Instagram accounts²⁵, without targeting
2 those groups who are likely to be against public health care. NGOs have also been
3 provided with the same post to be able to reach more participants and to minimise
4 bias²⁶. Social media recruitment was selected due to its practical nature and wide
5 reach, with evidence showing that social media recruitment can counter low
6 recruitment accrual and has the potential to reach a broader audience than other
7 recruitment techniques (Gelinas, Pierce et al. 2017, Arigo, Pagoto et al.
8 2018). However, there are also several issues with social media recruitment, such
9 as optimal benchmarks, sampling bias, or privacy, which needed to be
10 countered. Arigo, Pagoto et al. (2018) suggest some measures to counter these, and
11 I followed these techniques. I was selective with information presented in
12 recruitment materials to avoid responses from non-targeted users; included the
13 usernames or hashtags of high-profile users who are influencers for the target
14 population (for example news outlets, Transparency International, etc.), as well as
15 selected the relevant platforms for advertising carefully. In order to place physical
16 fliers on notice boards in cultural centres, libraries and town hall notice boards,²⁷
17 permission was first sought from the building manager and made sure the content
18 of these provided all necessary information about the possible dates and duration of

²⁵ These were namely (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram if available): Transparency International Slovensko [over 27,000 followers on Facebook, over 800 followers on Twitter] (F: <https://m.facebook.com/transparencysk/>; T: @transparencysk), Nadácia Zastavme Korupciu [over 2,000 followers on Instagram, over 30,000 followers on Facebook] (F: <https://www.facebook.com/NadaciaZastavmeKorupciu/>; I: nadacia_zastavmekorupciu) Liga proti korupcii [over 300 members on Facebook] (F: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1607785872822034/?ref=share>) Modrý koník [over 4,000 followers on Facebook and over 4,000 followers on Instagram] (F: <https://www.facebook.com/Modr%C3%BDkon%C3%ADk-242192219272658/> ; I: modrykonik)

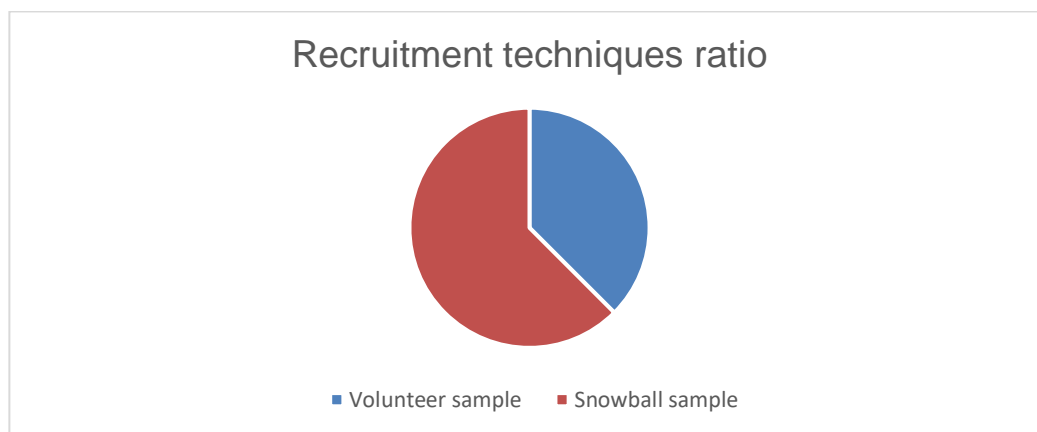
²⁶ These were namely: Transparency International Slovensko

²⁷ Locations include but are not exclusive to the following venues in Bratislava: Dom Kultúry Zrkadlový háj, Dom Kultúry Ružinov, Knižnica Ružinov, Knižnica Petržalka, Miestny úrad Petržalka.

1 the research, the voluntary nature of it, and the potential for refreshments,
2 including contact details.

3 **4.4.2 Snowball sampling**

4 The study also utilised non-probability sampling, namely snowball sampling from the
5 gained participants who volunteered, based on the social media notices and flyers.
6 This proved most useful and produced the most significant pool of participants, at
7 62.5%.



8

9 **Figure 4.1 Recruitment techniques ratio, Source: Author**

10

11 While both volunteer and snowball sampling present bias in terms of selecting a
12 sample of participants who want to share as opposed to the rest, it would be
13 unrealistic to think that the research had any leverage that would make participants
14 who joined on a voluntary basis talk about corruption if they did not wish to do so.
15 The study directly followed Seale's (2012:145) recommendation of using volunteer
16 and snowball sampling in order to access a population relatively hidden, as in the
17 case of those engaging in illicit activities. As a mitigation of potential bias, Seale
18 recommends multiple starting points for snowball sampling so that more than one
19 network is accessed, and the study followed this measure as far as possible (Seale
20 2012).

1 There was also the option of the researcher's personal contacts (friends, co-workers,
2 school connections) and social networks to be used to gain participants or to use
3 these as a basis for snowballing, although the bias involved in this had to be taken
4 into account during data analysis with transparent presentation of data in both
5 languages and disclosing the relationship between researcher and participant.
6 Research into similar topics has already proved, however, that personal relationships
7 such as friendships or acquaintances can in fact be beneficial for establishing a
8 needed connection for sensitive topics (Tillmann-Healy 2003, Owton and Allen-
9 Collinson 2013). For elite interviews, due to the sensitive and taboo nature of the
10 research, the elites gained proved impossible to acquire through any other than
11 these networks. Several gatekeepers were approached²⁸, as were professional
12 institutions²⁹, or individuals with insight into corruption. However, no
13 representatives of such institutions were willing to share their views. Therefore, the
14 elites were sourced through personal networks initially and a few were snowballed
15 from them, lowering bias through lower researcher-participant connection. Even
16 then, the accrual rate was low, even with assurances of anonymity; this meant that
17 the target was missed by 12 elites. This is a testament to how difficult participant
18 recruitment is for sensitive topics and how valuable any data acquired is. Jancsics
19 (2015) advocates snowball sampling as the best tool for corruption investigation.
20 Despite some shortcomings of snowball sampling, as outlined by Jancsics (2015),
21 (such as selection bias which reduces the validity of the sample and also bias towards
22 the researcher who in some cases is vouched for with regards to trustworthiness),
23 he maintains that the advantages heavily outweigh the disadvantages. The primary
24 advantage of snowball sampling with sensitive topics such as corruption is the
25 provision of access to hard-to-reach populations (Atkinson and Flint 2001) and also
26 access in general to those willing to share their opinions on a largely taboo subject.

²⁸ Such as Transparency International, Slovakia chapter.

²⁹ Such as the Slovak Academy of Sciences.

1 **4.4.3 Heterogeneity within focus groups**

2 Bloor et al (2011) warn against an artificial manipulation of participants to avoid
3 producing a non-representative sample. The recommendation is that 'care should
4 be taken to avoid groups that consist of individuals too diverse to obtain a sufficient
5 depth of information' on the research topic (Bloor, Frankland et al. 2011). Morgan
6 (2011) concurs and advises that it is indeed a myth that a focus group must consist
7 of strangers, as naturally occurring groups usually present with unavoidable
8 acquaintance. It is also not supported by anything other than anecdotal evidence
9 that age homogeneity or heterogeneity has any real influence on group behaviour
10 (Shaw 1981). Because of these recommendations, particular emphasis was not
11 placed on forcing the focus groups to be of diverse age or gender, but rather collated
12 groups based on time availability and willingness of participants. Artificial
13 manipulation of participants into specific groups may have reduced the sample size
14 due to scheduling difficulties and as demonstrated above, there is no hard evidence
15 to prove that heterogeneity of a group in various aspects of demographics produces
16 a higher quality of results. The only real criterion, according to Morgan (2011), when
17 selecting the sample for focus groups, is whether the particular group of participants
18 can comfortably discuss the topic in ways that are useful to the researcher
19 (2011:36). Therefore, the study did not view any particular composition of the group
20 as a weakness. The study interpreted the willingness of certain demographics to talk
21 about the topic more than others as a valuable part of the results. These kinds of
22 trends emerging naturally in the participant response rate could provide valuable
23 insight into the sociological make up of Slovak society and of those willing/able to
24 be active in social change- alternatively, also those who perhaps access health care
25 more frequently and have greater wealth of experience. The breadth of resources
26 had to be recognised as imposing limits on what can be done in one single study.
27 With participants of similar age to that of the researcher (and this is relevant to the
28 interviewing ethical behaviour in general), I had to be mindful of maintaining a
29 professional distance and had to be mindful of following purpose and procedure
30 under the rules of confidentiality (Kvale 2011).

1 **4.4.4 Ensuring open discussion within focus groups**

2 Stewart et al (2011) make a point of ensuring that the researcher is aware of traits
3 that can make the group or interview dynamic unexpected, including personality
4 traits such as assertiveness of individuals (ascendant tendencies), behavioural
5 consistency, emotional stability, and others(Stewart, Shamdasani et al. 2011). They
6 do not see these factors as necessarily problematic but encourage the researcher
7 and/or moderator to be aware of the effects these can have on the group if not
8 managed. Because of this caution I made sure to be mindful of an effective but not
9 necessarily a controlling moderation style within focus groups. Interestingly,
10 snowballing from participants the researcher has already met is seen as a good
11 preventative technique from having to deal with challenging personality traits, as
12 prior knowledge of respondents' personalities, based on who refers them, helps a
13 moderator understand how best to interact with said participants (2011:24). This is
14 why I felt more comfortable recruiting using snowball technique from focus group
15 participants on several occasions throughout the research. It is worth pointing out
16 at this time, that such mindfulness of personality elements makes the moderator
17 better equipped to deal with any eventualities arising throughout the focus group or
18 the interview.

19

1 4.5 Research questions and hypotheses

2

3 **Overarching research question (RQ):** To what extent is the theoretical difference
4 between grand and petty corruption reflected in the real-life understanding of
5 corruption in Slovakia's health care?

6 Real-life understanding is based on the definition laid out by Schwandt (2001:84) as
7 a human lived experience: ie 'the *life-world* as it is lived, felt, undergone, made
8 sense of, and accomplished by human beings' (Schwandt 2001). In such a way the
9 thesis investigated the understanding of corruption as constituted by the
10 participants' awareness based on their 'life-world'.

11

12 1. RQ1: How does awareness of grand corruption inform/justify individual engagement
13 in petty corruption?

14

15 2. RQ2: How does awareness of petty corruption inform/justify individual engagement
16 in grand corruption?

17

18 *H_{0a}: Awareness of grand corruption will have no impact on the engagement of*
19 *individuals in petty corruption and vice versa.*

20

21 *H_{1a}: Awareness of grand corruption will inform/justify individual engagement in*
22 *petty corruption.*

23

24 *H_{1b}: Awareness of petty corruption will inform/justify individual engagement in*
25 *grand corruption.*

26

27

28 3. RQ3: What are the strategies utilised to carry out grand and petty corrupt practices?
29 *Theoretical assumption: There will be similarities in the strategies utilised to carry*
30 *out grand and petty corrupt practices.*

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- RQ3a- subquestion: What is the significance of trust as a pre-requisite for corrupt interactions?

Theoretical assumption: Trust is understood as one of the processes of corruption that links the corrupt practices on grand and petty levels; as such it is seen as a condition more often than it is understood as a result of corrupt practice.

- RQ3b- subquestion: To what extent are social rules and customs important in the carrying out of corrupt practices?

Theoretical assumption: Social rules and customs are understood as one of the processes of corruption that links corrupt practices on grand and petty levels; as such they will prove as important determinants in carrying out corrupt practices.

*strategies will be defined as both ways of accessing corrupt practices- e.g. obtaining information from friend or family networks, and as ways to carry out corruption- e.g. approaching the healthcare professional, the amount paid in bribe, the way a gift is passed on, the kind of service exchanged for preferential health care provision, gift/bribe before or after treatment received. The term is first coined by Grodeland et al (1998:660) as ‘corrupt strategies’ - ie the most effective methods utilised by people to combat the inherent inequalities within society.

The questions used in fieldwork interviews and focus groups (see Appendix 3) were carefully selected upon review of similar questioning utilised by previous corruption studies (Grodeland et al. 1998, Miller et al. 2001) and in order to answer the research questions above in a targeted manner (See Appendix 3).

1 **4.6 Research challenges**

2

3 ***4.6.1 Scheduling challenges, set targets and saturation point***

4 **Scheduling requirements** were anticipated to be a specific challenge with the elite
5 interviews, which is why every effort has been made to meet the elites in their
6 chosen venue (e.g. their office) at a time that suited or to be able to reschedule
7 flexibly. Alternatively, if scheduling proved to be too challenging for a face-to-face
8 interview with both in-depth non-elite and elite interviews, there was also the
9 possibility of conducting an online interview via software such as Skype or
10 Zoom. However, this was not opted for by the participants.

11 The research planned on carrying out **10 focus groups of around 3 participants**
12 (lower numbers would facilitate a more intimate setting needed for sensitive topic
13 discussion). The number of focus groups was in fact much smaller, at only 4 focus
14 groups, but altogether these produced a fair number of participants, 20 in total
15 which would be equivalent to five groups of four. The target was for ideally **30 in-**
16 **depth non-elite interviews** and more if possible; time and schedule constraints
17 dictated the capability on this front. The target was for **15-20 elite interviews**,
18 more if possible- again access and scheduling dictated the capacity. However, while
19 the targets were set out for the research as shown in Table 4.4, these were subject
20 to dynamic evolution of the research itself. Owing to this, the number of elite
21 interviews ended up being much lower, at only 8 elites. As for the rest of the
22 interviews, they were capped at 14, therefore not reaching the set-out target either.
23 However, the quality of information extracted was high and in-depth, resulting in
24 over 1000 minutes of recording and towards the final interviews was no longer
25 providing new insights and information.

26 However, research to-date shows that it is not necessary to stick to artificially set
27 targets. Morgan (2011) states that most of the widely advocated theories on the
28 amounts of focus group participants, (where the myth is that 3-5 focus groups are

1 the golden rule), are based on arbitrary goals unsupported by evidence as to their
2 effectiveness. Ultimately, it is both the purposes of the research and the constraints
3 of the field situation that must be taken into account when selecting (Morgan 2011),
4 which was the case with this research as well. Group sizes may also vary, as it may
5 prove that for specific topics big groups will be unimaginable but also vice versa-
6 this came into play for corruption especially with groups fluctuating in numbers from
7 3 to 7 per group. As for the fulfilment of targets, several scholars agree (Powell and
8 Single 1996, Morgan 2011, Stewart, Shamdasani et al. 2011) that there is no value in
9 artificially sticking to targets when 'saturation' point has been reached earlier
10 (Glaser and Strauss 1967, Krueger 1993, Saunders, Sim et al. 2017). This point is
11 understood as the point at which additional data collection no longer generates new
12 understanding, new information or insights, or, perhaps also the point at which the
13 moderator can accurately anticipate what will be said next in a group (Glaser and
14 Strauss 1967, Krueger 1993, Saunders, Sim et al. 2017). The thesis stuck to this
15 principle and the research remained flexible with this in mind; not trying to
16 artificially reach the laid-out targets.

17 With interviews conducted, it became obvious with the last three participants that
18 there was only so much variation in answers to the questions asked, and therefore
19 recognising the saturation point was easier. With regards to focus groups, the
20 potential for answers to vary was greater and I am unable to say if saturation point
21 had been reached, but in terms of capacity, the research had reached a point of
22 moving on to data analysis from the sufficient, combined number of responses and
23 respondents. There was, however, a large overlap in the answers from both
24 interviews and focus groups once these were isolated into text units. This became
25 obvious during data analysis, with only very few outliers to the general responses
26 given and themes/trends raised. As such, therefore, the research had achieved as
27 much as it could have in the given circumstances and was able to isolate clear trends
28 to aid in answering the overarching research question.

1 **4.6.2 Transcribing challenges**

2 While the interviews were in-depth, they were also semi-structured in nature and
3 therefore the questions provided served merely as prompts to elicit narratives
4 around the topics of interest to the research question. The nature of a semi-
5 structured interview (especially with sensitive topics), has the potential to
6 limit the levels of stress and rigidity that may be elicited by a structured interview
7 (Brannen 1988, Lee 1993). Bearing this in mind, for the participants, besides the
8 opportunity to contribute to the research that addresses the core issues of
9 corruption, there was also an opportunity of speaking openly about issues that are
10 societally taboo. It was important to respect the silences and pauses of the
11 respondents- these have been transcribed as essential parts of speech wherever
12 caught on recording, not to be omitted through researcher/transcriber censorship
13 (Denzin and Lincoln 1998, Cameron 2005, Stewart, Shamdasani et al. 2011).
14 Transcription of the interviews and focus groups was carried out as it occurred and
15 not 'tidied up' in retrospect, with editing kept to a bare minimum if any at all
16 (Kitzinger 1994, Charmaz 2002), in order to ensure authenticity of expression. The
17 assumption was that as authentic a transcription as possible is more likely in this
18 case, where the researcher is also the translator and transcriber and thus more
19 familiar with the material from memory.

20

21 The focus group environment suffered from similar potential for researcher bias in
22 transcription but also in moderation of the groups- the researcher/moderator,
23 much like in the process of the interviews, must exercise reflexivity at all times,
24 and also make sure that discussion is not being dominated by them. They should
25 not be telling the group what to do, but should merely facilitate and moderate the
26 conversation from a position of understanding and encouragement (Stewart,
27 Shamdasani et al. 2011). Interviewer/group moderator should therefore legitimise
28 the members' responsibility to manage the discussion (Morgan 2011). Following
29 this practice, I have tried my best to amend my processes throughout the field
30 work and reflect on my own role as a moderator within the group and bestow as

1 much agency on the respondents as possible. As Sieber and Stanley (1988) point
2 out, shying away from controversial topics because of their controversial nature
3 means avoiding responsibility as a researcher and such research is vital for
4 addressing of pressing social issues (Sieber and Stanley 1988). The purpose of this
5 research is to treat the sensitive topic of corruption with respect and caution, but,
6 in the spirit of Sieber and Stanley's statement, to tackle the underlying societal
7 issue with a level of rigour and responsibility.

8

9 **4.6.3 Data management and storage**

10 A rigorous **data management and data storage plan** was in place which involved
11 the contextualisation of research by keeping sufficient electronic metadata in the
12 field, a rigorous electronic fieldwork journal, as well as continuous mapping of
13 themes emerging from focus groups and interviews. All of this was stored on
14 University of Glasgow servers with password protected Cloud access. Encryption
15 has been employed for storing the recorded data, in compliance with university
16 policy and the GDPR procedure. Further details on data management and storage
17 can be found in the Ethics Application related to this project.

18

1 **4.7 Data analysis and ethical challenges**

2

3 ***4.7.1 Data analysis outline***

4 The approach adopted was that of thematic and textual analysis, conducted both
5 manually and with the use of qualitative data analysis software. Out of the
6 available software for qualitative analysis, the NVivo12 software was utilised to
7 conduct a rigorous comparison of interviews across those working in fields
8 connected to grand corruption (such as health care, health care administration
9 or procurement) and those receiving services connected to petty corruption (such
10 as the everyday delivery of health provision). NVivo12 is the latest version of NVivo
11 and was selected due to its ease of use, as well as the researcher's existing
12 experience with it.

13 Interviews were conducted among elites and the general public, with the possibility
14 of textually analysing some health care discussion fora as well to provide a point of
15 comparison. Several public online discussion fora have already been identified (e.g.,
16 zdravie.sk or blog.sme.sk), averaging 350+ contributors to each topic relating to
17 corruption practices in health care. With such traffic, simple search tools were
18 employed with key words to gain valuable raw data for **NVivo coding (See Data**
19 **Analysis chapter section 6.3)** and comparison of text-based units. These units
20 are defined by Miller et al (2001) as the contribution (written or verbal) made by
21 one person (or body) at one point in the survey entry/interview/text entry (Miller
22 2001).

23 The combination of methods used for the entirety of the research was aimed at
24 being able to see the 'bigger picture' as well as deeper intricacies of the corrupt
25 apparatus of health care. Therefore, while NVivo was used, there were also
26 extensive elements of textual analysis and theme identification done manually,
27 especially considering the multilingual nature of the project, which required
28 **substantial transcription and translation** of spoken text. These themes were pulled

1 based on the areas of focus encompassed in the questions asked: for example, the
2 definitions of corruption in real life, the understanding of grand and petty
3 corruption, the customary way of securing high quality health care and others. These
4 were accumulated under headings not necessarily according to the same word or
5 language used, but the similarity of content expressed. For focus groups the coding
6 and indexing process started off by following the three main avenues of coding
7 (Morgan, 2011a) in order to encompass as full a picture of trends arising in the
8 discussion as possible:

- 9 • Coding all mentions of a given code
- 10 • Whether each individual participant mentioned a given code
- 11 • Whether each group's discussion contained a given code (Morgan 2011).

12 The transcription and coding was carried out by the researcher and training in
13 translation was employed in order to provide as representative a translation of
14 spoken text as possible. Krueger (1994) in fact recommends the transcript-based
15 analysis of focus groups as the most rigorous analysis of spoken word out of the four
16 possible: transcript-based, tape-based, note-based and memory-based (Krueger
17 1994). For transparency purposes I always presented the original and translated text
18 excerpts side-by-side.

19

20 **4.7.2 Ethical challenges**

21 There are several ethical issues that present themselves with the use of interviews
22 and focus groups, most acute being those of **confidentiality, anonymity and**
23 **researcher bias**. I am aware of the potential of participants to feel uncomfortable
24 speaking about taboo issues and every effort was made to give the participants the
25 amount of time and space to feel comfortable and secure enough to express their
26 views. This was emphasised by a verbal reassurance at the beginning of the focus
27 groups, elite, and in-depth interviews that the data collected was strictly
28 confidential and anonymous. Other sections of the informed consent were also
29 reiterated, along with the caveat not to disseminate what was talked about in the

1 focus groups further and the ability to withdraw at any point during the study. This
2 is particularly relevant to the focus groups, as the usual confidentiality issue of
3 interviews becomes twice as problematic in a focus group setting, as the
4 participants are not only concerned about the confidentiality of the researcher but
5 also that of other participants (Cameron 2005). Other ethical challenges such as
6 fear of self-incrimination, participant identification, and researcher's well-being
7 are elaborated on in detail in the Ethics Form associated with this project.

1 Chapter 5: Slovakia and anti-corruption policy 2 development

3

4 5.1 Introduction to policy background

5

6 This chapter follows on from Chapter 4 which outlines the rationale for selecting
7 Slovakia as a single case study for this project. Its purpose is to provide a brief
8 overview of the existing anti-corruption legislation and measures in place in
9 Slovakia's short history, as well as its engagement with international anti-corruption
10 legislation. The chapter starts with a timeline and comprehensive overview of
11 government strategies to address corruption, in order to provide insight into what
12 systemic measures will have shaped my participants' views on the extent of
13 corruption in Slovakia and how it has developed. It then continues on to provide
14 more detail on first the international and then domestic legislation in place and also
15 the role that various external actors played in shaping anti-corruption policies to
16 date.

17

18 Party politics of post-communist societies are often examined and correlated with
19 effectiveness of reforms in the field of transparency, civil society, anti-corruption
20 and good governance. Slovakia is seen by many as a microcosm of several post-
21 communist societies in its party make up since its transition in the 90s, due to the
22 divides and conflicts which shape party politics, such as: ethnicity, religion,
23 legacies, economic policy or corruption (Deegan-Krause 2013, Haughton 2014).
24 Deegan-Krause (2013) labels it 'a remarkable case study of political competition that
25 resembles post-communist Europe in miniature' (2013:255) in its dynamic
26 development of party politics throughout the three decades of its independent

1 existence with varying degrees of stability. Haughton (2014) warns against the
2 presupposition that all post-communist societies have developed identically and
3 states that for the specific case of Slovakia, it may have indeed been its exit from
4 federalism, politics of independence, or even its pre-communist past that have
5 shaped its political agenda and its reform efforts more than its communist legacies.
6 He also states, importantly, that from an external actors' perspective, the CEE
7 region was not a tabula rasa in 1989 upon which 'anything could be drawn'
8 (2014:217) but it had its own agendas, agency, and influences, shaping both policy
9 development and policy suggestions from external bodies.

10

11 Effective anti-corruption efforts are often associated with decentralisation of
12 government and greater independence of individual parts of the state (Nemec 2018).
13 Slovakia is in fact seen as a 'decentralisation champion' (Nemec 2018) when it comes
14 to its moving away from a centralised communist system with its numerous,
15 independent municipalities, equipped with a large set of competences and
16 responsibilities. Despite this decentralisation, we see evidence of partial state
17 capture by governmental structures and organised crime groups (the Gorila scandal
18 of 2012), of 'ownership' of politicians, and control of regulatory agencies (Skolkay
19 2018). Most alarming are the suggestions that the leading political party SMER, with
20 its background of donors and associates, in fact resembles a corrupt, cartel culture
21 (Skolkay 2018).

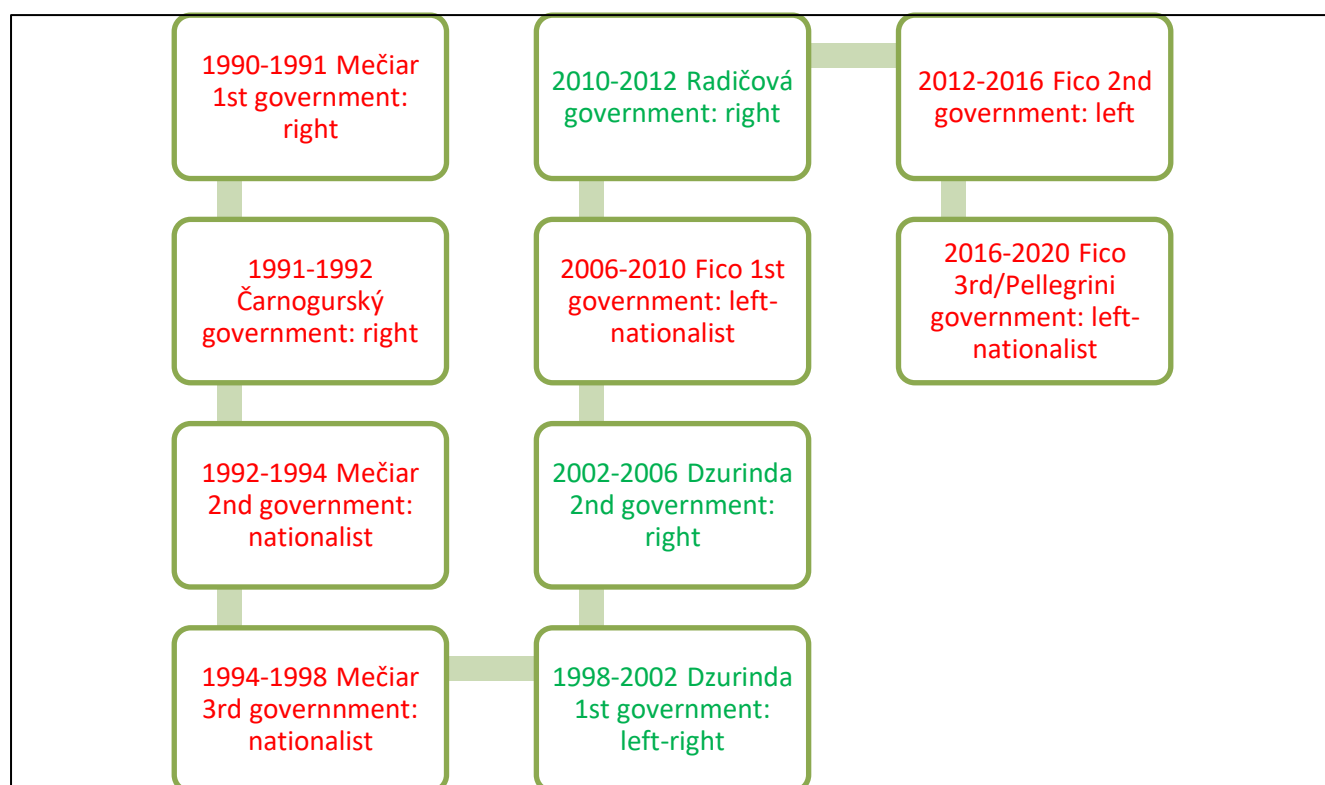
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23 Considering this realisation, it is important for the thesis to map out the policies and
24 external actor influences regarding anti-corruption efforts, in order to have a fuller
25 picture of what could constitute the understanding of the corruption status quo for
26 the research participants. It is also helpful to have a clear outline of the regulations
27 in place to curb and/or report corruption, or generally to facilitate transparency
28 and effective public administration in day-to-day dealings with public officials. This
29 is in order to be able to better understand the context and nuance expressed by the

1 participants who talk about experiencing petty or grand corruption on a daily basis
 2 or in specific circumstances. It is also important in order to be able to gain greater
 3 insight into the participants' views of their own feelings of individual responsibility
 4 and behaviour when it comes to understanding corrupt exchanges. This presents
 5 Slovakia as a good illustrative case study from an interpretivist outlook, which
 6 focuses on the subtleties of tradition and discourse and views knowledge as socially
 7 and culturally constructed (Clough and Nutbrown 2002, Marsh and Furlong 2017).

8 **5.2 Timeline of corruption-related policies in Slovakia from** 9 **1991-2018**

10



11

12 **Figure 5.1 Breakdown of Slovak governments by anti-corruption policy (1990-2020).**
 13 **Governments mostly facilitating anti-corruption policy in green, governments mostly**
 14 **hindering anti-corruption policy in red. Source: Author, based on Beblavy, Sicakova-Beblava**
 15 **(2014)**

16

1 The above figure outlines a chronological order of the governments that Slovakia has
2 experienced from 1990, all the way to the present day. Based on research conducted
3 mostly by Beblavy and Sicakova-Beblava (2009, 2014), the above is a visual
4 representation of how the sitting governments approached anti-corruption policy.
5 This includes their active engagement and implementation of policies and reforms,
6 but also their political orientation and opinion of external factors as to their
7 commitment to anti-corruption policies. The individual policies, anti-corruption
8 legislation in place, and role of external actors are explored in greater depth below.

5.2 Corruption-related policies and their effectiveness

Table 5.1 presents a comprehensive overview of international anti-corruption agreements and domestic reforms and legislation passed during each government's tenure. It is clear from Table 5.1 that the 1998-2006 governments laid the foundations of the greatest amount of anti-corruption tools and legal measures. The following governments have carried out little additional formal anti-corruption framework implementation or enforcement. Beblavy (2009) and Nemeč (2018) concur that the greatest impetus for reform was around the late nineties and early 2000s and while they state that several reforms would have been tied to the EU acquis accession criteria, they conclude that the most robust measures taken were motivated by domestic electoral pressures and requirements.

Table 5.1 Breakdown of Slovakia's governments and their anti-corruption initiatives

Government tenure	PM	International anti-corruption agreements		Domestic reforms and legislation		Additional relevant notes
1990-1991	Vladimír Mečiar			1990	Specialised deconcentrated state administration system established	New administrative structure established (district and sub-district offices)
1991-1992	Ján Čarnogurský					
1992-1994	Vladimír Mečiar					

1994-1998	Vladimír Mečiar			1996	Public administration reform	Regions and districts defined. Generally seen as unsuccessful, costs were very high and results very weak
1998-2002	Mikuláš Dzurinda **Intensity of anti-corruption in governmental manifestos increases massively (Beblavy, Sicakova-Beblava 2016)	1999	Slovakia joins GRECO (Group of States against Corruption)	2000	Freedom of Information legislation passed	Part of EU accession reqs. Bears impact both ex ante and ex post accession.
		2001	EC provides funds as a part of the PHARE scheme (Poland and Hungary Assistance for the Restructuring of the Economy) to set up the Special Court and Special Prosecutor's Office	June 2000	National Program for the Fight against Corruption	Spearheaded by the Office of Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Policy Ivan Mikloš
		1999	Council of Europe Criminal Law Convention on Corruption	2001	The public are given access to all proposed legislation and are allowed to comment on it in an open web platform	
		1999	Civil Law Convention on Corruption	2000-2001	All major remaining state-owned banks are privatised	
				2001-2002	Education reform	HE institutions get funding based on the number of students; the market is open to private institutions, admissions thus targeted for corrupt practices. Number of students increases from 128k in 2000 to 200k in 2006. But increased numbers and less scrutiny has

						detrimental impact on quality of education
				1999	The State Aid Authority and the Public Procurement Authority established	Enforcement still weak
				2000-2002	Trestnoprávny dohovor o korupcii (The Criminal Law Convention on corruption)	Adopted 1999, entered into force 2002
2002-2006	Mikuláš Dzurinda	2006	UN anti-corruption charter ratified in April	2002	Internal Audit and restructured existing mechanisms of financial control	
		2005	European Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism	2004-2005	Legislation on Internal Audit passed	Supreme Audit office to monitor all local governments and overall governmental transactions
				2003	Company Register Reform- previous deadline of 150 days for processing shortened to 5 days	Anti-corruption agenda moved from Ivan Mikloš to Daniel Lipšic (Justice Minister) who implements legal measures such as these for anti-corruption

					targets efficiency and waiting times as frequent sources for bribery.	objectives- perceived corruption in banking sector drops from 29% to 13% in 2006
				2002-2004	Case management in the judiciary reform	Speed of the system increased by random electronic allocation of cases to judges; corruption opportunities in selection processes cut down
				2003-2004	Special Court and Special Prosecutor's Office established	The PHARE initiative started this in 2001. The goal is to break with elites interfering in the judiciary by establishing an independent arbiter and institution for dealing with corruption cases
		2003-2005	World Bank contributing \$75 million to Healthcare reform	2003-2005	Healthcare reform, Health Reform Project	Health sector modernisation, technical assistance support. Lowering of health care expenditures for medicines and check-ups, all hospitals were to be restructured- some were even corporatized and privatised; the key terms of the reform were liberalisation and privatisation. These reforms were however not completed, and corruption did not lower. From 62% respondents believing that corruption in health care was significant in 1999, the figure was 63% in 2006 (Beblavy, 2014)

				2004	Specialised deconcentrated state administration system	New administrative structures established (district offices abolished)
				2005	Party financing revision	Imposed transparency measures on financial relationships with donors, gifts declaration, donor declaration, campaign financing transparency
2006-2010	Robert Fico	2006	UN Anti-corruption charter ratified in April	2009	Civil Service Act	Not received well, effectiveness too low, opportunities for nepotism and uncontrolled salary margins were created (Nemec, 2018)
				2007-2013	High percentage of funding and structural funds vulnerable and exposed to corruption	3 ministers out of 8 forced to resign during this tenure due to corruption scandals and EU funds misappropriation
				2007	New administrative structures	Regional offices abolished
2010-2012	Iveta Radičová	2011	OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions	2010	Web publication of all governmental contracts, invoices and orders implemented	
		2011	Accession to Open Government Partnership Initiative			
2012-2016	Robert Fico			2012	ESO programme (Efficient, Reliable and Open state administration)	Integration of specialised local administration into one office Client centres (one-stop-shops) established E-government development

						2012 marked by the Gorila files corruption scandal, files spanning from 2005 onwards, implying partial state capture by single oligarchic group embedded in the government, in line with the partial elite cartels corruption pattern in Slovakia (see Školkay, 2018)
				2014	General deconcentrated state administration system established	District offices re-established
				2015	Slovak National Action Plan of Open Government Partnership Initiative	
2016-2020	Robert Fico/ Peter Pellegrini					Marked by the murder of journalist Ján Kuciak in 2018 writing about government officials involved in dealings with the Italian mob and agricultural procurement fraud, ethnic tensions and rightwing extremist party ĽSNS entering the parliament
				2018	Anti-corruption policy document published by the government 2019-2023	Outlines the need for repressive and preventative measures to complement one another for effective tackling of corruption

Table 5.1 Breakdown of governments from 1990-2020 and their anti-corruption measures initiatives. Source: Author, based on Beblavy (2009), Beblavy and Sicakova-Beblava (2014), Nemeč (2018), Skolkay (2018)

5.3 Anti-corruption legislation in place

It is important to have a clear idea of the language used by the government in their manifestos and official documents, such as legislation and international conventions signed, in order to better understand the impact of these measures and reforms on society.

A discussion of legal anti-corruption measures and reforms in place inevitably invites a debate about society's readiness and willingness to adopt these in an efficient manner. Blasszauer (1997) argues that the post-communist countries suffer from a 'moral crisis' with the practice of bribery and under-the-counter payments which has penetrated the system so deeply that reforms are very unlikely to succeed (Blasszauer 1997). The need for reforms, especially in health care, has been obvious to researchers from the early nineties, suggesting (1991:260) 'large black economy, with extensive tips and gifts to healthcare staff, contributing up to 30 percent of their total salary' (McKee 1991). There is an obvious discrepancy between how the public and the officials have always understood and perceived the status quo and therefore the mixed approach of qualitatively interviewing both officials and the public is the best-suited method for an objective set of conclusions. As seen in Figure 5.2 overleaf, which focuses on Slovakia, such discrepancy in understanding makes for a very heterogeneous political and cultural environment, which poses a challenge to implementing reforms with efficiency.

Table 2 Was greed, poor pay, or importunate clients the main reason why officials accepted gifts?

	<i>Main reason why officials take presents and bribes is...</i>		
	<i>officials are greedy %</i>	<i>officials are badly paid %</i>	<i>people are desperate to buy favours %</i>
Doctors	14	56	31
Nurses	19	38**	43*
Hospital administrators	8	59	33
All officials	13	55	32
By contrast—the opinion of the public	39	25	36

Figure 5.2 Discrepancy between perceptions of health care corruption in Slovakia: officials and the public. Source: Miller et al. 2000

This section outlines the route taken to date by the governments and the individual wording of the measures in place so far, which is indicative of their future application in real life. The legislation discussed starts with the international policies:

- the EU-wide 1999 Civil Law Convention on Corruption,
- the 2006 UN Anti-Corruption Charter,

and follows with domestic policies:

- the 2005 and 2011 Slovak Criminal Code Section 300 on Criminal Acts of Corruption,
- and the 2019-2023 Official Anti-Corruption Policy of the Slovak Republic.

5.3.1 International: 1999 Civil Law Convention on Corruption

The Convention stipulates rules, definitions, and agreed preventative and punitive measures that all parties agree upon, as of the signing of the Convention in Strasbourg in 1999. Successive Slovak governments have bound themselves to abide by the agreed-upon rules and have agreed to the ethos of corruption being a threat to the rule of law, democracy, human rights, good government, social moral code, and stability of democratic institutions. The main definition of corruption lies in providing or extorting, directly or indirectly, an unfair advantage from a public official. The Convention goes on to lay out specific definitions of different kinds of bribery (first 11 articles discuss only bribery and its different forms, be it through brokerage, domestically, abroad, and similar), indirect bribery, embezzlement, misappropriation of funds and/or resources, and the definitions of perpetrators, accomplices and so forth. The Convention refers to effective and appropriate deterrent measures to be undertaken by all parties of the agreement.

The language of the Convention is very vague and vagueness, as well as a lack of specificity in definitions and in descriptions of measures, is a running theme across all parts of legislation described in this section. In fact, in the key sections which outline the definitions for 'crime', 'corruption', 'public official' and similar, the Convention stipulates the right for individual countries to come up with their own legal definition (The Convention on Corruption 1999, Article 37). If states have this much room for interpretation and amendment, however, the question poses itself as to the effectiveness and realistic expectation of adhering to such conventions. The Convention is difficult to be seen as binding for the respective governments, or practically enforceable. No sanctions for not adhering to the Convention are stipulated, and in fact, any party to the agreement is able to denounce the Convention at any point, as per the Denunciation Article 41 of the Convention.

5.3.2 International: 2006 United Nations Anti-Corruption Charter

Very similar language is employed by the UN Anti-Corruption Charter, signed in New York in 2003, and ratified by the Slovak Republic only in 2006. It calls for a ‘complex’ and a ‘multidisciplinary’ approach to corruption, but implements articles on not just deterrent measures, contrary to the Convention of 1999, but also emphasises preventative measures, the increasing of public awareness about corruption, and outlines the basic principles of effectiveness and transparency.

The Charter specifically calls for caution when it comes to public functions that might be acutely vulnerable to corruption, and to make sure that officials in these positions rotate on a regular basis (UN Anti-Corruption Charter 2003, Article 7). Many political commentators would agree that Slovakia has in fact violated Article 7 in this respect, especially in the Fico government tenure. Here the Minister of the Interior, Robert Kaliňák, who was associated with several corruption scandals (including the 2012 Gorila scandal- see section 5.4.1 for details), did not resign from his post which granted him unfettered access to the police force and the judiciary, but instead stayed in position for over 8 years, being labelled the ‘crown prince’ of the party, groomed to replace Mr Fico, should the PM have succeeded in his 2016 presidential campaign (Lesko 2017). The Charter goes into much greater detail than the 1999 Convention and talks about the public’s access to information, for protection of whistleblowers, for the construction of systemic measures that would protect the reporting of corruption and effective inner-state investigation of corruption, including robust appeal systems. Slovakia does have a law on whistle-blowers as of 2015, however, a 2016 Transparency International report assesses this law to have made very little difference to whistle-blowers in practical terms. Their findings show very little to no protection offered by the Labour Inspectorates that are to be on the receiving end of reporting corruption in the workplace. In practical terms, therefore, while the Law and the Labour Inspectorates are supposed to protect whistle-blowers from unlawful disciplinary sanctions such as dismissal from work or redeployment to another position as a result of filing the complaint, they do not offer any provisions of physical safety,

do not inform the whistle-blowers of any free legal assistance, and do not inform on all provisions in place to offer workplace protection (Dancikova, Nechala et al. 2016). In comparison, the authors show the provisions in place in the USA by the Office of the Special Counsel (OSC). The OSC has a space for reporting malpractices directly on its website, provides clear guidelines about defence against retaliation (with the option of the employees to create new ones pertaining to them specifically), and regularly publishes reports on progress and its activities, which increases accountability (2016:15).

Finally, the UN Charter does not outline any international sanctions for not complying with its set-out rules and also stipulates the possibility for individual states to denounce it, albeit with a longer term of denunciation ratification (denunciation is ratified one full year after the state submits their wish to denounce, as opposed to a mere three months for the 1999 Convention).

5.3.3 Domestic: 2005 and 2011 Slovak Republic Criminal Code Section 300 on Criminal Acts of Corruption

The 2005 update in the Criminal Code focuses, as is the case traditionally³⁰, on corruption in the form of bribery. The updates in the Criminal Code were spear-headed by the Ministry of Justice and its focus was on targeting drug trade- in fact the law itself gained the nickname ‘the drug novella’. It was initially vetoed by the president who believed it to be too soft on drug crime and the updated version had to tackle the low threshold for incarceration for drug dealers and applying these lower thresholds on soft drugs only, as opposed to the proposed all drugs. The coalition believed a softer approach would achieve less of a targeting of teenagers who are merely experimenting with drugs. A further update to the Criminal Code was implemented in 2011 which focused on a much greater scope

³⁰ See previous sections in Conceptualising Corruption and Literature Review Part 1 for the majority of theoretical understanding of corruption being based on a financial framework, such as bribery.

of effectiveness of the criminal proceedings. This update, for example, shortened the previously required full proof documentation in every hearing pertaining to one case, to just sections relevant to the particular issue at the time. It also expanded the use of agents for proceedings who no longer needed to be policemen exclusively, and also established the automatic allocation of counsel to those who are not able to afford their own legal advice. These and other measures³¹ have sped up the proceedings of criminal trials, offering less scope for deal making and less time for bribing particular judges. The Criminal Code Sections 328-335 specify the minimum and maximum sentencings for different forms of bribery, depending on whether the bribe is offered or taken, whether this is done directly or through a broker on behalf of someone else; whether an advantage is extricated for oneself or for someone else, and it makes a point of emphasising the misappropriation of public funds and resources. The sentencings span anywhere from 2 to 12 years of incarceration depending on the severity of the crime. The idea of a broker or 'middleman' is mentioned in each section, and it is difficult to ascertain whether this would be seen as a mitigating circumstance or as more damaging. It does however reinforce an interesting point of corruption not taking place as a mere transaction between two agents, but a more complex endeavour, calling for greater scrutiny into the mechanisms in carrying out corrupt acts.

The Code also mentions the crimes of indirect corruption, electoral corruption, and sport corruption. Sport corruption became a topic of interest in the young democracy of Slovakia mostly because of the challenges posed by international competitions and increasing regulations in terms of match fixing, illegal substance use, but also scope for public procurement of equipment and funding for teams that represent the country, and therefore have access to state funding as well as private donors. *Indirect corruption* constitutes influencing others to partake in corrupt exchanges or carry out corrupt acts. *Electoral corruption* constitutes influencing public officials to vote in any which direction, as well as deterring someone from voting, or coercing someone to vote in a way that provides unfair

³¹ For further details, see http://www.ulclegal.com/sk/2994-vlada-sr-pripravuje-novela-trestneho-zakona-a-trestneho-poriadku?year_issue=2011%2F03 [last accessed 15/02/2021].

advantage. The maximum sentence for indirect corruption carries 3 years. The maximum sentence for electoral corruption carries 5 years. There are variations of the language in subsections that determine the severity of the sentence based on who carries out the particular corrupt act and to what personal benefit. These and other targeted cases of corrupt behaviour all fall under the remit of the Special Prosecutor's Office, established in 2003. As it came to light in 2020, most of the prosecutors working here, as well as the Head of the Office personally, were themselves involved in corruption and arrested and charged with corruption, bribery, conspiracy, and other charges³² by the National Crime Agency (NAKA) in a series of arrests.

Paradoxically, while at the time of these updates to the Criminal Code, there was no law for whistle-blower protection as of yet in Slovakia (came into effect in 2015), there is a section in the Criminal Code that classifies not reporting a corrupt act, or not intervening in one, a crime. It is possible to report anonymously and in written form, but the law does not give any guidance on this.

Legally, therefore, it would appear that corruption is considered in the confines of the monetary, the indirect, electoral and sport categories, but there is little mention of legislation that protects those who report corruption and there is no mention of considering corruption in its immaterial form. The government website dedicated to corruption tries to give off the impression of successfully tackling corruption by statistics like the one presented in Table 5.2. However, the website itself has not been updated for the past 5 years so there is no way for a regular citizen to monitor progress, save for submitting a Freedom of Information request. The difference between transparency of progress on these issues displayed by the US OSC, which provides statistics and updates on a regular basis for citizens visiting its website, and lack thereof for Slovakia, is stark. It is unclear whether the government considers the outlined statistics a success and why there is such a large discrepancy between corrupt acts reported, prosecuted, and convicted.

³² For more details see <https://dennikn.sk/2101623/ako-sa-mohlo-stat-ze-specialnu-prokuraturu-viedol-takyto-clovek-odpovedaju-kandidati-na-generalneho-prokuratora/> [last accessed 15/02/2021].

The lack of clarity as to the mechanisms employed to process corrupt acts reported makes it difficult to interpret the data for an average citizen interested to see how the fight against corruption is progressing.

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016
Total recorded criminal acts of corruption	370	468	367	547
Total prosecuted (according to Section 206 of the Criminal Code) crimes of corruption	57	77	79	?
Total persons convicted for crimes of corruption	104	141	116	260

Table 5. 2 Corruption statistics in the Slovak Republic. Source: Author translation of identical table from www.vlada.gov.sk/statistiky/ and information published by Pravda.sk: <https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/422787-z-korupcie-vlani-na-slovensku-obvinili-260-ludi/>

The website also contains a tab, informing citizens of where they can report corruption and provides guidance on how to recognise corruption, how to deal with corruption if encountered, how to define corruption, and so forth. The definition provided by the government once again veers towards bribery and anecdotal mentions of ‘envelopes’ on the governmental guidance website³³, and explicitly emphasises ‘enriching oneself’ as the primary transgression. Therefore, the reliance on bribery and a financial understanding of corruption is actively fed to the citizens, without a consideration of other forms of corruption. The assumption therefore is that the participants in the interviews and focus groups display an overly financial understanding of corruption as well.

³³ See full text here: <https://www.vlada.gov.sk/co-je-korupcia/> [last accessed 12/12/2020]

For reporting corruption, the government tries to encourage the public by seemingly protecting them from harm³⁴. However, the only legal measures listed by the government are the § 13, 59 and 7/8, which refer to legislation on workplace conditions, on civic duty and provisions for citizen complaints. There is no protection for the whistle-blower stipulated, merely the right of a citizen to complain and to enjoy comfortable working conditions.

There is no wonder that without effective legislation that protects the whistle-blower and that explicitly defines what can be viewed and reported as corruption, (along with the lack of public knowledge as to where one would report corruption), corruption has been able to thrive.

³⁴ See full text here: <https://www.vlada.gov.sk/ochrana-oznamovatela-nebojte-sa-korupciu-nahlasit/> [last accessed 12/12/2020]

5.3.4 Domestic: Slovak Republic's Governmental Anti-Corruption Policy 2019-2023 (ratified on the 12th December 2018)

The Anti-Corruption Policy pledge³⁵, passed by the ex-PM Pellegrini government in 2018, contains wording on preventative and repressive measures complementing each other, as preventative measures lead to unveiling corruption and repressive measures lead to deterrence. The policy outlines that corruption can indeed be both the cause and the effect of bad public administration. It outlines the potential for corruption to undermine public trust in its institutions, the potential for corruption to cause political and economic instability, and the astute observation that a *culture* of integrity, honesty and trustworthiness must be fostered. At first glance, the government appears to be acutely aware of the severity of the situation and of the full impact of corruption on society.

However, the policy does not specify at all how these goals are to be achieved. It goes on to stress that effective preventative measures should be based on effective measurement of corruption- but there is no mechanism outlined as to how the government is going to measure corruption in real time. The policy admits that corruption is in fact not legally defined and that needs to be remedied, but does not state how or by when (Anti-Corruption Policy, 2018:5)³⁶. It outlines its ambition to eliminate corruption through raising awareness, through its cooperation with international institutions, and effective curbing of corrupt practices. However, no specific links to individual institutions that should presumably carry out these theoretical goals are listed for the public to follow. The policy goes on to outline the need for enforcing ethical codes in public administration bodies and says that the climate for fighting corruption has never

³⁵ See full text here: https://www.bojprotikorupcii.gov.sk/data/files/7130_protikorupcna-politika-sr-2019-2023.pdf [last accessed 12/12/2020]

been greater, as there is a positive relationship with international organisations and external bodies, ready to help Slovakia in its endeavour. We know, however, that this has been the case at least from the late nineties, with Slovakia being a part of the Corruption Convention as of 1999, so this is not a novel situation outlined by the government.

The policy goes on to shift the responsibility for ineffective repressive measures onto the public by stating that: the tolerance for corruption by the public is very high, the will of the public to partake in curbing it is low, and that the non-existent lobbying and whistle-blower laws put the government at a disadvantage. The important thing to derive from this is that the culture and the public perception of corruption do indeed need to be addressed, but cannot be held responsible for the lack of legislation meant for their protection, should their efforts to report and curb corruption reach higher levels. The policy mentions a draft of a new whistle-blower law in progress, but in 2020 the legislation has still not been passed or implemented.

Finally, the policy, ironically, outlines the need for governmental approach to be practical rather than formal, without listing any practical steps to be taken. A list of tasks can be found at the very end of the policy, without indicating the timeline of actioning these or the institutions responsible for actioning. The very last section states that ‘appropriate authorities’ within public administration will be in charge of executing the policy’s pledge, but there is no hyperlink for the public to access, or any address for the public to write to or to visit, to be able to monitor the progress of the set-out tasks (Anti-Corruption Policy, 2018:28).

In short, the outlined policies, legislation, and pledges of the governmental institutions have several things in common:

- They utilise similar, binding language lifted from the international conventions that they are already a part of, without any specificity as to the practical undertaking of anti-corruption measures.
- They display acute awareness of the costs and effects of corruption, but provide no platform for monitoring of the success of their efforts, nor of their means to measure corruption.

- They are difficult to locate and not clearly signposted on the governmental websites.
- The Slovak-specific documents are predominantly published in Slovak only, which reduces the chances of international research being able to penetrate the status quo of anti-corruption efforts in Slovakia.
- They emphasise the role of the electorate and civil society in curbing corruption and the need to further investigate the role of cultural understanding of corruption- which the thesis acts upon in its research.

5.4 Role of external actors

Aside from the aforementioned conventions and bilateral anti-corruption efforts on an EU and UN levels, there are some specific areas where external actor influence has impacted on anti-corruption policies. It is important to investigate the role of this influence in contrast with the impact of domestic political pressures.

5.4.1 Economic and horizontal reforms

Beblavy (2009) in his analysis of the role of external actors concludes that Slovakia has honed its anti-corruption policy into 'economic reform + transparency' with the help of the external actors. He refers mainly to the accession/membership conditionality of the EU and also its aid programs, particularly PHARE (see Table 5.1). These conditionalities include the internal financial audit of the government and the taking on board of GRECO group recommendations. They also include horizontal reforms, such as the Freedom of Information Law (FOI) (2000), or setting up of the Special Court and Prosecuting Office. Another significant area of a horizontal reform can be seen in the 2005 revamping of political party financing. This horizontal reform, at the encouragement of external actors (primarily the EU), detailed the regulations for donors and gifts, and banned any party business

activities or financial relationships with public authorities (see Table 5.1) (Beblavy, 2009).

These regulations, however, seem ineffective after the unveiling of scandals like the Gorila corruption scandal (2012), which indicated strong links between high governmental officials and private Slovak financing groups such as PENTA and J&T³⁷. The range of implicated officials spans from government authorities (as high as Minister of the Interior, Minister of Justice and potentially the PM himself), through the judiciary (the Prosecutor General, several judges), the official state funding and procurement bodies, all the way to the police and infamous organised crime groups (the leader of the most prominent organised crime group, Marian Kočner, is currently facing trial for being implicated- among other things- in the murder of the investigative journalist Ján Kuciak in 2018). The 2012 Gorila scandal outlines the close cooperation between all these separate public officials and members of private financing groups, as well as members of the organised crime units operating in Bratislava and beyond. It outlines the opaque party financing of the government leaders spanning as far back as 2005, offered in exchange for: specific rulings in civil and criminal proceedings, specific individuals sympathetic to the goals of financial groups or organised crime to be embedded in governmental structures, specific projects receiving amounts of EU funding, the ‘dealing with’ uncomfortable members of the public, and much more. Therefore, to say that EU-inspired, horizontal reforms addressing party financing, internal audit processes, and transparency in governmental dealings have been ineffective, is an understatement in light of this and other scandals (e.g. the state-run hospital in Piešťany and also in Košice overpaying several million EUR for a CT scanner and for sonographic equipment in a series of exposed public procurement embezzlement scandals)³⁸.

³⁷ These groups are outlined in greater detail in the upcoming empirical chapters.

³⁸ These were actually incidents costing the directors of hospitals their jobs and they were all charged with either gross misconduct when maintaining public property or with manipulation of public procurement tenders and auctions. For more details, visit <https://www.pravda.sk/trendove-temy/kauza-ct/> [last accessed 15/02/2021].

5.4.2 Conditionality and sectoral reform

Other external factors include the World Bank operating through its grant and lending activities (banking and healthcare), including an element of technical assistance, as well as conditionality (Beblavy 2009). A positive effect of this and the EU impact on financing costs has been associated with substantial drops in perceived credit risk by external investors (Gray 2009). This ‘seal of approval’ of the EU is described as a phenomenon whereby the EU endorses a pre-existing policy mix and thus pushes the national government in the right direction of anti-corruption policy. However, it is worth pointing out that with regards to EU funding, the potential for fruitful change is equal to the potential for funds misappropriation (Beblavy and Sicakova-Beblava 2014). For example, Slovakia only received limited funding from the Structural Funds up until 2006 (roughly 400-500 million EUR), but the 2007-2013 period brought a substantial increase in the level of aid (1.5-2 billion EUR annually), which opened up the opportunities for funds embezzlement³⁹ (Beblavy, Sicakova-Beblava, 2014:548). The increased funding, it is argued, has invited an increase in corruption itself, as this funding is vulnerable to corruption based on three specific criteria: political discretion in the allocation of projects, imbalances between supply and demand, and a high level of private sector involvement (2014:548). The misconduct on all three levels was picked up by the international community at the time (Castle 2010)⁴⁰. From this perspective, the external actor influence has managed to inflate the levels of corruption. The three most notorious cases with allegations of corruption and clientelism that were declared in contravention of EU law by the European Commission, resulted

³⁹ Periodically, ministers get ‘sacrificed’ whenever a scandal becomes too prominent in the public eye, such as the ‘bulletin-board tender’ scandal. See <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/20127801/bulletin-board-tender-investigation-completed.html> and Beblavy, Sicakova-Beblava (2014:548) for more details.

⁴⁰ For more details on EU Funds corruption in CEE, see Fazekas, M., L. P. King, J. Chvalkova, J. Skuhrovec and I. J. Toth (2014). Are EU funds a corruption risk? The impact of EU funds on grand corruption in Central and Eastern Europe. Working Paper series: CRCB-WP/2013:03. Budapest, Corruption Research Center Budapest.

in EU funding cancellation and loss of 20-30% of expenditure already pre-paid by government:

- Tender to supply a toll system for commercial vehicles (600-800 million EUR)
- Consulting services in the management of Structural Funds (120 million EUR)
- Grants to pilot social enterprises (eight grants worth 24 million EUR) (Ragacova 2009, Krajanova 2010, Ruttkayova 2013, Beblavy and Sicakova-Beblava 2014).

However, the argument can be made that the *acquis* and EU fiscal pressures were among the most relevant for combining the praised sectoral reforms (such as bank privatisation) with horizontal policies (such as FOI legislation) for the first Dzurinda government, resulting in the approval and ratification of Council of Europe's anti-corruption conventions outlined in Table 5.1. On the contrary, Beblavy's (2009) evaluation of 12 major anti-corruption reforms in the 1998-2006 period identified only one of these reforms as directly connected to accession conditionality (government internal financial audit) and this particular reform has been rated to have had a 'low' impact. Other reforms were evaluated positively due to their *ex-post* rather than *ex-ante* impact (Beblavy, Sicakova-Beblava, 2014:545), further emphasising the role of domestic rather than external actor pressures. Finally, Table 5.3 outlines the adherence of GRECO members with the Council of Europe standards, and it is obvious here that the impact of external actors was at its most effective pre-accession.

Round	Number of recommendations	Slovakia's implemented number of recommendations
First round (2003)	19	15
Second round (2006)	17	8
Third round (2010)	16	1
Fourth round (2013)	16	7

Table 5.3 Monitoring of GRECO recommendations implemented by Slovakia (over three monitoring rounds). Source: Author, based on Beblavy, Sicakova-Beblava, 2014:546 and GRECO official statistics

The conclusion drawn is that while the EU did have a moderately positive role in 1999-2004 with regards to anti-corruption policy, its influence became 'largely irrelevant' thereafter and the main driving force behind anti-corruption policy became domestic political pressures, that mostly related to the publicised

scandals of embezzlement of money in hospital equipment procurement or scandals like Gorila in 2012, rather than those from external actors (Beblavy and Sicakova-Beblava 2014).

5.5 Effectiveness of Slovak reforms

The effectiveness of Slovak reforms has been seen as not overly successful. Meyer-Sahling (2009) actually groups Slovakia (along with Poland) among the so-called ‘destructive reform reversal’ countries (Meyer-Sahling 2009).

Having implemented substantial horizontal reforms and economic reforms, Nemec (2018) concludes that transparency of public companies as well as governmental financial dealings remains low. According to his findings:

- ‘36% of public companies have not disclosed the names of managers on their websites,
- only one out of seven public companies opens its economic information to external reviews,
- 85% of public companies do not present CVs of their directors on their websites,
- one-fourth of public companies did not respond to information requests of citizens,
- only one out of ten public companies informs who the subjects of their promotional or funding support are’ (Nemec, 2018:121).

This, in conjunction to the so-called ‘zigzag’ administrative reforms over three decades (see Table 5.1 for 1990, 1996, 2004, 2007 and 2014 administrative reforms) that have repeatedly established, abolished, and re-established administrative systems and district offices, creates the impression of no longevity and lack of cohesiveness of anti-corruption policies. Additionally, the Civil Service Act of 2009, gave way to increased forms and cases of nepotism, patronage, and enabled the break of the link between performance and salary. Formally, open competition for civil service posts is established, but in reality, patronage is the main principle for selection and there are very few enforced legal measures against it (Staronova et al., 2014). While basic salary is fixed, allocation of any

non-pre-determined premiums is completely arbitrary and subject to discretion. There is also the option of discretionary bonuses under this Act, and these can account for up to, or exceeding, 100% of basic salary grade, which has led to massive inflation of salaries without any link to performance on managerial positions (Nemec, 2018). This has in fact contributed to a general, ever-growing perception of inequality among the public and to an environment where subjectivity and corruption can thrive with little accountability.

Finally, it is important to delve into the efforts by the government to decentralise its structures, in line with the traditional approach of societies transitioning from centralised to market economies. Decentralisation of this sort is theoretically supposed to support the workings of transparency and good governance, as funds and resources have a greater chance to be utilised for their intended purposes. However, Nemec (2018) argues that the decentralisation in Slovakia has reached such extremes, with the smallest municipality having 12 inhabitants, and most municipalities having around 1000 inhabitants, that the resulting fragmentation is not helpful, but detrimental to effective policy implementation. Such small municipalities are still expected to carry out administrative and logistical tasks such as: waste disposal, budget allocations, construction, establishment of ambulatory health service, leisure and tourist venues, maintenance of local cultural establishments, education, and training. Large municipalities have a lot more manpower and social capital to administer these. As a result, countless small municipalities (Slovakia is among the countries with the greatest number of municipalities in the EU) often feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of the task at hand, and comfortable to misappropriate allocated funds and budgets due to their proliferation and very little oversight. This, coupled with the passivity of the civil society (Buncak et al. 2009 report that over 67% of respondents believe that their problems need to be solved by the state), who are not 'effective controllers of their politicians and bureaucrats' and are lacking a sense of individual responsibility (Nemec, 2018:123), also creates an environment where corruption has been allowed to thrive and evolve.

5.6 Conclusions

This section set out to outline and characterise the anti-corruption measures undertaken by the Slovak governments from its independence in the early 90s until present day.

It is obvious from the research conducted that some governments placed greater emphasis on anti-corruption measures and legislation than others. The general trend is to see the pro-European governments placing greater emphasis on transparency and anti-corruption in their government manifestos, as well as in their practical implementation of measures through passed legislation or reform. This trend is further emphasised by the very recent election of the first female president, Ms Zuzana Čaputová, an independent candidate, who ran on a campaign of full transparency. The most recent government elected in 2020, with PM Matovič at its helm, has also run on a programme of tackling corruption and ceasing the one-party rule of SMER and its corrupt financial background. It is therefore fair to re-visit Bunčak et al.'s claim from 2009 that the civil society is mostly seen as passive- there seems to be clear impetus from the public for the system to change and this is encouraging from an anti-corruption perspective.

However, it is also clear that most of the measures undertaken so far have been negatively impacted by the vagueness of language, weak legislation enforcement, sceptical acceptance of these by the public, and lax implementation by the state authorities. There are clearly several institutions established to promote anti-corruption, such as the Specialised Courts and Prosecutor's Office, several internet portals available to present the government's pledge to combat corruption, and evidence by the government to try and cut through the red tape by making administrative tasks more efficient for the citizens. However, the official evaluation of these measures presents with results of low effectiveness, lack of longevity, and low impact on corruption levels.

The evidence also suggests that much more emphasis should be placed on the agency of the individual governments in their implementation of anti-corruption and less focus should be given to the role of the external actors. It is obvious that the EU and World Bank conditionality catalysed the anti-corruption efforts seen throughout the late 90s and in the 21st century alike, but there are indicators to suggest that domestic public demands and pressures have had a greater pull in recent times.

The language presented in the legislation and reforms, as well as within the international conventions that Slovakia has bound itself to, is indicative of a superficial approach to the problematic (for example the recent 2015 law on whistle-blower protection that was found insufficient in its practical application by Transparency International). It is true that all public bodies have complied with the government measures of having published their anti-corruption ‘plan’ or ‘ethos’- this includes even bodies such as the Slovak Postal Service⁴¹ or the Metrological Inspectorate⁴². All of these plans emphasise buzzwords such as ‘integrity’, ‘preventative measures’, or ‘public interest’, and speak in detail about the general vision, values, and principles to abide by. However, there are no concrete rules outlined that the employees have to stick to and no update provided on whether the measures proposed have been implemented and to what extent they are effective. There is very little available to the citizens to be able to hold the government’s progress on this to account. It appears that the only measurement of corruption comes from outside actors, such as the World Bank, The European Commission, or Transparency International through their measurements. No comprehensive summary of the progress made is available to the public and no domestic government measurements are available. Additionally,

⁴¹ See the Postal Service’s anti-corruption plan here in full: <https://www.posta.sk/subory/39980/protikorupcny-program-slovenskej-posty-as.pdf> [last accessed 15/02/2021].

⁴² See the Metrological Inspectorate’s anti-corruption plan here in full: https://www.unms.sk/swift_data/source/2020/protikorupcny_program/Protikorupcny%20program%20SMI.pdf [last accessed 15/02/2021].

the domestic measures are not made available in translation to international audiences.

These conclusions serve a vital purpose of mapping out the status of anti-corruption efforts in the case study. The section informs the theoretical assumptions behind questions posed to the respondents and provides insight into their levels of awareness about several aspects of corruption. While some perceptions of corruption are well documented by tools like the Eurobarometer, which includes both businesses' and citizens' attitudes towards corruption, there are some specifics that can only be answered in more detail within a deeper conversation. These include the following: knowing where and how to report corruption, the understanding and reasoning behind the main causes of corruption on petty and grand levels in Slovakia, how corruption is carried out in practice, the role of brokers and middlemen in corrupt transactions on the ground, the difference in understanding and perception of gifts versus bribes, and so on. Overall, there appears to be a chasm between what the government promotes, understands, and has implemented regarding corruption, and the implications thereof on the public's practical, day-to-day experience with corruption.

Chapter 6: Data Analysis

6.1 Introduction

This section outlines the data analysis process, which was undertaken using an interpretivist ontology, adhering to the key principle that meaning and interpretation is socially-constructed and established within discourse and tradition (Marsh and Furlong 2017). Rigorous thematic analysis and elements of textual analysis of in-depth interview and focus group transcripts were employed to investigate corruption on the case study of Slovak healthcare. The interpretivist epistemology of the project focuses on how this particular region's customs shape the respondents' views and understanding of corruption.

I undertook qualitative analysis of data collected through focus groups and in-depth interviews from June to December 2019. Anonymised data simultaneously collected from health care fora were also added for a further testing of theoretical assumptions, but due to the anonymised nature without any demographic data available, the use of health care fora was limited to textual analysis only. All data were processed using the principle of text units- these units represent the contribution (verbal or written) made by one person at one point in the interview and can be as large as a phrase and as short as one word, depending on context (Miller 2001).

The rest of the section will outline the types of analysis used and then move on to describe the four steps of analysis undertaken and the challenges arising. These four steps are namely: data immersion (including data collection, transcription and translation, and basic data visualisation), coding, creating categories, and identifying themes.

6.1.1 Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is an established method of qualitative textual analysis, alongside narrative analysis and discourse analysis and is most commonly used for public health research (Green, Willis et al. 2007). Thematic analysis is a method that is engaged during the very early stages of research already (ie data collection) and as such, it facilitates thorough and early data immersion. Moreover, this type of analysis is often used in conjunction with in-depth interviews (Silverman 2006, Green, Willis et al. 2007) and following this established trend, thematic analysis was used to analyse the one-on-one in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

Thematic analysis carries several advantages for analysis of the data in this project over discourse analysis: flexibility, pattern recognition, suitability for software analysis and relational analysis. Thematic analysis in this project follows the principle of carrying out a ‘form of pattern recognition within the data, where emerging themes become categories for analysis’ (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane 2006) and as such the identification and search for themes for analysis is key to the process (Daly, Kellehear et al. 1997, Rice and Ezzy 1999). The particular strength of thematic analysis lies in its ability to combine analysis of meaning with context, as opposed to detailed discourse analysis. A limitation with thematic analysis is the over reliance on frequency occurrence of themes and topics within text. It is necessary to bear in mind, as outlined in Chapter 4, that greater frequency may not necessarily reflect greater importance, but perhaps just greater willingness or ability to talk at length about the specific topic (Loffe and Yardley 2004, Shields and Twycross 2008). However, since the focus of the thesis is aimed at investigating the participants’ understanding of corruption in their real-life setting, even such an interpretation yields valuable results.

Rather than focusing on the discourse itself, thematic analysis is more suitable for identifying patterns and themes and is a more suitable method for utilising software pattern recognition, such as NVivo12. Software use, through thematic analysis, is capable of rigorously ‘tagging’ and ‘retagging’ codes and subsequently connecting them into themes (Crabtree and Miller 1999)

effectively. For this particular project, the recognition of frequency of expression, clustering of similarities in language, and understanding under thematic headings was paramount. Thematic analysis also allows for a more organised manner for scrutinising already-existing themes and codes and allows for re-clustering and re-categorisation of entire thematic headings.

Thematic analysis also has the advantage of being used within different theoretical frameworks while also adding the appropriate level of focus on form and function of the text in question (Lawless and Chen 2018). As opposed to the strictly linguistic focus of Critical Discourse Analysis, thematic analysis offers the option of analysing relational communication between individual sets of expression and participants. Similarly to Owen (1984), the thematic analysis here followed the three criteria for rigorous thematic analysis: recurrence, repetition, forcefulness (Owen 1984). When coding initially and then connecting codes into broader categories and themes, I was guided by the recurrence of particular similarities of expression, the repetition of these individually and across participants, as well as any features of emphasis within language or tone used. When identifying themes and categories, I was also guided by the understanding of a theme as representing a level of response pattern or meaning within the data set (Braun and Clarke 2006), while bearing in mind that themes are often latent and abstract, as opposed to the more descriptive and manifest content represented by a category (Graneheim and Lundman 2004). I was also reflectively conscious of making sure that themes were identified not only based on quantifiable measures, but due to capturing important topics relating to the overarching research question (*To what extent is the theoretical difference between grand and petty corruption reflected in the real-life understanding of corruption in Slovakia's health care?*).

6.1.2 Textual analysis

Having outlined the purpose of thematic analysis in the project, it is important to briefly describe the role textual analysis has played. In text, we are dealing with the conversion of language into a set of symbols, organised to convey meaning to the reader (Park, Griffin et al. 2012). Within text, the words perform a communicative act. I follow Potter and Wetherell's (1987) definition

for textual analysis as a 'broader analysis of data to evaluate the face value of rhetoric and discourse of a case, focusing on identifying significant patterns of consistency and variation.' It is these patterns of consistency and variation that interested me. While there are several instances of pointing out a linguistic specification inherent to the region, close 'micro' linguistic focus of textual analysis favoured by the likes of Fairclough (2003) gave way to broader analysis. I have focused instead on a 'meso' level of textual analysis, which looks into passages and portions within the text that reveal meaning and patterns- as such, this level of textual analysis pairs itself effectively with a broader thematic analysis which also looks for patterns in a larger context (Park, Griffin et al. 2012). This process was facilitated by ensuring that coding extended to full phrases or sentences, not just individual words.

It was crucial not to decontextualise during analysis. This was achieved through processes, such as creating word trees in NVivo12, where I made sure more context was added when necessary, as seen in Figures 6.1 and 6.2 overleaf. Here it is obvious when looking into the topic of corruption vs. token of gratitude, that if we take *pod'akovanie* (gratitude) out of context, it does not give us much to work with for interpretation and analysis. However, when taken in the context of 6 and more context words added, suddenly we get examples of what people consider to be tokens of gratitude (e.g., *bonboniéra*- box of chocolates) and what they consider to be a bribe (e.g., *peniaze*- money). In this way I was able to interpret data with firm association present between words and situations, customs, or local vernacular, which is one of the main advantages of using open-response questions for ensuing textual analysis (Bolden and Moscarola 2000). In this sense the analysis follows semiotic theory of textual analysis, which argues that sense cannot be determined outside of its contextual framework and words and expressions may go beyond the surface of the text (Bolden and Moscarola 2000), and provide wider insight into the understanding of participants as parts of a specific region and culture.

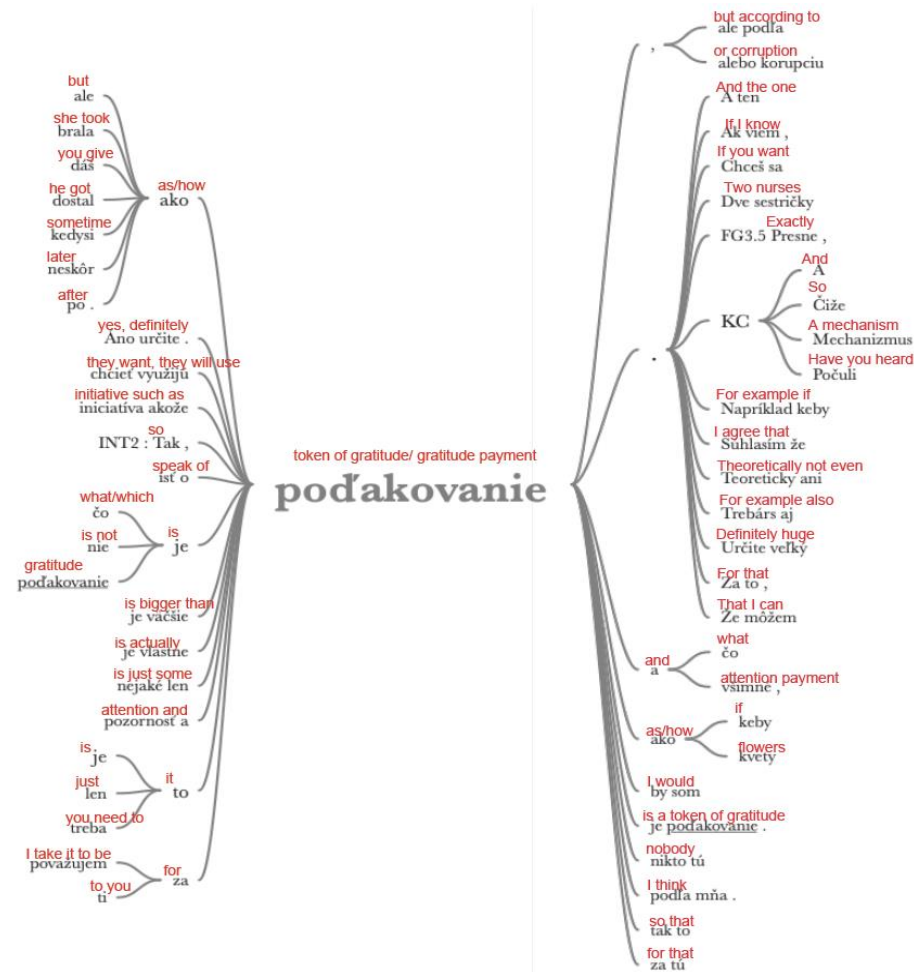


Figure 6.1 Word tree of 'gratitude' within node 'Corruption or token of gratitude', 2 context words, translations embedded in red by author. Source: Author

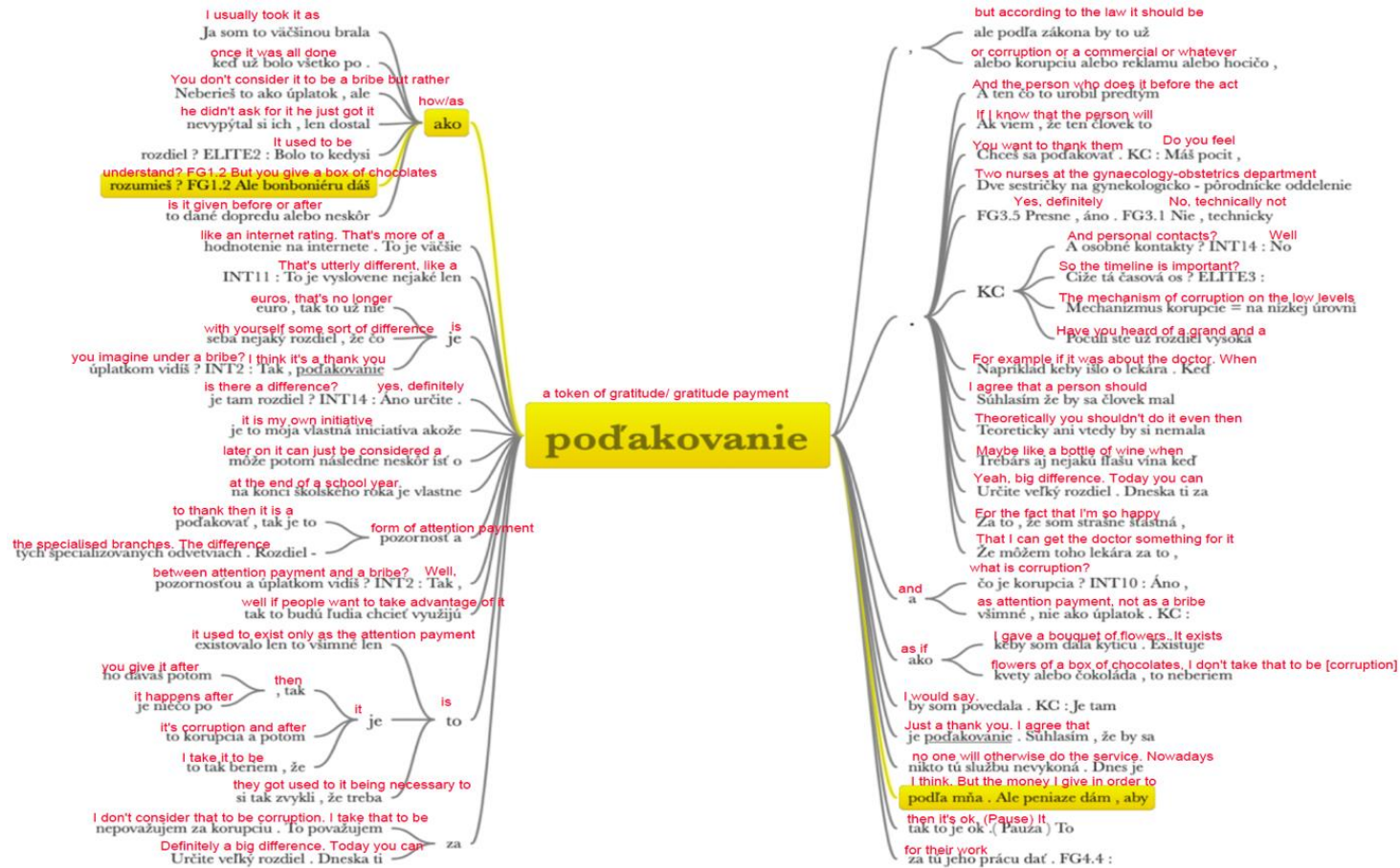


Figure 6.2 Word tree of word 'gratitude' within node 'Corruption or token of gratitude', 6 context words, translations embedded in red by author. Source: Author

6.2 Initial data analysis- data immersion

Qualitative data analysis conducted for this research followed a 4-stage approach, which included: immersion in data, coding, creating categories, and identifying themes- as seen in Figure 6.3 overleaf (Green, Willis et al. 2007). Early stages of data immersion begin in the data collection stage and are especially effective if, as is the case here, the same individual undertakes the process of data collection as well as analysis (Green, Willis et al. 2007). Initial theoretical assumptions emerged that were jotted down in field notes (journals), which have been shown to be an effective tool for initial data immersion (Hamo, Blunt-Kulka et al. 2004). The analysis presented benefits from my use of the field journal, and I made sure to cross reference it with categories emerging from NVivo12 analysis as well. Repeated reading and re-reading of the interview transcripts was employed. This was often done while listening to the transcripts again to ensure accuracy of transcription, as well as increase familiarity with data.

Later stages of data immersion included transcription of recordings by the researcher and initial recognition of frequent themes arising from data. It is important to note that effective thematic analysis can only be performed by constant awareness of moving back and forth between the four steps outlined- constant reflexivity on the side of the researcher and a process of 'testing the fit' as new data are integrated, while re-assessing theoretical concepts used is vital (Green, Willis et al. 2007). In short, the process outlined in Figure 6.3 is non-linear as indicated by the arrows inbetween individual steps. This was the case with the study of corruption in Slovak health care, where new emerging ideas and follow-up questions meant a continuous development of codes and taxonomy (as outlined in section 6.3). Codes often had to be amended or rephrased to include a broader spectrum of an idea or be separated into subsections for greater clarity. The research followed the principle of analysis being an iterative process with continuous updates to coding and category and theme extraction, where category shifting and renaming was necessary

(Davidson 2009). This was possible due to following the best practice for thematic analysis, the researcher's deep familiarity with the data (Green, Willis et al. 2007). This familiarity was facilitated by the researcher assuming the role of the interviewer, transcriber, translator, and analyst. In fact, it has been shown that while a greater team of researchers working on thematic analysis can cover more ground in terms of statistical significance due to a greater sample interviewed, problems of inconsistency with coding and data categorisation, as well as data translation and transcription emerge with more researchers handling the same data (Twinn 1997, Green, Willis et al. 2007, Davidson 2009). The thesis mitigated this shortcoming by the researcher (myself) undertaking all of the aforementioned tasks individually and in a consistent manner.

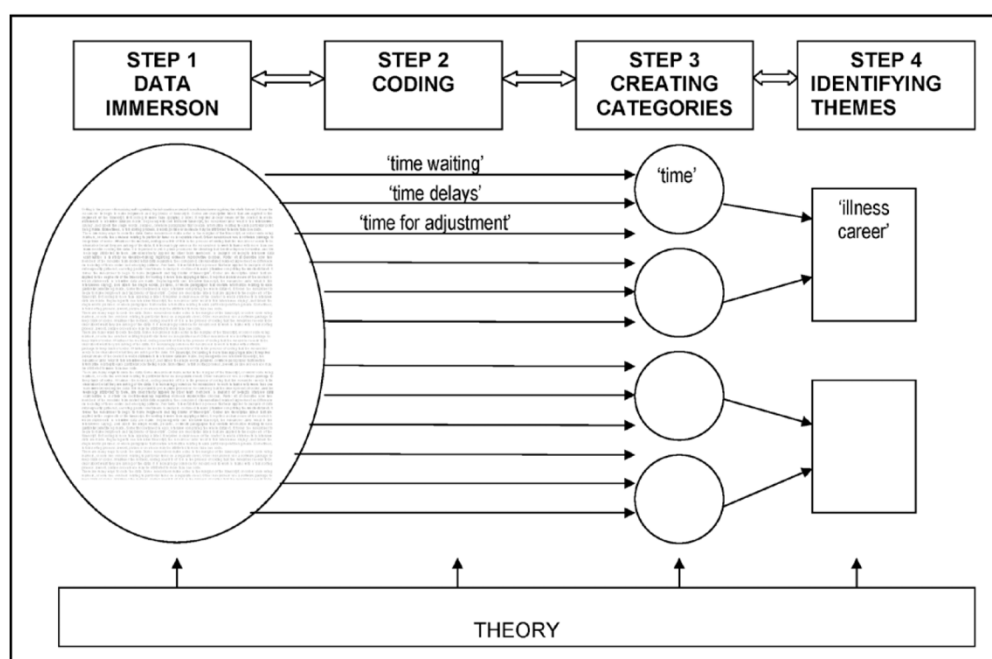


Figure 6.3 Four steps of data analysis to generate best qualitative evidence. Source: Green et al. 2007

6.2.1 Data collection

Data were collected using semi-structured in-depth interviews and focus groups over the course of several months, as outlined in Chapter 4. The collection employed volunteer and snowball sampling under the principle of purposive selection (Polkinghorne 2005). Purposive selection in this case outlines the need

for ‘fertile exemplars’ of the experience under investigation for the study. It was therefore important to employ volunteer sampling and subsequently snowball sampling, to ensure that the participants selected were willing and keen to discuss the sensitive issue of corruption. The existing literature (Gill, Stewart et al. 2008, Sutton and Austin 2015) emphasises the need for continuous reflexivity on the part of the researcher when undertaking these methods and a need for flexibility when it comes to scheduling difficulties, as well as follow up questions that can arise on an ad hoc basis.

The challenges presented by researcher subjectivity and filters through which researchers perceive data are outlined in detail by Sutton and Austin (2015). I was acutely aware of the challenges posed by one person collecting, transcribing, translating, and analysing data. These were namely researcher bias, scheduling difficulties, the issues of collecting data on a sensitive subject, the challenges posed by group dynamics, and the time-consuming nature of the data collection. While there are official recommendations of overcoming difficulties relating to sensitive subjects, such as conducting more consecutive interviews with participants, even three, if possible, this was not possible to carry out- partly due to participants’ unavailability and partly due to them not wishing to delve into the topic of corruption repeatedly. Instead of seeing these as challenges only, I saw them as opportunities as well. For example, instead of agonising over the ‘best’ solution to a functioning group mix for a focus group, I was happy to work with groups that naturally welded together through personal connections, as it has been shown that pre-existing groups share a familiarity that actively facilitates discussion on sensitive topics (Gill, Stewart et al. 2008).

There were protocols in place to counter scheduling difficulties that included the possibility of changing the neutral venue selected for a more feasible venue of the participant’s choice, phone interviews or Skype/Zoom interviews as well. Luckily, usually the scheduling difficulties encountered could be solved by selecting a more appropriate date and time for individuals. The transcription and translation challenges and their mitigation are outlined in the section below, but rigorous reflexivity and the use of a field journal were utilised to counter researcher bias.

I utilised an inductive-dominant framework for data collection and analysis and as such, there were theoretical assumptions and hypotheses in place before the data collection commenced (Armat, Sharifi et al. 2018). These are outlined below as a reminder:

Overarching research question (RQ): To what extent is the theoretical difference between grand and petty corruption reflected in the real-life understanding of corruption in Slovakia's health care?

1. RQ1: How does awareness of grand corruption inform/justify individual engagement in petty corruption?
2. RQ2: How does awareness of petty corruption inform/justify individual engagement in grand corruption?

H_{0a}: Awareness of grand corruption will have no impact on the engagement of individuals in petty corruption and vice versa.

H_{1a}: Awareness of grand corruption will inform/justify individual engagement in petty corruption.

H_{1b}: Awareness of petty corruption will inform/justify individual engagement in grand corruption.

3. RQ3: What are the strategies utilised to carry out grand and petty corrupt practices?

Theoretical assumption: There will be similarities in the strategies utilised to carry out grand and petty corrupt practices.

- RQ3a- subquestion: What is the significance of trust as a pre-requisite for corrupt interactions?

Theoretical assumption: Trust is understood as one of the processes of corruption that links the corrupt practices on grand and petty levels; as such it is seen as a condition more often than it is understood as a result of corrupt practice.

- RQ3b- subquestion: To what extent are social rules and customs important in the carrying out of corrupt practices?

Theoretical assumption: Social rules and customs are understood as one of the processes of corruption that links corrupt practices on grand and petty levels; as such they will prove as important determinants in carrying out corrupt practices.

With the outlined assumptions and research questions, there were already several pre-determined themes and codes that I expected to see and appear in the data collected (details of which questions addressed which RQs can be found in Appendix 5). These would have related to trust, the distinction between grand and petty corruption, an attempt by the participants to show how the corrupt behaviour has been normalised within their culture, and so on. In order to corroborate the theoretical assumptions, I would expect to see the participants to make a distinction between grand and petty corruption in their understandings without prompting and treat them as separate problems. I would expect to see evidence of justifying corrupt behaviour by 'those in higher positions' carrying out corruption on a greater scale, or the other way around as having 'learnt' corrupt behaviour in lower levels and carrying it forward. Furthermore, I would expect the participants to base their explanation of corrupt behaviour, predominantly on the petty level, on the ingrained social and cultural customs and traditions, as well as conditioned by Soviet legacies.

On the contrary, to disprove the theoretical assumptions, I would expect the participants not to view corruption in its separate capacities of grand and petty, but rather as a holistic problem that does not separate into levels. I would expect them to focus more on individual decision-making, as opposed to believing that one level causes another- instead I would expect them to view the levels as having a cyclical, mutual impact on one another and thus merging into one systemic problem. Equally, I would expect them to focus more on individual decision-making and concept of morality, as opposed to justifying corrupt behaviour with social and cultural customs inherent to the region and influenced by Soviet legacies.

6.2.2 Transcription and translation

Transcription of data is an effective method of immersion in data and a general re-familiarising of oneself with the responses of research respondents (Ferrie 2018), which ultimately aids in rigorous data analysis. Using software such as NVivo12 runs the risk of decontextualising text as an expression of an individual, turning it into a mere set of noted symbols to be categorised. Transcription aids in adding an element of personalising the data within textual analysis. It has been shown that transcription is much more than just a ‘mechanical selection and application of notation symbols’ (Davidson 2009:38) and is instead a selective activity where researchers exercise a lot of choice-making and selectivity as a practical and a theoretical necessity (Cook 1990, Kvale 1996, Bucholtz 2000, Duranti 2007). Such selectivity was applied here as well, where analysis was conducted using the original language of data collected (Slovak) to ensure authenticity, in conjunction with categories and themes articulated into English for practical purposes of writing in English. When presenting such data, as shown in Example 6.1 overleaf, the use of more than one language has implications for layout, and this is why early on, it was necessary to make sure that transcription style was considered before carrying out transcription itself and consistent layout was applied (Oliver, Serovich et al. 2005). Such early thought into the format and layout of transcription ensures an alignment of method with research objectives. In this transcription, for example, to ensure that the translations could be presented side-by-side to mitigate issues of transparency and trustworthiness of transcription, the decision was to undertake a naturalised form of transcription, as opposed to denaturalised (Davidson 2009). In practice, this meant that features of discourse had primacy over the oral expression- so, commas, full stops and paragraphing were incorporated, rather than adopting the denaturalised style which on paper would appear much like a Joycean stream of consciousness with language fillers uncensored (‘erm’, ‘um’) and without punctuation. Such format would be very difficult to read and impossible to analyse using software.

Because it is impossible to capture everything expressed in verbal and body language on the recording, further decisions were made in the transcription process to facilitate reading, as well as translation for reader comprehension.

For example, for the transcription, significant pauses (over 3 seconds) were recorded, as well as laughs and instances of one participant interrupting another, to be able to capture the nuance of a heated debate. The decision was also made not to capture short pauses or make any notes on tone of voice and some denaturalised language fillers such as ‘like’, ‘hmm’ or ‘er’ were omitted to save time and capture clearly the idea expressed, as opposed to the mannerism, to facilitate clarity. Another factor to consider when selecting the naturalised as opposed to the denaturalised manner of transcription (Davidson 2009) was the subsequent use of the NVivo12 software for further coding and category extraction. The ‘cleaner’ and more consistent the transcript for NVivo12, the more effective its ability to compute matrices and cross tabulations of textual units.

To mitigate the potential for being reductionist in this manner, general comments were made in the field journal during interviews to put across accurately any contextual nuance arising, should it prove to offer valuable insight into data analysis. For example, after Focus Group 3 the field journal notes: *‘heated debate between participants 3 and 4 regarding use of personal contacts as a form of corruption- the views here were fundamentally opposing and the tone of voice bordered on hostile. Clearly the topic has stimulated passionate discussion and dissent within the group.’* With the significant passage of time from the focus group being conducted several months before the data analysis took place, the field journal note effectively explains the unusual volume of discussion recorded in the transcription and emphasises the importance of the personal contacts topic (discussed in Example 6.1).

Transcription and translation (applied to all examples presented in thesis chapters) was undertaken by the researcher alone to mitigate arising methodological challenges. These include ethical considerations related to hired transcribers, where participant responses should stay confidential, and the transcriber’s/translator’s potential interpretation of the data and subsequent omission or alteration of words and phrases (Davidson 2009). To mitigate issues of lack of transparency and researcher interpretation during translation of passages, the source text and translation produced are presented side by side in the thesis, as shown in Example 6.1 overleaf. While the very nature of

transcription is a selective process, it was important to retain transparency in the presentation of data this way, in order for original-language meaning to be preserved, increasing the validity of the analysis itself.

The analysis followed the three pillar recommendations for enhancing the validity of a study involving translation: 1. Thinking and reflection processes, 2. The researcher acting as a translation moderator if professional translator is employed, 3. Not using a translator in the early stages of the project (van Nes, Abma et al. 2010). The first recommendation was employed throughout the entire process of transcription and analysis and the other two were not relevant concerns for the study, as these were all undertaken by one individual. To ensure that translation was carried out with sufficient expertise, and it was a fair representation of the original text, random samples of translation were picked out and the translation verified by a licensed translator from Slovak to English within the Official State Language School (1. ŠJŠ Štátna jazyková škola: www.1sjs.sk).

FG3.3 Nie len finančne. Ale sú tam aj známosti a vždycky sa niečo dá, nejaká pozornosť- káva, alkohol.

FG3.2 Známosti primárne.

FG3.1 Ale my častokrát nemusíme dať nič, lebo naša rodina má známosti oproti ostatným ľuďom aj to je korupcia.

FG3.2 To nie je korupcia, to je keď niekomu len niečo šuchneš vtedy je to korupcia.

FG3.3 Korupcia je keď ty niekomu ponúkneš ako štátny úradník a máš za to niečo prednostne.

FG3.1 Ja si zase myslím, že aj toto je korupcia, že som dostal výhodu za to, že tam mám známost.

FG3.1 Ja áno.

FG3.3 Ja nie

FG3.4 Ja nie tiež

FG3.2 A ja tiež nie, lebo podľa mňa korupcia je len, keď ja za to niečo niekomu dám fyzicky.

FG3.3 To nie je o tom, že niekam niekoho posunúť vieš. To je o tom, že niekto je ochotný mimo ordinačných hodín alebo mimo strážkových hodín ti pomôcť.

FG3.2 To je ako rodinná služba.

FG3.1 Ale prečo to nie je korupcia? Podľa mňa to je. To je rodinkárstvo.

FG3.5 Je to korupcia podľa mňa aj keď nedáš za to peniaze. Protislužba sa ráta. Akože výmenný obchod.

FG3.3 Not just financially, no. There's also contacts that we have and we always bring a nice little token of gratitude- like a bag of coffee or some alcohol.

FG3.2 Well, contacts are absolutely key.

FG3.1 We don't even have to give anything a lot of the time, because our family has lots of contacts and connections compared with other people- that's corruption too.

FG3.2 That's not corruption, corruption is if you give someone something under the table so to speak.

FG3.3. Corruption is when you as a public official offer something to someone out of the usual order of things.

FG3.1 And I think that this is corruption too, that I get this advantage because I have a connection or a contact.

FG3.3 I don't think that.

FG3.1 I do think that.

FG4.3 I don't think that either.

FG3.2 I don't think that either, I think corruption is just when I physically give someone something in exchange.

FG3.3 Yeah, because this is not about the fact that you can get someone ahead someone. It's about the fact that someone is willing to help you outside of their official office or surgery hours.

FG3.2 Yeah, it's like a family favour.

FG3.1 But why don't you think that this is corruption? I think that's nepotism of a kind.

FG3.5 I think so too, I think it is corruption even if you don't pay money. Like an exchanged service counts, I think. It's something like barter trade.

Example 6.1 Transcription of FG3 on the topic of personal contacts as corrupt- Original language and translation. Source: Author

6.2.3 Basic initial data visualisation

Once transcriptions were completed, the transcript files were uploaded onto NVivo12 in a Word document format. Some initial basic data analysis, primarily with the objective of organising thoughts within the system, was initially performed. The trends arising were identified during data collection and transcription, based on having manually noticed these in the role of interviewer and transcriber/translator. For illustration, these included:

- the general perception of the public that corruption in health care is rampant,
- the understanding of corruption not only in financial terms of bribes, but a broader reach into exchange of services or use of contacts,
- the idea of corruption being equivalent to ‘arranging’ a deal and similar.

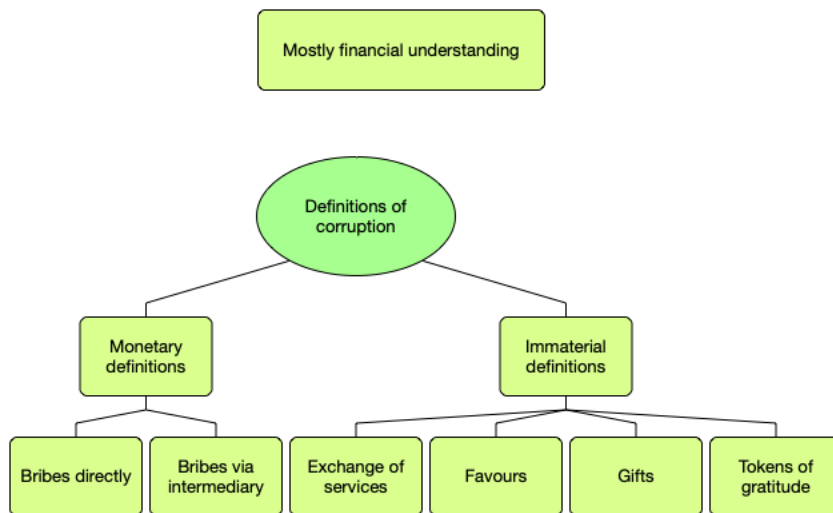
These themes were reflected upon in later stages of the analysis. The process of analysis and categorisation was enhanced by taking these initial themes and predicted categories of data and converting them into mind maps in NVivo12, which served as a helpful initial visualisation of the main idea and its subsections. The mind map function was also able to add overarching, ‘floating’ ideas that apply to all subcategories in a contextual manner, as seen in Example 6.2 overleaf. Here, based on existing literature outlined in Literature Review Part 1 of the thesis, the definitions of corruption are divided into two main categories:

- an understanding based on a monetary exchange for an unfair advantage
- an understanding based on the exchange of goods depending on social custom and convention, such as gifts or favours, for an unfair advantage.

The financial understanding did seem to be prevalent from initial immersion into data and it was therefore depicted as a floating idea in the mind map. However, the existing literature on informal networks (Baez-Camargo and Ledeneva 2017) and *blat* (Ledeneva, Lovell et al. 2000) does emphasise the role of connections, use of contacts and immaterial informal exchanges of goods or services.

Therefore, both definitions extracted from the respondent answers also have an anchoring in theory.

NVivo12 allowed for this mind map to be converted into 'nodes', whilst maintaining the hierarchy depicted- i.e., one central node and several 'child' nodes, or subsections. Categorisation was initiated on a very intuitive and efficient basis, utilising the helpful tool of visualisation in the beginning stages of the process.



Example 6.2 Example of a mind map constructed from trends arising during data collection. Source: Author

Basic visualisation offered by NVivo12 included other useful visual tools, for example the word frequency search tool, as seen in Example 6.3 overleaf. A simple word frequency search within all the files uploaded revealed some of the shortcomings of NVivo12, which did not recognise prepositions or short words such as articles or conjunctions 'and' 'but' to be excluded, but put them in the forefront of the search. Since there were realistically at least a hundred of these to begin with, a more specific query had to be run, excluding these words. Even then, some words like 'something' (in the centre of Example 6.3 overleaf) would make it into the centre of the word frequency cloud- its size and proximity to the center indicating its prevalence.

However, as shown in Example 6.3, some initial useful trends can be depicted by the word frequency cloud even despite its shortcomings. Example 6.3 shows a word frequency search within one specific node that related to all mentions and understandings of the definitions of corruption. The second biggest word

highlighted in white, 'peniaze', is translated literally as 'money', which indicated that the original floating idea of 'Mostly financial understanding' in Example 6.2, was not far off the verbal representation of corruption understanding by the respondents. However, there are several words that allude to finances within the word search, such as 'všimné' which can loosely be translated as 'notice money' or derivations of the word 'peniaze' such as 'peňažné' or finances, 'financie' or derivations thereof, such as 'finančné'. This occurred even after the option of 'words derived from the original' was selected in NVivo12, and this indicated that the software might not be as adept at picking these out in the original language, as it might have been in English. The trend should therefore theoretically be even more prominent than depicted in Example 6.3 overleaf. A level of manual analysis had to therefore be employed to accommodate for this - the most obvious case here with relation to both Example 6.2 and Example 6.3 would be the seemingly small presence of other corruption definitions based on service exchange or gifts. In the wordcloud however, while this presence may seem small, there are at least six words that allude to the exchange of service- all derivations of the word 'service' služba, protislužba, protislužbu, službu, službou, protislužbou. The variations here can easily be explained through grammatical categories and cases, rather than any semantical difference of meaning and for the purposes of the research these are all identical in meaning- and in real terms they should therefore look bigger and be closer to the centre. It was therefore important to be able to manually amalgamate these and similar cases of words with identical meaning and their frequency of use, to produce an accurate image of understanding and trends arising from the data.



Example 6.3 Example of a word frequency search within the 'Definitions' node, set at 50 words, translations embedded in red by author, Source: Author

6.3 Coding

The approach to coding was manual at the beginning, once transcripts were printed out and collated, and later utilised the NVivo12 software for greater analytical robustness and creation of categories and themes out of existing codes/nodes. Coding was utilised from transcriptions of whole in-depth interviews and focus groups, because such units of text are deemed to be whole enough and small enough to be kept in the mind of the researcher as a 'context for meaning' (Graneheim and Lundman 2004). The general progression of the coding process followed a pattern of three steps: 1. Generating many codes that reflect only the data (open-coding/indexing), 2. Culling the list of codes and deleting some and combining others, 3. If applicable, connecting the data to previous research and including theories and/or concepts (Charmaz 2006).

As for the definition of codes themselves, I followed a combination of practical definitions as laid out by existing literature (Dey 1993, Seidel and Kelle 1995). Codes are understood as tags or labels for allocating units of meaning to the information at hand, attached to varying sizes of phrasing, words and sentences. Codes are in that sense examples of phenomena tagged under specific labels to be able to detect commonalities, differences or patterns and are able to be re-named, re-evaluated and re-coded during the iterative process of coding. The terminology of Tesch (1990) who thinks of coding and qualitative analysis as a 'data condensation' or a 'data distillation' process was of particular relevance to me, as the vast amount of material to tackle required reducing the data to manageable tags and categories. Data reduction is not only recommended but in fact a necessary part of qualitative analysis (Miles and Huberman 1994) and facilitates return to textual material and its revision to ensure that the created categories are well-defined.

6.3.1 Open-coding and indexing

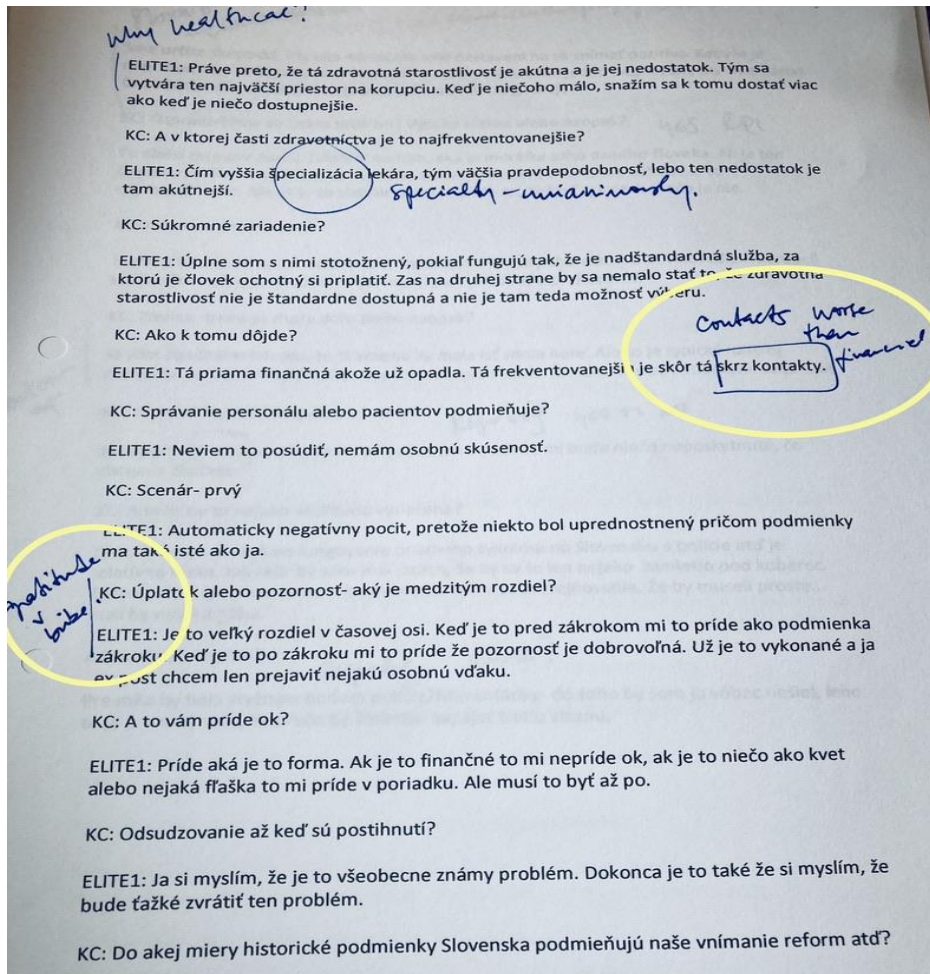
At the very start of transcription, in order to aid the initial coding process, it was important that uniform naming of files was employed to facilitate organisation of information and also subsequent upload to software. For me these were always 'Transcript INTNumber/ Transcript ELITENumber/ Transcript FGNumber' in a chronological manner of fieldwork taking place. The respondents were given respondent IDs and these ranged from 'INTNumber.Number/ ELITENumber.Number/FGNumber.Number'. All this information was also stored in an encrypted Excel file which contained demographic information on the participants as well and later helped in the addition of *attributes* to NVivo12. These attributes were very useful and robust in creating matrices and cross tabulations for analysis and gave a basic idea of frequency of answers to a specific node with regards to demographic categories. The demographic information is laid out in Figure 6.4 overleaf with names removed to facilitate confidentiality and anonymity. Such early organisation of data particulars then made analysis using the software easier and more effective (Deterding and Waters 2018).

Type	ID	Gender	Age	Education	Region	Occupation	Date	Notes
INT1	INT1	F	50+	uni. ed.	Bratislava	admin assistant	22/06/2019	
FG1	FG1.1	F	30-40	h.s. ed.	Bratislava	stay-at-home mum	22/06/2019	
FG1	FG1.2	M	40+	p.s.ed.	Bratislava	entrepreneur	22/06/2019	
FG1	FG1.3	M	30-40	uni. ed.	Bratislava	sales rep	22/06/2019	
FG1	FG1.4	F	20-30	h.s. ed.	Banska Stiavnica-central SVK	nursery teacher	22/06/2019	
FG1	FG1.5	F	40+	h.s. ed.	Bratislava	stay-at-home mum	22/06/2019	
FG1	FG1.6	M	40+	h.s. ed.	Bratislava	entrepreneur	22/06/2019	
FG1	FG1.7	M	40+	h.s. ed.	Bratislava	entrepreneur	22/06/2019	
FG2	FG2.1	M	30-40	h.s. ed.	Bratislava	entrepreneur	25/06/2019	
FG2	FG2.2	M	30-40	uni. ed.	Bratislava	employee of chocolate factory	25/06/2019	
FG2	FG2.3	M	30-40	uni. ed.	Bratislava	sales rep	25/06/2019	
INT2	INT2	F	20-30	uni. ed.	Bratislava	ESOL teacher	25/06/2019	
INT3	INT3	F	40+	h.s. ed.	Bratislava	hair dresser	26/06/2019	
ELITE1	ELITE1	M	40+	uni. ed.	Bratislava	university professor	26/06/2019	
INT4	INT4	F	20-30	uni. ed.	Bratislava	doctoral student	27/06/2019	
INT5	INT5	F	50+	h.s. ed.	Banska Stiavnica-central SVK	shop owner (jeweller)	30/06/2019	
INT6	INT6	F	60+	p.s. ed.	Banska Stiavnica-central SVK	cook	01/07/2019	
INT7	INT7	F	60+	h.s. ed.	Banska Stiavnica-central SVK	retired	01/07/2019	
ELITE2	ELITE2	F	40+	uni. ed.	Bratislava	doctor (4 specialties)	01/07/2019	
FG3	FG3.1	M	50+	uni. ed.	Bratislava	business owner	05/07/2019	
FG3	FG3.2	F	50+	h.s. ed.	Bratislava	nurse	05/07/2019	lives in Germany long term but was a nurse
FG3	FG3.3	M	50+	h.s. ed.	Bratislava	professional sportsman	05/07/2019	lives in Germany long term
FG3	FG3.4	M	20-30	h.s. ed.	Hassloch	soldier	05/07/2019	lives in Germany long term
FG3	FG3.5	M	30+	uni. ed.	Glasgow	doctor	05/07/2019	lives in the UK long term
INT8	INT8	M	30+	uni. ed.	Bratislava	sales rep	07/07/2019	
ELITE8	ELITE 8	M	20-30	uni. ed.	Zvolen- central SVK	pharmaceutical rep	07/07/2019	
INT9	INT9	F	50+	uni. ed.	Bratislava	librarian	10/07/2019	
INT10	INT10	F	40+	uni. ed.	Bratislava	PGR convener	10/07/2019	
INT11	INT11	F	50+	uni. ed.	Bratislava	Head of Admin at university	10/07/2019	
ELITE3	ELITE3	M	40+	uni. ed.	Bratislava	Dean of Faculty	10/07/2019	teaches European trade, business
ELITE4	ELITE4	F	60+	uni. ed.	Bratislava	Senior Lecturer	10/07/2019	teaches European law, European trade
INT12	INT12	M	80+	h.s. ed.	Gabcikovo	Former pilot, retired	25/08/2019	formerly from Bratislava
ELITE 6	ELITE 6	F	50+	uni. ed.	Bratislava	gynaecologist	26/08/2019	file corrupted, just notes
INT13	INT13	F	50+	uni. ed.	Bratislava	IT specialist	27/08/2019	
INT14	INT14	F	50+	h.s. ed.	Bratislava	librarian	27/08/2019	
FG4	FG4.1	M	50+	uni. ed.	Bratislava	Chemical engineer	27/12/2019	
FG4	FG4.2	F	50+	uni. ed.	Bratislava	Administrator	27/12/2019	
FG4	FG4.3	F	20+	uni. ed.	Bratislava	Economist	27/12/2019	
FG4	FG4.4	F	20+	uni. ed.	Bratislava	ESOL teacher	27/12/2019	
ELITE5	ELITE5	M	60+	uni. ed.	Bratislava	radiologist	23/12/2019	
INT15	INT15	F	60+	uni. ed.	Bratislava	teacher	23/12/2019	
INT16	INT16.1	F	20+	uni. ed.	Glasgow	administrator	26/05/2020	originally from Slovakia
INT16	INT16.2	M	20+	uni. ed.	Poprad	student	26/05/2020	
ELITE7	ELITE 7	M	30+	uni. ed.	Glasgow	doctor	26/06/2020	worked in both Slovakia and Glasgow

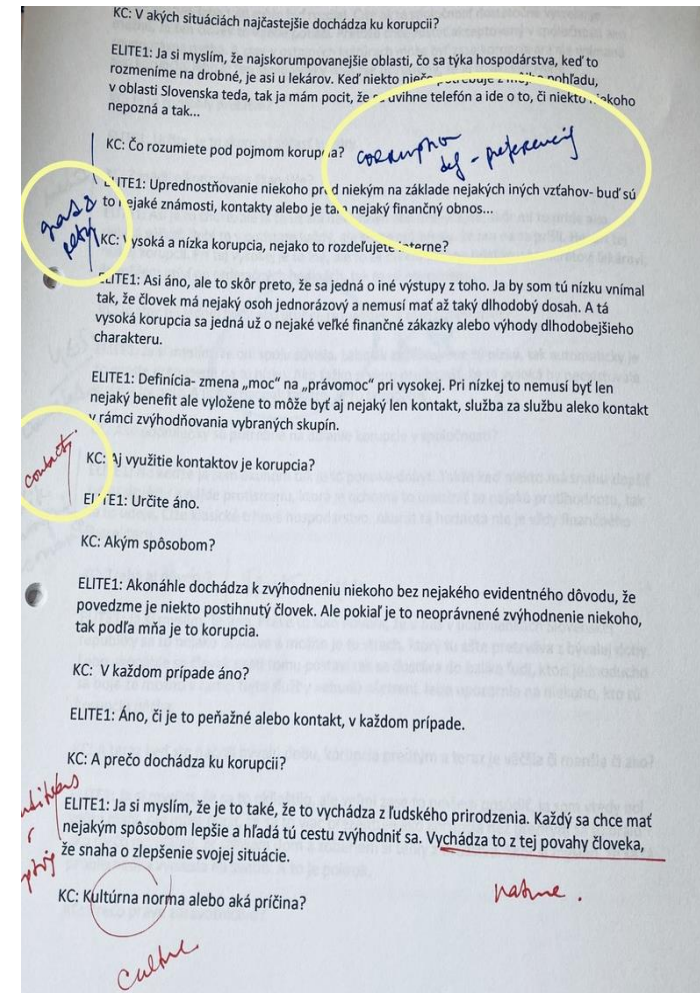
Figure 6.4 Anonymised details of participant demographics and IDs. Source: Author

The initial stages of coding were rudimentary in principle and included manually going over the transcripts, re-reading them and generating understanding and concepts present in the data- what is sometimes referred to as identifying the main 'stories' of the data (Deterding and Waters 2018). These initial 'index' codes helped me create as accurate and broad a picture as possible of the themes that were addressed by the questions asked and identified some initial trends arising. I was conscious of not artificially looking for exceptions to arising topics and trends. In other words, it was not the sheer number of exceptions that was important, but their ability to offer additional insight and 'colour' into the majority responses.

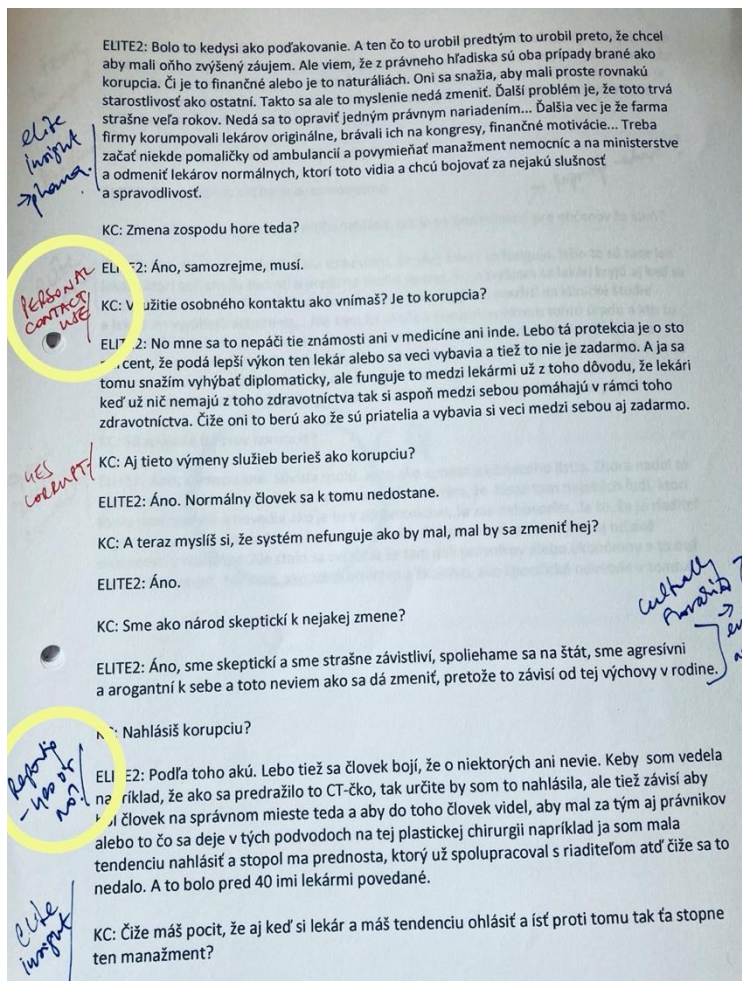
In line with the essence of open coding, i.e., taking down broad codes and headings/notes in the text while reading, several codes were identified early in reading through data, as shown in the randomly selected Examples 6.4-6.7 in yellow circles overleaf. It is obvious here that in the initial stages of index coding there is a wide variation of codes that pertain to similar topics: for example, 'Personal contact use' in Elite2 open coding and 'Contacts worse than financial [corruption]' in Elite1 open coding, or a simple 'contacts' in later stages of Elite1 open coding. Similarly, in Elite2 the index code is 'grand v. petty connected' and in Elite1 simply 'grand v petty'. It was important for me to be able to record the different nuances in the initial stage of coding, so that I would be able to return to the original data reading later on and verify that meaning has not been lost in the process of distilling data further when using NVivo.



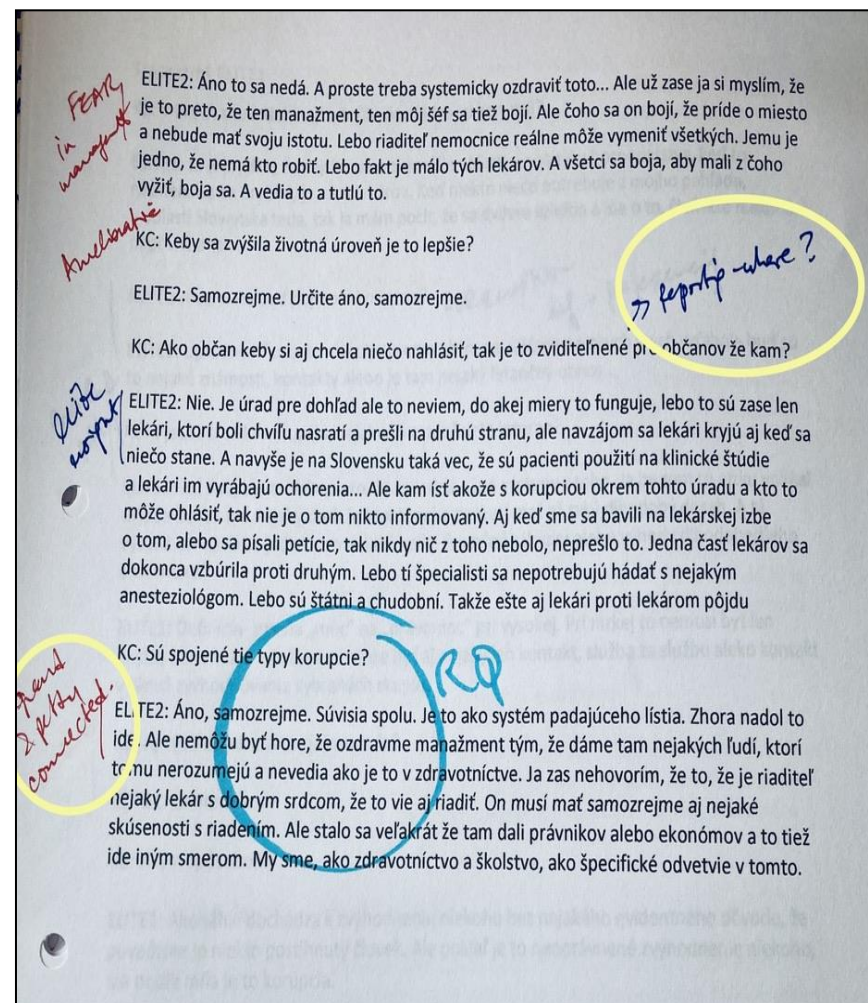
Example 6.4 Open coding Elite1, Source: Author



Example 6.5 Open coding Elite1, Source: Author

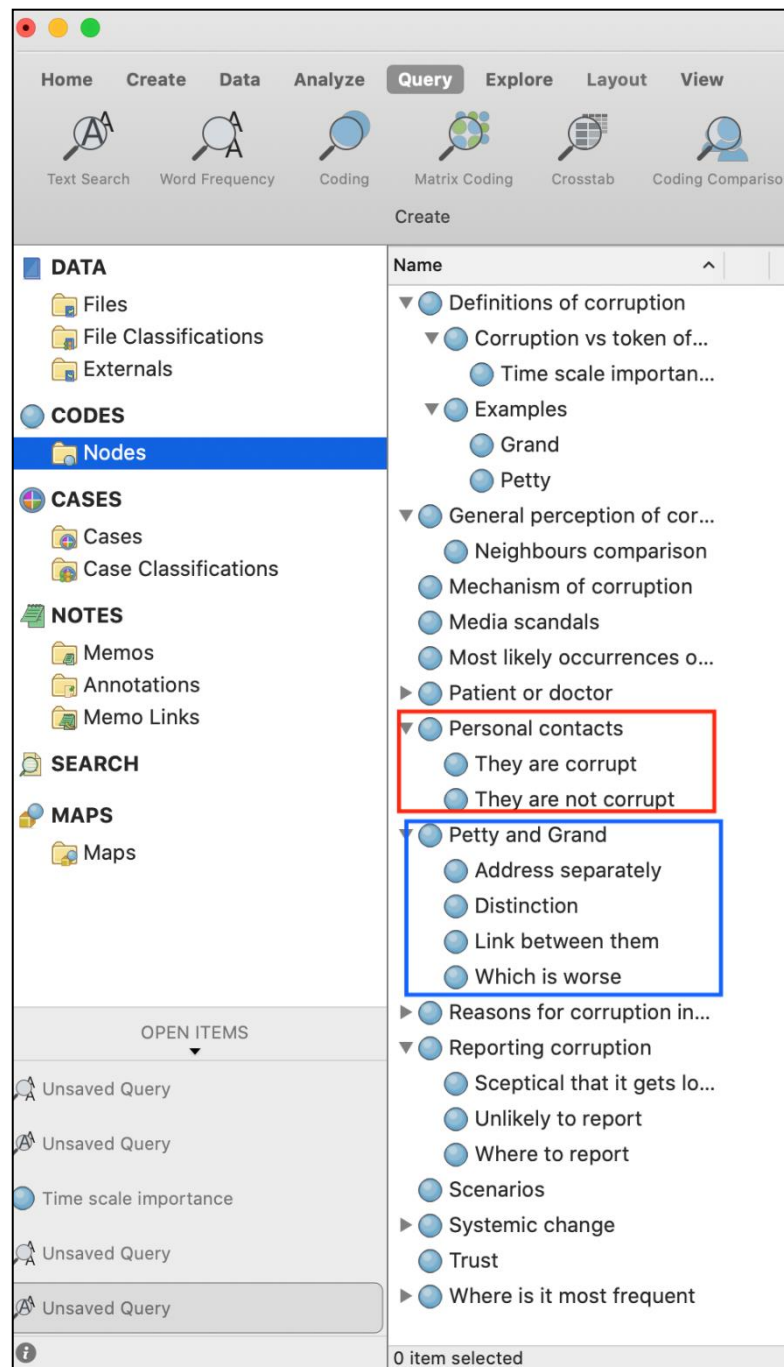


Example 6.6 Open coding on Elite2, Source: Author



Example 6.7 Open coding on Elite2, Source: Author

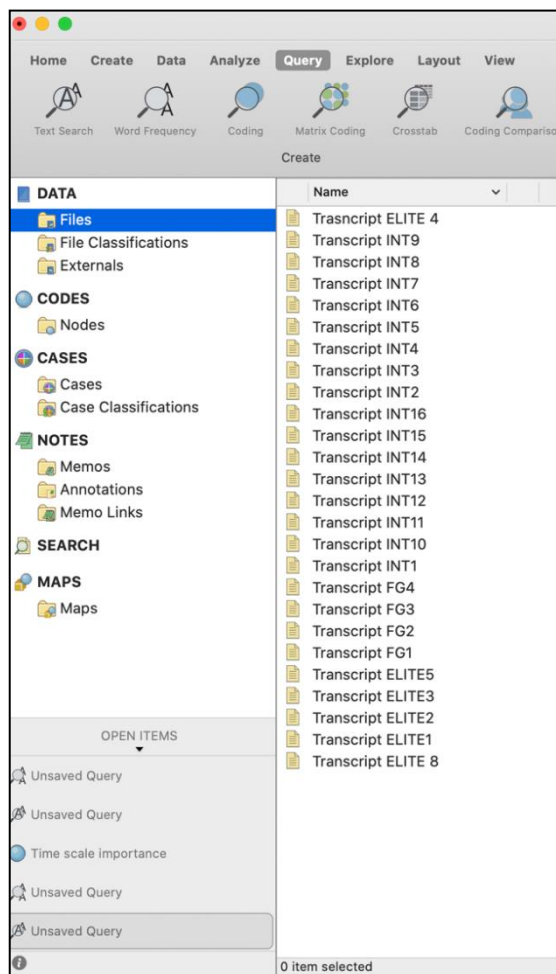
For these initial codes that were later converted into nodes when using the software, it is apparent in Example 6.8 that both parent nodes of contacts and grand v petty corruption were, first, renamed from my hand-written notes and, second, contain several subcategories within which greater detail is sourced. Another advantage of using software like NVivo12 is the ability to code a single passage under several nodes and thus be able to convey more of its meaning and context during analysis.



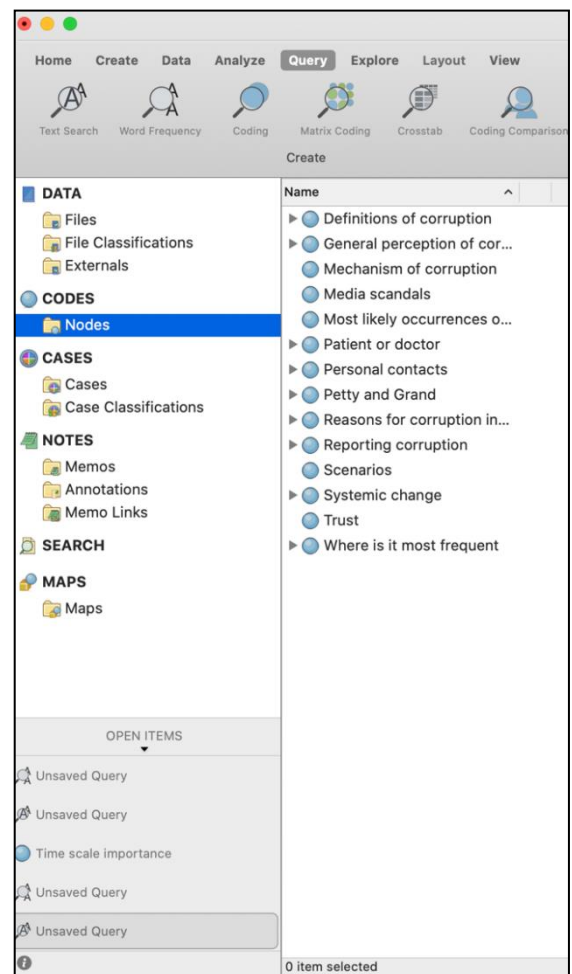
Example 6.8 List of nodes in NVivo12, Source: Author

6.3.2 Distilling codes

Once the initial index coding was completed, I uploaded the word doc. files into NVivo12 which ordered them neatly into the files section, as seen in Example 6.9. From the position of files, electronic coding could commence with the help of some initial visualisation and mind maps, as outlined in the previous section, and a list of parent nodes was created gradually, as seen in Example 6.10.



Example 6.9 Text files of Transcripts in NVivo12, Source: Author



Example 6.10 Parent nodes in NVivo12, Source: Author

The creation, refinement, renaming and revision of both the parent and child nodes took place over several days and weeks until this stage was reached. The reason for this was continuous reflexive activity, rather than just premeditation, because codes change and develop during the course of the process. Some codes

can flourish into several subcodes (child nodes) and some will need to be absorbed by others due to their re-coding. Many segments were coded in several nodes and it is difficult to keep track of the boundaries of each segment which become very easily de-contextualised when looking at a summary of references in one node only, as seen in Example 6.11. It was therefore important to make sure that I was continuously returning to the original data and was making annotations within the system to re-contextualise the individual segments and see them as a part of a whole again (Tesch 1990, Miles and Huberman 1994).

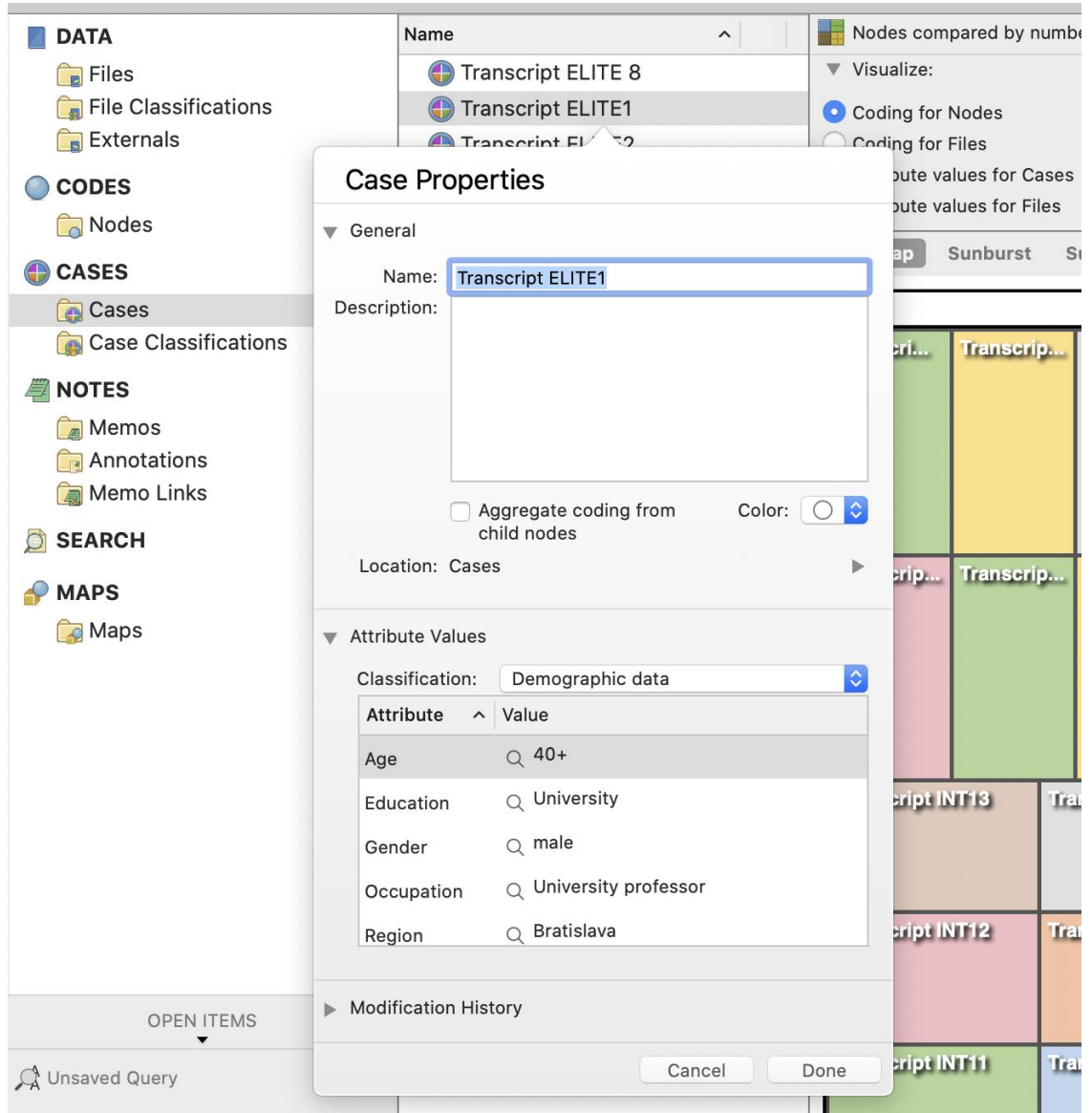
The screenshot shows the NVivo12 interface. On the left, a tree view shows the hierarchy: DATA (Files, File Classifications, Externals), CODES (Nodes), CASES (Cases, Case Classifications), NOTES (Memos, Annotations, Memo Links), SEARCH, and MAPS (Maps). The 'Petty and Grand' node is selected under CODES > Nodes. The main window displays a list of references for this node:

- Files\Transcript ELITE 8**
1 reference coded, 0.94% coverage
Reference 1: 0.94% coverage
No počul som o tom. A chceš, že čo si podtým predstavím hej...
- Files\Transcript ELITE1**
1 reference coded, 3.62% coverage
Reference 1: 3.62% coverage
Asi áno, ale to skôr preto, že sa jedná o iné výstupy z toho. Ja by som tú nízku vnímal tak, že človek má nejaký osoh jednorázový a nemusí mať až taký dlhodobý dosah. A tá vysoká korupcia sa jedná už o nejaké veľké finančné zákazky alebo výhody dlhodobejšieho charakteru.
- Files\Transcript ELITE3**
1 reference coded, 1.02% coverage
Reference 1: 1.02% coverage
Môžeme to rozdeliť tak ako ja delím na veľkú korupciu a malú korupciu.
- Files\Transcript FG1**
1 reference coded, 1.74% coverage
Reference 1: 1.74% coverage
FG1.2 Nie.
FG1.3 Akože vysoká je v tých vyšších kruhoch akože politická? A nízka taká každodenná.
FG1.2 Tak to sú aj tie Eurofondy alebo čo.

Example 6.11 Example of text de-contextualised within Petty and Grand node, Source: Author

Following the coding process, which was ongoing and continuously revised, true to the principle of qualitative analysis being an iterative process, it was necessary to assign attributes to my individual participants. Assigning attributes such as age, gender or occupation provided for a more robust utilisation of NVivo12, which was then capable of producing matrices and picking out trends as far as frequency of answers was concerned. In order to assign attributes, I

first had to convert the list of ‘files’ into a list of ‘cases’ which were then capable of taking on attributes. Each case was assigned demographic attributes as seen in Example 6.12.



Example 6.12 Example of attributes assigned to a case in NVivo12, Source: Author

The ability to cross tabulate between nodes or cases and individual attributes then produced some valuable results and trends, as seen in Example 6.13 overleaf. Here, for example, I cross tabulated the child nodes relating to the use of personal contacts with the education levels of respondents. It is clear that a vast majority of university-educated respondents believes that use of personal contacts is a form of corruption, as opposed to the opposite.

The screenshot displays a software interface with a left-hand navigation pane and a main content area. The navigation pane includes categories like DATA, CODES, CASES, NOTES, SEARCH, and MAPS, with 'Nodes' selected under CODES. The main content area features a table titled 'Unsaved Query' showing a cross-tabulation of nodes by education level. The table has columns for 'Education = University (n=16)', 'Education = High School (n=5)', 'Education = Primary School (n=1)', and 'Total (n=22)'. The rows represent nodes: 'They are corrupt' (11, 2, 1, 14), 'They are not corrupt' (5, 3, 0, 8), and a 'Total (Unique)' row (14, 5, 1, 20). To the right of the table is a control panel with 'Query' and 'Results' tabs, buttons for 'Run Query', 'Save Query...', and 'Save Results...', and a 'Nodes' list containing 'They are corrupt' and 'They are not corrupt'. Below this is a 'Show node against' section with 'Attributes' and 'Cases' tabs, and an 'Attributes' section with dropdown menus for 'Classification' (Demographic data), 'Attributes' (Education), and a blank dropdown, along with a 'Swap' button and a checkbox for 'Include "Unassigned" and "Not Applicable" values'.

Name	Education = University (n=16)	Education = High School (n=5)	Education = Primary School (n=1)	Total (n=22)
Nodes				
They are corrupt	11	2	1	14
They are not corrupt	5	3	0	8
Total (Unique)	14	5	1	20

Example 6.13 Example of a node cross tabulated with education levels, Source: Author

6.3.3 Coding challenges

The most obvious challenge when coding interviews and focus groups is the nature of the narrative material. As this material is not in its nature linear, the material will contain elements relevant to several categories and it requires time, vigilance, and vast amounts of revision and reflexivity to make sure that all material is coded under all relevant codes. I often felt uncertain with my labelling of codes and indexing and because qualitative analysis is always tailored to its specific project, there was not much material for comparison of my processes with another that I could find. I returned to and revised my wording and labels multiple times, and this resulted in a lot of node and category revision and renaming. While a level of tolerance with feeling uncertain during coding is generally admissible and required (Glaser 1978), it needs to be countered by returning to the data to check the reliability of codes and ensuing categories.

The lack of standardised processes is another shortcoming of conducting content analysis (Polit and Beck 2004). There is generally not any linear model to follow with this type of analysis and therefore high levels of organisation, reflection, and keeping track of one's own processes was required. I also had to undergo a period of time re-teaching myself a lot of the skills required to work with the software effectively. At the same time, it was important not to abandon the traditional manual handling of the data and I found it especially useful to keep returning to and re-reading the data to re-familiarise myself with the context of what was being coded. Whilst I found this to be incredibly time-consuming, I considered it necessary to ensure the results produced were as reliable as possible.

Finally, I discovered when assigning attributes to the individual cases, that NVivo12 does not automatically discern between individual respondents in one document, which was particularly problematic with Focus Group transcriptions, which contained several respondents in one file. In order not to lose the context of their responses, I had to initially code from focus group files containing all participants. However, for these responses to be given their individual voice and

attributes, I then had to split all Focus Group transcripts into several files containing only the de-contextualised responses of each respondent individually. This ensured I could assign attributes to each case, and I could re-code the same responses I had already coded from the contextualised group file, subsequently deleting the group codes to avoid duplication of content. That way I was able to code with context and with attributes as well- although this proved a laborious and a time-consuming process. The impact on the final coding was reflected both in the codebook where the number of references per node were more representative of the individual participants, but also within nodes themselves and the percentage of coverage per reference within a transcript. In the node 'Examples', for example, before disaggregation of Focus Group references, the coverage per FG1 with all its participants seen as one was 32.36% of the entire transcript. After disaggregation, for participant FG1.5, for example, the coverage of 4 references represented 25.04% of coverage. It is therefore obvious here that the 'examples' references per this one participant constitute quite a large part of the participant's entire discourse, over a quarter of their responses relate to them. It also points to the fact that not all participants will have contributed in the same magnitude per node: for example, for participant FG1.3 this was only 7.14% percent of coverage and for participant FG1.2, who was otherwise mostly quiet with short responses, the percentage was 19.56% of coverage. The disaggregation therefore provided a valuable way to stay true to the discourse recorded and ensuring that the voices of the participants were given the authenticity of representation that they deserve.

To make sure that the process did not omit any nodes in the re-coding, I exported both the codebook (a summary that NVivo produces of all nodes and codes and their summative numbers) and all nodes in their entirety pre and post coding. This meant exporting each node as a word doc file as well as a pdf before and after the coding of focus groups was disaggregated into individual files. I then printed both sets and was able to compare the numbers in each code book and also the nodes themselves in their content. This was also a very useful thing to do for the following creation of categories as I was able to manually annotate the printed files and jot down initial thoughts of which nodes to potentially amalgamate into a category and ultimately a theme before creating further mind maps in NVivo.


6.4 Creating categories and identifying themes

Creation of categories is where the debate about inductive and deductive content analysis became particularly relevant. It has been established that the labels of inductive and deductive content analysis are at best artificial and overly simplistic- as both approaches contain elements of one another (Armat, Sharifi et al. 2018). It is instead more useful to think of the chosen analysis method as inductive or deductive-dominant, but with elements of the other method included. My analysis was from this perspective inductive-dominant, as there were already research questions present, study aims and some pertinent theoretical assumptions to direct my inquiry extracted from literature (Armat, Sharifi et al. 2018). Extracting meaningful content, however, is a feature of deductive or 'directed' reasoning as well, which is why the blended approach is necessary and unavoidable.


In light of this, the creation of categories was two-fold. Using inductive reasoning, some categories presented themselves through interpretation quite organically and were semantically congruent with a lot of the parent nodes, but some emerged unexpectedly (Dey 1993). The analysis and creation of categories was reinforced in some instances by analysing a notorious, public health care forum, *Modrý koník* (modrykonik.sk). I found several instances of referring to the idea of 'gratitude payments' (*pod'akovanie*) or 'attention payments' (*pozornost'*) or even 'reward' (*odmena*), as seen in the headings within Examples 6.14-6.16 overleaf. It was therefore obvious that the node 'Corruption vs token of gratitude' was well-identified and there was an element of terminology congruence with what the anonymous fora have offered. The transition of codes into categories was not always this straightforward and I had to make sure that exceptions were recorded as well as trends. However, it was obvious that textual analysis into the nuances of the original language was going to produce some valuable results for this region. Clearly the word 'corruption' is avoided in everyday vernacular and one coping mechanism for the participants, and the populace as a whole, appeared to be the search for a more socially acceptable term or label for the behaviour exhibited and described.


Fóra > Voľné diskusie

Malá pozornosť 82 ročnému doktorovi


 **mischell0110** · 14. máj 2017


Chcem len nejaký typ na malú pozornosť pre 82roč.doktora,ktory mi velmi pomohol.Viem,ze budu nazory,naco "uplatky" ved ma za pracu plat.Niechcem dat nieco ako uplatok,ani nic take.Proste je to clovek,ktory si nasiel cas aby mi pomohol (s chrbticou),zaplatila som si ako kazdy iny,no ten pan Dr.ma neskutocne pochopenie,trpezlivosť a mile slov,pre mna zazracne ruky a ma teraz narodeniny a kedze idem na poslednu navstevu,chcem mu dat nieco na pamiatku ako podakovanie a netusim co,co dat 82r.cloveku doktorovi,aby to neurazilo,nebolo od veci ...

 0


 **pink_lady** · 14. máj 2017

@mischell0110 papierove topanky 🍷 Ale nie, hlupy zart...Je skvele, ked v tolkych rokoch dokaze niekto este pomahat ludom s cisou hlavou...kedze v podstate vsetko je povazovane za uplatok, tak ozaj nejaku malickost - nejake kvalitne vino, kvalitnu bonbonieru,.....obraz... (nic ine ma nenapada...)

 0


 **mischell0110** **AUTOR** · 14. máj 2017

@pink_lady dakujem,tiez som rozmyslala nad niecim takym,no neviem.presla som uz tolkymi Dr,ze nie kazdy je ochotny a robi to,co robit ma,preco vlastne vystudoval medicinu.preto si vazim toto a hlavne,ze v tom veku vie byt stale ustretovy a vie pomocť a som clovek,co si veci vazí.a uplatky nedavam nikdy nikomu,lebo si to nik podla mna nezasluzi,ma robit pracu,lebo sa rohodol ju robit a pomahat.no toto je len o vdake za vsetko.

 2

 **kenzom** · 14. máj 2017

Listky do divadla?

 2

Example 6.14 Forum 'Small attentive payment to an 82-year-old doctor', Source: Modrykonik.sk

Fóra > Moje zdravie

Co dať doktorovi ako poďakovanie?

Zdravie a choroby

10. jún 2020

Čo by ste odporučili ako poďakovanie pre doktora a starostlivosť

 0

 **karhu** · 10. jún 2020

dnes, keď sa aj na cokoladu pozera ako na uplatok, radim kvety, blahozelanie s dakovaním, dajte mu zahrat do radia ci nechajte pozitivne hodnotenie na lekar.sk

 3

 **syslik81** · 10. jún 2020

nic-akymkolvek darcek je uplatok ...

 7

 **gemberka17** · 10. jún 2020

Najlepšie čo môžeš urobiť je nechať pozitivne hodnotenie na lekar.sk , nič iné by som nedávala/nenosila. Pekná recenzia s dobrou gramatikou a stylistikou viet stačí. Poteší aj lekára (ak si to občas pozrie) aj ostatných pacientov, keď budú vedieť že sú v dobrých rukách.

 16

 **[REDACTED]** · 10. jún 2020

Daj poslať kvety donaskovou službou a daj tam napísať dakujeme, není meno, nie je dokaz 🍷

 0

Example 6.15 Forum 'What should I give the doctor as a token of gratitude?', Source: Modrykonik.sk

Fóra > Moje zdravie

Odmena doktorovi po operácii

 **evitta2** · 18. mar 2018

Ahojte, som po operácii ženských vecí. Ide skôr o plastiku, ktorá ale bola nutná a po veľmi dlhom čase som našla doktora, ktorý bol schopný zákrok urobiť. Som mu naozaj vďačná. Onedlho sa idem ukázať na kontrolu a chcela by som niečo doktorovi doniesť. No nemám žiadne skúsenosti. Poistovňa to nepreplácala, takže som si zákrok hradila sama. Čo ste niesli doktorovi vy? Dávali ste aj hotovosť? Aké máte skúsenosti?

 0

Dole < Predošlá Strana 2 z 2 Ďalšia >

 **zenaajmama** · 18. mar 2018

Či platíš za zdrav.starostlivosť na mieste alebo to hradí poisťovňa(myslím že tam odvádzame dosť, nie je to vôbec zadarmo) prečo by si mala niečo dávať navyše? Ja sa určite vždy poďakujem ak som spokojná, ale z princípu nedávam dary a hlavne nie peniaze.Ani neviem ako by sa mohlo niečo zmeniť v tomto štáte keď taketo "zvyky" sú bežné.

 2

 **montemotherone** · 18. mar 2018

@oli18 keby sme sa bavili o tom koho na Slovensku súdia a koho nie a mali by, to už sme aj v inej téme 🍷 Narážala som skôr na problém niektorých tu s morálkou takéhoto kroku. Akože to už by bol des, že by za bonboniéru išli súdiť mňa, či daného doktora 🍷 A čo učiteľky a kvety, bonboniéry, kávy... ? To už sú fakt vrci pritiahnuté za vlasy 🍷

 3

 **doty1** · 19. mar 2018

Ak máš potrebu niečo dať, tak to skús s lístkami do divadla, kina, darčekovými poukážkami do knižkupectva, handmade obchodíkov, kvalitnou cigarou, z flaštičiek sa im už podľa mňa otvára nožik vo vrecku 🍷 a pošli mu to na jeho adresu aj s poďakovaním, nebude "trápne" ani jemu a ani tebe.

 3

Example 6.16 Forum 'Reward for a doctor after surgery', Source: Modrykonik.sk

For other categories, these remained more descriptive and specific. In contrast, the themes arising from them became more abstract in their outlook. Following the diagram set out in the beginning in Figure 6.3, and following the process outlined by Green et al (2007), the nodes formed the foundation layer of a pyramid hierarchy, which then distilled into categories, which ultimately distilled into abstract themes. The nodes in Example 6.8 were revised with regards to their levels and the node ‘corruption vs token of gratitude’, which was originally a child node was moved to top level node upon revision of its volume and significance in conjunction with internet fora. Similarly, the node ‘examples’ which was previously a child node was assigned top level node position, due to its significance outside of mere definitions of corruption. Several nodes were also re-named, for example ‘Time scale importance’ became ‘Time scale of giving’ and ‘Sceptical that it [corruption] gets looked at’ became a much more concise ‘Scepticism’ which carried enough meaning under its parent node ‘Reporting corruption’. The nodes in their entirety and hierarchy ultimately stood as follows:

- Definitions of corruption
- Corruption vs token of gratitude
 - Time scale of giving
- Examples
 - Grand
 - Petty
- General perception of corruption
 - Neighbours comparison
- Mechanism of corruption
- Media scandals
- Most likely occurrences of corruption
- Patient or doctor
 - Patient initiates
 - Doctor initiates
- Personal contacts
 - They are corrupt
 - They are not corrupt
- Petty and Grand
 - Address separately
 - Distinction
 - Link between them
 - Which is worse
- Reasons for corruption in Slovakia
 - Bureaucracy
 - Culture norm
 - Deficiency of services
 - Lack of morals
 - Legislative deficiencies
 - Low living standard
 - Mentality of people
 - Soviet legacy
- Reporting corruption
 - Scepticism
 - Unlikely to report
 - Where to report
- Scenarios
- Systemic change
 - Change bottom-up
 - Change top-bottom
 - Combination of both
- Trust
- Where is corruption most frequent
 - GP
 - Private clinics
 - Specialists

These nodes (especially the child nodes) would represent the bottom layer of coding and would be merged through content similarity into categories, and these ultimately merged into themes. For example, the nodes ‘examples’ along with the node ‘patient or doctor’ both refer to the practical execution of corruption from different vantage points and could be grouped under the category ‘Carrying out corruption’. The established category of ‘Gratitude payments’ discussed above, which consists of its child nodes and is large enough to stand on its own, could be merged with the category ‘Common corrupt practices’, which combines nodes: ‘contacts’, ‘mechanism of corruption’, and ‘most likely occurrences of corruption’. Ultimately, merging these two categories meant arriving at a theme of ‘Justification of corruption in Slovak discourse’. This example of construction of categories and themes is illustrated in Figure 6.5 below.

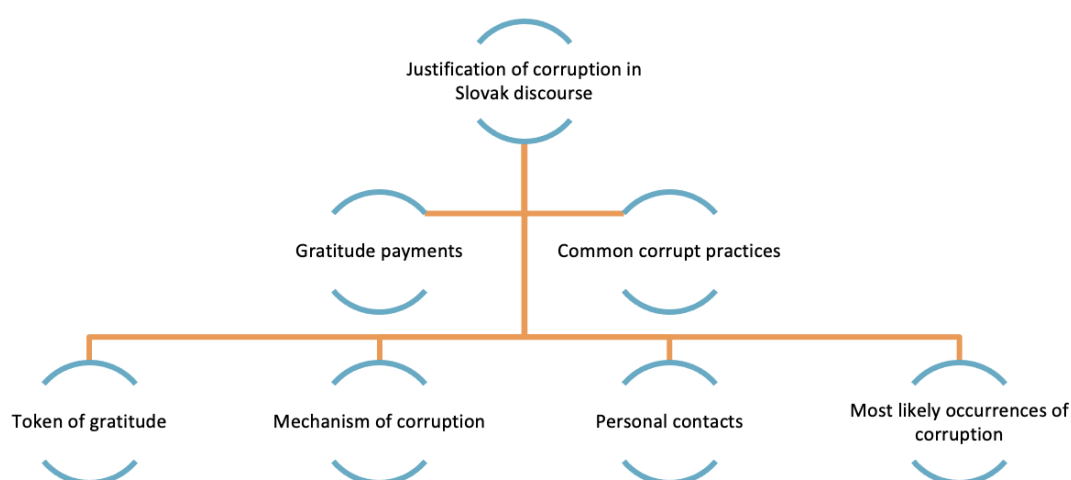


Figure 6.5 Example of creating categories and identifying themes from initial coding and nodes, Source: Author

The rest of the thesis will present analysis of data under the extracted categories and will ultimately present the identified themes in its discussion, alongside recommendations on further tackling of corruption, as seen,

investigated, and understood using the case study of Slovakia's healthcare sector.

Chapter 7: Creating Categories

The goal of this section is to provide a comprehensive overview of the creation of categories from nodes and their relevance to addressing the research questions. First, a broad analysis utilising the quantitative properties of NVivo is presented, such as cross tabulations and matrices, to provide for a basic visualisation of trends and discourse arising from interviews and focus groups respectively. These serve as a valuable and visually friendly general overview of the data trends that led to the creation of categories and provide insight into the success of the methods in eliciting content. The section then goes on to outline the rationale behind the grouping of nodes under categories, which then comprise the rest of the thesis as sections under their individual headings.

The individual categories are presented in the order that they follow in the rest of the thesis and Table 7.1 overleaf provides a comprehensive overview of all research questions and categories that address them respectively. The category diagrams in section 7.3 of this chapter repeatedly refer back to Table 7.1.

From Table 7.1 several categories address each research question and its hypothesis/theoretical assumption. For some categories this was a transparent choice, for example RQ3a alludes to trust specifically and therefore the category which contains the node 'Trust' had to be selected. However, the addition of 'Health care corrupt practices' to this grouping for example, is due to the similarities between the two categories, rather than a direct connection of the latter category to the RQ3a. Similarly, at first glance at the nodes tree, it might appear as if RQ3 would be answered perfectly just by allocating it the lone node of 'Mechanism of corruption'. However, from approaching the data with an open mind and by first grouping together the similarities based strictly on the

principle of repetition, recurrence and forcefulness of content, this RQ has now been given the additional dimensions of 'Personal contacts', 'Systemic change', 'Trust' and 'Most likely occurrences of corruption' along with their child nodes. Allocating nodes too early would have risked the RQ3 missing out on the additional dimensions provided by the rest of the nodes under one category. The possible addressing of the RQ3 has therefore been enriched by parts of the participant discourse that may not have been obvious at the start, but which arose organically from the transcripts.

Research Question (RQ)	Hypotheses or Theoretical assumptions	Categories addressing RQs
Overarching research question (RQ): To what extent is the theoretical difference between grand and petty corruption reflected in the real-life understanding of corruption in Slovakia's health care?		General perceptions of corruption Reasoning and reporting Petty v Grand Common corrupt practices Gratitude payments Health care corrupt practices
RQ1: How does awareness of grand corruption inform/justify individual engagement in petty corruption?	H0a: Awareness of grand corruption will have no impact on the engagement of individuals in petty corruption and vice versa. H1a: Awareness of grand corruption will inform/justify individual engagement in petty corruption.	Petty v Grand Gratitude payments Common corrupt practices Reasoning and Reporting
RQ2: How does awareness of petty corruption inform/justify individual engagement in grand corruption?	H0b: Awareness of grand corruption will have no impact on the engagement of individuals in petty corruption and vice versa. H1b: Awareness of petty corruption will inform/justify individual engagement in grand corruption.	Petty v Grand Gratitude payments Common corrupt practices Reasoning and Reporting

RQ3: What are the strategies utilised to carry out grand and petty corrupt practices?	Theoretical assumption: There will be similarities in the strategies utilised to carry out grand and petty corrupt practices.	Common corrupt practices Health care corrupt practices General perceptions of corruption Gratitude payments Petty v Grand
RQ3a- subquestion: What is the significance of trust as a pre-requisite for corrupt interactions?	Theoretical assumption: Trust is understood as one of the processes of corruption that links the corrupt practices on grand and petty levels; as such it is seen as a condition more often than it is understood as a result of corrupt practice.	Health care corrupt practices Common corrupt practices
RQ3b- subquestion: To what extent are social rules and customs important in the carrying out of corrupt practices?	Theoretical assumption: Social rules and customs are understood as one of the processes of corruption that links corrupt practices on grand and petty levels; as such they will prove as important determinants in carrying out corrupt practices.	Common corrupt practices Health care corrupt practices Gratitude payments

Table 7.1 Research questions and categories created to address them, Source: Author

All the categories will have ultimately enjoyed a similar level of enriching an initially skeletal set of ideas, shaped and padded out into a more complete body of answers, by following the principles of good practice for data collection, as well as thematic data analysis. It is this unexpected pairing of complex views that can come together with the help of qualitative analysis and its unique flexibility.

Therefore, it is clear that the dataset itself has ended up dictating the necessary way of addressing the initial theoretical assumptions arising from literature. There must be a level of flexibility and researcher reflexivity when joining up the assumptions with the dataset. The process began with identifying the questions and assumptions from literature, continued by devising individual interview questions to provide insight into these broader theoretical problems (Appendix 3), went on to distil similarities, recurrences and repetitions of information to code the responses (nodes), and has now arrived at the point where these similarities are grouped based on their relationship with one another into categories. Matching these categories to the original step of identifying questions and assumptions from literature is a useful way of re-checking that the research has rigorously addressed what it had initially set out to investigate.

7.1 Codebook data

The codebook is automatically generated by NVivo as a summary of all nodes and number of files⁴³ and references attached to them and serves as an overview tool for the information and trends gathered. Upon disaggregation of nodes from Focus Groups into individual participant transcript files, as described in section 6.3.3, it was clear from the codebook generated (see Appendix 1) that some nodes got significantly more content in than others.

The reasons behind the node content variation are twofold. First, the participants reacting in greater detail to some questions than others (and this is useful to note for any future research conducted into the topic) meant that some themes got more attention than others in their narrative. Secondly, the coding process initially presumed that some sections will be relevant for one node only, but they ultimately applied to several nodes, which inflated the content of some themes explored. As a result, the node with the greatest number of references ended up being the ‘General perceptions of corruption’ node with over 120 references. Other nodes with a large number of references attached to them were the ‘Corruption vs token of gratitude’ node with 61; ‘Definitions of corruption’ with 61; ‘Examples’, ‘Personal contacts’ and ‘Soviet legacies’ with over 50; and it is also worth mentioning ‘Deficiency of services’, ‘Mentality of people’, and ‘Systemic change’, which all scored over 40 references. I expected the nodes relating to examples and definitions of corruption to elicit this amount of content mainly because they are difficult to conceptualise and require more narrative. However, themes relating to Soviet legacies or mentality of people being the root cause of corruption, as well as use of personal contacts in a corrupt context, were also expected to elicit a lot of

⁴³ For the sake of clarity, it is important to point out that the NVivo terminology of ‘file’, ‘case’ and our understanding of ‘participant’ is synonymous. In NVivo the individual participant transcripts are imported as ‘files’ and can be converted to ‘cases’ just for the purpose of allocating attributes for analysis. These are however always to be understood as material expressed by the participant.

content due to their controversial nature. Based on the regional idiosyncrasies relating to gift giving and networking, as well as the Soviet past of the country, the theoretical expectation was that these themes would generate lively debate and contentious narratives. Among the weakest nodes with single digits or very low double digits worth of references were the following: 'Bureaucracy' (7), 'Combination of both [bottom-up and top-bottom systemic change]' (6), 'Trust' (11), 'GP' (10), 'Change top-bottom' (10), 'Change bottom-top' (12). These nodes probably have less content coded because not everyone may have had experience with bureaucracy to the extent of being able to speak about it at length and also because concepts of trust in corruption, as well as specifics about systemic change may be more challenging to address than others, which may have resulted in lesser engagement with these themes.

However, it is worth noting here that the number of references coded against a node by itself may be misleading. Some nodes show several participants engaging with the node, even if the content is less dense. For example, 10 files for 10 references in 'Change top-bottom' shows that ten participants engaged with the theme with a single comment. A quarter of participants (10 files per 10 references) reacted to the 'Change top-bottom', which is not to be deemed insignificant with this number of participants. Therefore, it is important to emphasise that the content generated should be considered in context of the number of participants who engaged with a theme.

Only a few low-scoring nodes had fewer number of files associated in comparison to the number of references extracted: 'Bureaucracy' with 5 files to 7 references and 'Scenarios' with 4 files to 8 references. Here it is fair to observe that only very few participants engaged with the particular question/theme raised and for the case of 'Scenarios' this is doubly relevant. The respondent engagement was dissatisfactory with this in the first 10 respondents (respondents tended to close up and offer no or very short insights after it) and the question (number 11 in Appendix 3) was subsequently cut to allow for maximum levels of engagement with the rest of the questions for future participants. The conclusion drawn by my field journal at the time was that the examples chosen for the scenarios (as seen in Appendix 3) were perhaps too

realistic and eliciting levels of shame and discomfort for the participants, who then shifted their body language to crossed arms and/or leaned backwards and became much less verbose in their subsequent responses.

7.2 Interviews and Focus groups node cross tabulations

7.2.1 Interviews and Focus groups

For a more in-depth perspective of frequency and volume of responses, a simple cross tabulation between all nodes and all cases within NVivo was conducted in the software itself (see Appendix 2). This cross tabulation provides a simple but effective overview of the trends of responses by logging the number of responses against a node under the respective case (participant).

The data extracted from the codebook is consistent in the 'Total' column at the end of this cross tabulation too, which sums up the number of responses per node. The cross tabulation, as opposed to the codebook, gives more detailed information. It shows the total of all responses per case (participant) and thus indicates which participants engaged more with the whole interview and also specifically with particular questions. It can provide insight into the effectiveness of interviews versus focus groups as far as eliciting depth of response and level of detail. As always with these qualitative cross tabulations, it is necessary to bear in mind that NVivo is not sophisticated enough to recognise duplication of content- ie several excerpts of text may apply to several nodes. It is therefore important to view the following results as merely indications of trends, as it is possible that the total numbers are artificially inflated by the coding process.

From the Codes v nodes tabulation, several interesting comparisons arise. The participant (case) with the largest number of references coded is INT1 with 72 coded in total. Participant FG4.4 is a close second with 66 and there are several more participants with scores in the high 50s: FG4.1 with 52, FG4.2 with 59, INT2 with 58 and INT13 with 53. Participants with the lowest number of

references are FG1.1 with 2, FG2.3 with 1, FG3.7 with 2 and FG1.7 with 5. This is indicative of the participants engaging less with the verbalising of their thoughts in focus groups, but from memory and the field journal, many of them preferred to listen and would communicate through body language such as nods or onomatopoeic responses, which are impossible to note on the transcript in real time. It is also possible that one of the overall effects of focus groups, as discussed in previous chapters, can indeed be participant intimidation. This is why participants were given the option of following up the focus group with an interview- which was the case, for example, for participant FG3.7, who later contributed via interview as ELITE7.

It would appear from the above results that interviews have been more effective in eliciting responses per participant, and this confirms the theoretical assumption as outlined in Chapter 4 that interviews were more likely to elicit depth of response for sensitive topics such as corruption. Figure 7.1 overleaf presents the visual representation of the responses per participant in interviews only, as extracted using pivot table in Microsoft Excel. Figure 7.2 overleaf presents the same values for focus groups only. The average number of responses per participant is 35.36 for interviews (bearing in mind this includes both in-depth interviews and elite interviews) and for focus groups it is 23.42.

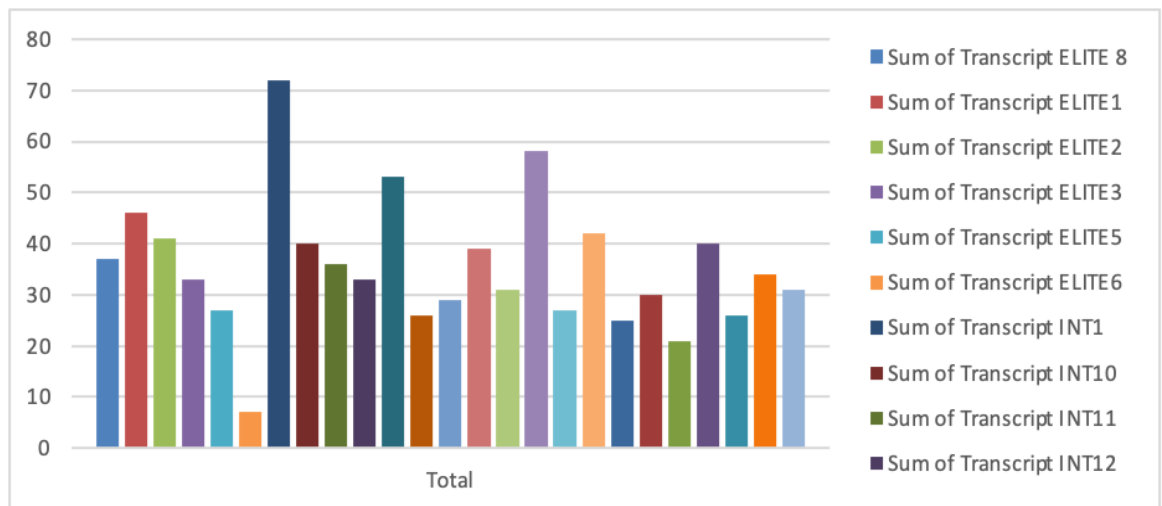


Figure 7.1 Interviews: Number of responses. Source: Author

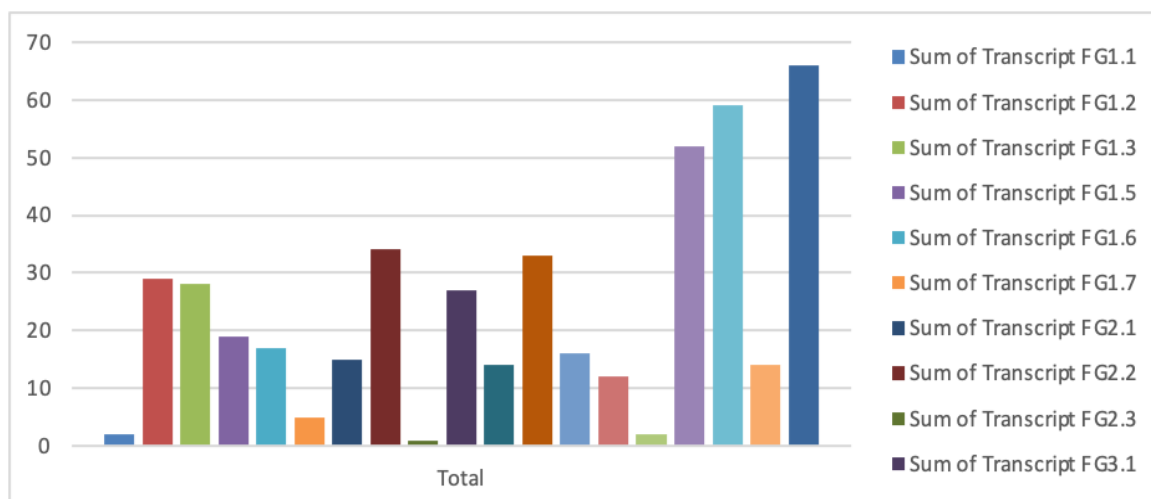


Figure 7.2: Focus Groups: Number of responses. Source: Author

Considering that there were more respondents for interviews (25) than there were for focus groups (19) and that some participants did indeed take part in both, the difference in the average is not as large as the individual participant figures indicate. However, for a more nuanced insight, the lowest number of references for Focus Groups was 1 or 2 responses per participant, whereas for Interviews this was 7 (which was a corrupted file and therefore only transcribed from memory and notes taken) and second lowest was in the low 20's. This would indicate that while on average the difference between the two methods may seem to be of low significance, individually the difference is noticeable and valuable for future research method selection.

Similar results can be observed when considering the focus groups themselves as a separate entity. For focus groups, FG1 of 7 participants produced 100 coded responses in total, FG2 with 3 participants 50 coded responses, FG3 with 7 participants 104 coded responses, and FG4 with 4 participants 191 coded responses. It is obvious here as well that while on average, a focus group produced 111.25 responses, there is a difference of nearly 150 responses between the lowest and the highest-response-producing focus group. Therefore, there is significant variation not only between two separate methods, but also variation of data acquisition consistency within one method, which emphasises the need for a robust approach to evaluation and also a diligent approach to sample selection for each group.

Rather than focusing on the sheer numbers of averages and numerical trends, it is important to take into consideration the nuance of working with participants in focus groups, the group dynamics, and interaction levels. It is far from true that the more participants per group, the more fruitful the discussion- more is at play here. The Focus Group with participants who knew each other (FG4) and had only 4 taking part produced the highest number of references.

7.2.2 Cross tabulations

Cross tabulations in NVivo serve as a useful tool for finding cross sections and trends between two or more variables of any kind. The Table 7.2 serves as another example of a cross tabulation and includes all attributes of the cases (participants) juxtaposed with all the nodes coded.

Nodes/Demographics	A : Demographic data:Age = 50+	B : Demographic data:Age = 20-30	C : Demographic data:Age = 40+	D : Demographic data:Age = 60+	E : Demographic data:Age = 30-40	F : Demographic data:Age = 80+	Demographic data:Educati on = University	Demographic data:Educati on = High School	Demographic data:Educati on = Primary School	J : Demographic data:Gender = female	K : Demographic data:Gender = male
1 : They are corrupt	5	6	10	4	1	0	20	4	2	16	10
2 : They are not corrupt	10	2	4	1	4	2	15	7	1	11	12
3 : Corruption vs token of gratitude	18	9	14	11	6	3	43	15	3	38	23
4 : Time scale importance	13	7	6	2	4	1	24	6	3	16	17
5 : Definitions of corruption	18	12	10	4	10	1	38	14	3	26	29
6 : Examples	15	13	14	3	5	1	34	15	2	30	21
7 : Grand	11	7	8	2	4	1	27	3	3	20	13
8 : Petty	13	11	5	3	2	1	33	2	0	23	12
9 : General perception of corruption	51	27	23	8	15	2	100	21	5	69	57
10 : Neighbours comparison	5	5	4	2	5	1	17	3	2	10	12
11 : Mechanism of corruption	8	7	2	4	6	1	20	7	1	16	12
12 : Media scandals	8	8	5	4	2	1	22	4	2	18	10
13 : Most likely occurrences of corruption	12	7	6	6	5	2	25	11	2	22	16
14 : Patient or doctor	5	5	5	0	1	0	16	0	0	10	6
15 : Doctor initiates	6	3	4	1	1	0	13	2	0	10	5
16 : Patient initiates	6	6	2	2	4	1	17	3	1	12	9
17 : Personal contacts	16	10	13	5	5	1	36	11	3	29	21
18 : Petty and Grand	9	6	4	2	5	0	22	3	1	14	12
19 : Address separately	4	4	0	2	0	0	10	0	0	9	1
20 : Distinction	7	7	1	4	3	0	19	3	0	14	8
21 : Link between them	9	14	6	4	5	1	30	7	2	25	14
22 : Which is worse	6	3	1	3	3	1	14	3	0	10	7
23 : Reasons for corruption in Slovakia	3	6	2	4	1	0	12	4	0	11	5
24 : Bureaucracy	1	0	0	1	4	1	6	1	0	2	5
25 : Culture Norm	14	10	8	2	5	0	31	7	1	23	16
26 : Deficiency of services	14	11	9	2	4	0	33	6	1	27	13
27 : Lack of morals	7	5	2	3	1	0	16	0	2	15	3
28 : Legislative deficiencies	11	4	0	3	1	1	18	2	0	12	8
29 : Low living standard	14	7	8	3	7	0	29	7	3	26	13
30 : Mentality of people	18	9	10	5	3	1	36	8	2	31	15
31 : Soviet legacy	19	10	7	9	5	1	39	9	3	27	24
32 : Reporting corruption	8	7	11	4	6	0	25	9	2	19	17
33 : Sceptical that it gets looked at	3	1	8	2	3	1	14	3	1	10	8
34 : Unlikely to report	10	5	7	6	7	2	25	10	2	20	17
35 : Where to report	8	6	9	5	5	1	26	5	3	18	16
36 : Scenarios	2	3	1	0	2	0	8	0	0	5	3
37 : Systemic change	13	10	8	4	5	1	31	9	1	28	13
38 : Change bottom-top	4	3	3	1	0	1	9	2	1	9	3
39 : Change top-bottom	3	3	1	1	2	0	8	2	0	6	4
40 : Combination of both	2	3	0	1	0	0	6	0	0	5	1
41 : Trust	3	4	1	1	2	0	8	3	0	5	6
42 : Where is it most frequent	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0
43 : GP	1	4	1	1	2	1	9	1	0	4	6
44 : Private clinics	7	3	7	2	3	0	17	5	0	13	9
45 : Specialists	10	9	7	3	5	1	28	6	1	18	17

Table 7.2 Cross tabulation of all nodes and all attributes. Source: Author. Red female/male ratio for node 'They are corrupt'; yellow female/male ratio for node 'Link between them', blue university-educated demographic for nodes 'Distinction' and 'Link between them' and green university-educated demographic for nodes 'Mentality of people' and 'Soviet legacy'.

It is obvious from the cross tabulation here that some demographic attributes are dominant in some nodes. However, this cannot be taken entirely at face value and a lot of the nodes provide merely a broad code word under which an excerpt is coded, as opposed to a clear binary delineation like 'agree and disagree' that would show immediate results. Some interesting trends can still be seen at first glance.

RED: For example, for the node 'They are corrupt' which relates to the parent node 'Personal contacts' and happens to be one of a few binary pairs (coupled with 'They are not corrupt'), it is obvious that females are more likely to consider personal contacts to be corrupt than men, with the ratio 16/10. This finding is explored in greater depth across the empirical chapters and remains a strong trend throughout when it comes to male/female ratios for tolerating corruption. This type of trend is consistent with previous literature which suggests that women tend to be more risk-averse and less tolerant of corruption (Dollar, Fishman et al. 2001).

YELLOW: For the node 'Link between them', which refers to a link between petty and grand corrupt practices, women are again more likely to consider there to be a link, as opposed to a distinction between the two levels of corruption than men, with the ratio 25/14. It is important to view the results with an amount of perspective, as we know that there were overall more women than men taking part in the research, so the gender splits may be less stark than they appear at first glance.

BLUE: It is equally interesting to see that 30 university-educated participants consider there to be a link between petty and grand corrupt practices and 19 are of the opinion that there is a clear distinction between the two practices. Knowing that the study only recruited a little over 40 participants, however, some views may apply to several contrasting nodes. For example, 30 and 19 highlighted in blue in Figure 7 point towards contrasting views, but this would in practice constitute more participants than the study realistically recruited. Therefore, it is logical to assume that some participants may have presented a view that lends itself to both nodes, were sitting on the fence with their opinion, or were of the opinion that both kinds of perspective are valid.

GREEN: Qualitative interpretation of the data will be able to uncover the level of nuance under these basic computations and provide the much-needed context for a full interpretation of the participants' views. In the same vein, under the mother node 'Reasons for corruption in Slovakia', the child nodes 'Mentality of people' and 'Soviet legacy' have acquired nearly identical number of codes of over 30 by university-educated participants. Again, this would constitute well over 60 participants if these views were not overlapping, which indicates that overlap is inevitable here. This further reinforces the idea that real life participant views are rarely black and white but require a deeper insight into the particular language used and circumstances described.

This section has indicated that there is some difference between the amount and depth of data acquired by interviews and focus groups. This variation in quantity of response was anticipated when designing this research and the purpose of combining the two methods was primarily maximising the yield of the responses. Secondary to this it was also to observe the differences in the type and length of responses and to observe which setting provided the participants with the opportunity to address sensitive topics in more detail. It is difficult to draw any specific conclusions from as small a sample as the research was able to acquire. The valuable conclusion here is, however, that both methods performed their objective and elicited different types of responses without one being superior to the other in quality. The key to a successful and qualitatively rich data collecting exercise, endorsed by my experience on this project, is development of good rapport of researcher with the participants, within a group, and the willingness of participants to share and elaborate on their views.

7.3 Collating nodes under categories

Having investigated the varied nature of content produced by interviews and focus groups, this section outlines the rationale behind grouping the existing content into categories, as outlined in Chapter 6 to be the next step after coding (Green, Willis et al. 2007). The six categories presented below in sections 7.3.1 to 7.3.6 are comprised of the nodes presented in Chapter 6 in full and can also be viewed in full and in their original hierarchy of parent and child nodes in Appendix 1. They are presented in their order of appearance going forward to the empirical part of the thesis. It is important to emphasise that the main connection of the categories is therefore content-based. This is established practice of conducting research using thematic analysis with the principles of recurrence, repetition and forcefulness in mind (Owen 1984).

The nodes are presented trying to maintain the original levels of hierarchy of parent and child nodes. However, the nodes which received the highest number of references have been coloured in red to account for their robustness (these are all nodes with 40+ references)⁴⁴, as opposed to the less content-dominant nodes which remained in green (less than 40 references). The objective behind this colour-coded presentation of categories is to help visualise the hierarchy of the nodes as they relate to the category, but also to point out their robustness, which sometimes over-rides their original status. For example, in 7.3.6 in Figure 13, the child nodes of 'Reasons for corruption in Slovakia' actually have significantly more references attached to them than their parent node, which indicates their superiority in relation to the category. Nearly all six categories include at least one red node, of which there are 9, which suggests a fairly even spread of dominant nodes across categories.

⁴⁴ One node in 7.3.3 is coloured in orange as also quite significant with only two less references than two very strong nodes in red

7.3.1 Gratitude payments

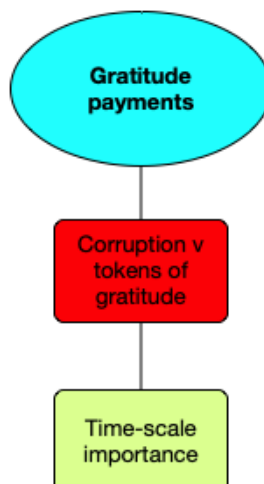


Figure 7.3 Visual presentation of the category Gratitude payments. The bright blue bubble represents the category, the red box represents node with a high number of references and green box represents node with a moderate to low number of references. Source: Author

This category is unique in its small composition of nodes, containing only one parent and its child node. However, when reading through participant responses, I felt that the category must be able to stand on its own not only because it received such a large number of references (61), but because of the unique and varied content presented within the responses. There were several recurring examples given by the participants that related to the type of material or immaterial gifts that are to be considered as tokens of gratitude, as opposed to bribes (bottles of wine, sausages, flowers, coffee, chocolates, tickets etc). There were also indications of a strong difference between perceptions of gift giving before and after the desired service took place, which justified a creation of another node during the coding process. The participants also alluded to their understanding of the law and its take on bribes, which is then juxtaposed with the actual legal statutes I was able to consult. Finally, the category bears strong endorsement from the analysis of randomly selected online healthcare fora that related to this topic (see section 6.4). It was easy to search for these fora using buzzwords such as ‘gratitude payments’ ‘what to give to a doctor’, ‘best doctor gift’ and similar. The responses from the healthcare fora, combined with the

responses of the participants, reinforced the instinctual pull for the category to stand on its own. It related directly to RQ1, RQ2 in its discussion of bribes and tokens of gratitude and to some extent also to RQ3 and sub question RQ3b. To the extent that it also spoke about normalised practices, the category provided relevant content for the overarching RQ (see all in Table 7.1).

7.3.2 General perceptions of corruption

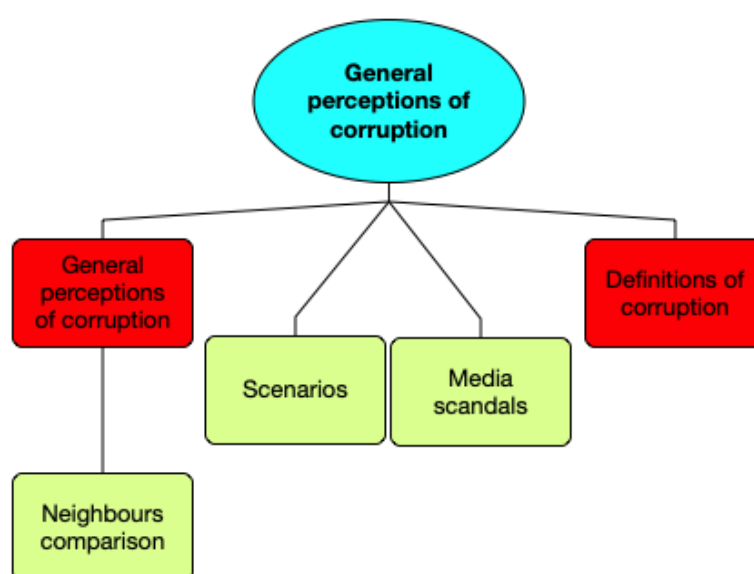


Figure 7.4 Visual presentation of the category General perceptions of corruption. The bright blue bubble represents the category, the red boxes represent nodes with a high number of references and green boxes represent nodes with a moderate to low number of references. Source: Author

This category combines together the perceptions of corruption that the participants presented in the data collection process, and also nodes that related to what shapes one's awareness of corruption. The 'Scenarios' node and 'Media scandals' node were of smaller size in terms of references coded against them (8 and 28 respectively), but still presented with the potential to add another dimension to the general perception of corruption. For example, several participants alluded to not feeling 'surprised' at the media presenting yet another grand corruption scandal and there were also elements of language such

as 'disappointed' or 'disillusioned'. On the other hand, the Scenarios question elicited feelings of shame and helplessness, as well as a desire to be able to help those who cannot benefit from corrupt practices in healthcare. As contrasting views, these two nodes reveal the sceptical but also the vulnerable dimension to the perceptions of corruption. If presented alone, the perceptions under the node 'General perceptions of corruption' would otherwise lack this dimension. The comparison of these elements of personal outlook juxtaposed with those of a more civic outlook of the participants as members of society make for an interesting debate and analysis. Furthermore, the node 'Neighbours comparison' tended to portray views that had a tendency to temper the overtly negative outlook of some participants, alluding to Slovakia 'not doing too badly' or 'probably on the same level as the Czechs', which helped mitigate the negative, biased outlook of a lot of participants coming into the debate on corruption. Lastly, the 'Definitions of corruption' node was helpful as it allowed the participants to set their own parameters of what they believe corruption is before these beliefs were probed by my following questions. This initial outlining of what corruption is according to them helped me create a more complete picture of where their particular perceptions of corruption really lie in their minds and in their socio-economically conditioned outlooks. As such, all mentioned nodes in this section were intertwined in their content when stripped down to its core, addressed the following question: What do the participants think the status quo of corruption is in Slovakia and how does it make them feel/think about corruption in their own language and understanding? The category therefore directly relates to the overarching research question, as well as RQ3 (see Table 7.1).

7.3.3 Reasoning and reporting of corruption

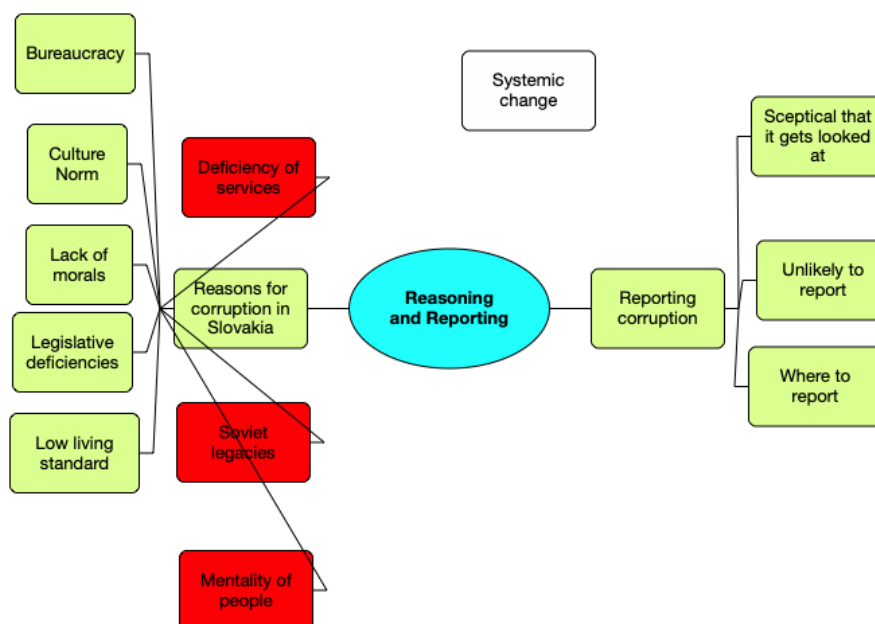


Figure 7.5 Visual presentation of the category Reasoning and Reporting. The bright blue bubble represents the category, the red boxes represent nodes with a high number of references, and green boxes represent nodes with a moderate to low number of references. Source: Author

This category combines the recurring ideas generated by participant responses about possible causes of corrupt behaviour in Slovakia, with their opinions on the likelihood of the populace reporting corruption. The repetition of content here was easy to spot through participants using buzzwords such as ‘mentality’, ‘it is within people’, ‘our inheritance’, ‘it’s normal here’, ‘low salaries’ and so on. As is obvious from the nodes coded, the overwhelming recurrence of the negative response to whether one would, according to my respondents, report corruption, is obvious. The child nodes here merely delineate the motives behind not reporting. Together these two parent nodes and their child nodes create a comprehensive category that addresses both the perceived causes of corruption and the knock-on effect of these on the perceived willingness to report corruption to the authorities and by proxy the trust of the participants in the authorities. The category will be relevant for the overarching RQ, as well as RQ3a on the role of trust and RQ1 and 2 as well with their interest in how awareness of separate levels of corruption impacts on behaviour (see Table 7.1). The floating idea of systemic change is also relevant here, as it complements the reasoning of participants not to report corruption.

7.3.4 Petty v Grand corruption

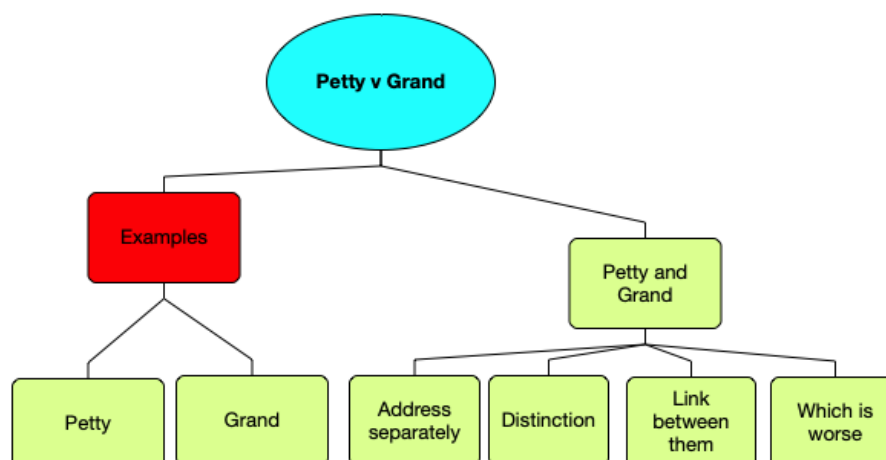


Figure 7.6 Visual presentation of the category Petty v Grand. The bright blue bubble represents the category, the red box represents node with a high number of references, and green boxes represent nodes with a moderate to low number of references. Source: Author

This category stands on its own as a representation of two different conceptual approaches to a similar label. Both parent nodes associated with the category look at petty v grand corruption in different viewpoints of recurring content. One addresses it on an abstract level and deals with the participants' views on whether in theory there should be a distinction between petty and grand corruption, which of them is more detrimental to society, and whether solutions should in theory come as part and parcel of one approach or a completely separate set of approaches. On another level, the category then takes this theoretical conception of participants and their views and directly juxtaposes the participants' own given examples of what constitutes petty and grand corruption in practice. It is obvious that this category will be most relevant for addressing RQs 1 and 2 which specifically relate to the difference between grand and petty corruption (see Table 7.1) but will have relevance for elements of other RQs as well. A lot of the time the participants' conceptual understanding of corruption would be broadly repetitive and congruent with their given examples, but there were also occurrences of differing views. For example, some participants insisted on corruption being one large problem that needs dealt with in a wholesome manner regardless of the level, but would then make

justifications for examples of petty corruption as ‘not really corruption’ in the first place, and not really being a part of the problem, presumably to reinforce their own experiences as socially acceptable.

There was in other words a discrepancy between the levels of consciously knowing what the issues are and then finding it difficult to reconcile that with examples of their own choosing, presumably because these would make the situation come to life for the participants and their views would shift. This discrepancy is at the heart of the discussion in this category and contributes greatly to the objective of the thesis and to the overarching RQ, which is to ascertain the extent to which the theoretical split between petty and grand corruption often found in literature is reflected in the real life understanding of corruption of respondents in Slovakia’s health care (see Table 7.1).

7.3.5 Common corrupt practices

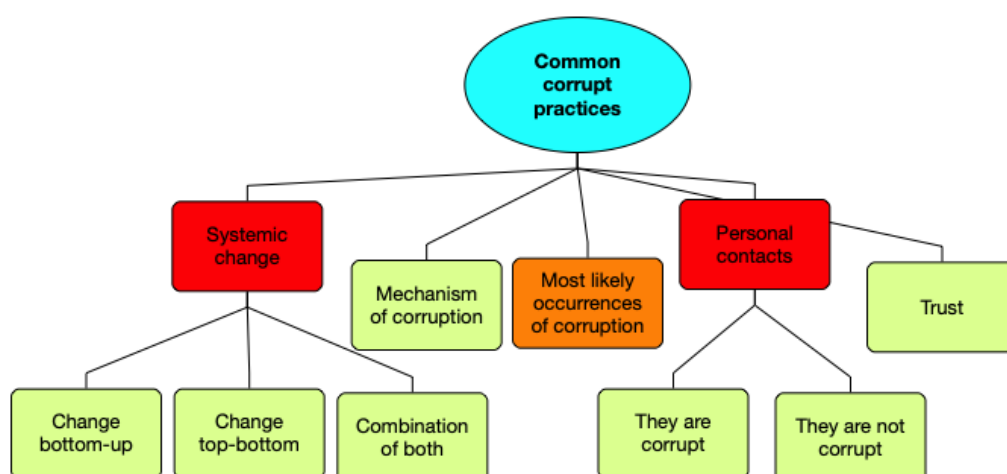


Figure 7.7 Visual presentation of the category Common corrupt practices. The bright blue bubble represents the category, the red boxes represent nodes with a high number of references, orange box represents the node with nearly as many references as the red nodes, and green boxes represent nodes with a moderate to low number of references.

Source: Author

Due to the previous category's unique discussion on particularly gratitude payments versus bribes, I felt it needed to be separate from the discussion presented in this category, Common corrupt practices. This category is one of the largest in terms of content and deals with a much broader set of ideas relating to corruption. These include the approach to how a bribe/gratitude payment is given or paid, where respondents believe that corruption most often takes place, how they think the system has and should respond, and the importance of using personal connections to get advantageous treatment. The nodes seemed to me to display repetition of contextual information, as there was a high recurrence of descriptions of corrupt transactions in practice, in the respondents' language. Many respondents identified the healthcare sector as one of the most frequently affected by corruption at the start of the interview without being prompted, but also identified other sectors which were consistent with those described by the literature review of the thesis. In this capacity the category relates to the overarching RQ (see Table 7.1). There were specific and recurring references made to the manner in which one informs themselves on how much is needed for a particular doctor visit and where that information can be found. An idea arose from this of an existing network of those with experience who share this experience with more people, which subsequently causes greater access to the information for others. This part of content related directly to the RQ3 which looks for strategies used to carry out corruption.

In a similar vein, the personal contacts discussion was controversial, but provided a forceful discussion of where people's opinions stood on using personal contacts to further their own agenda or standing. This section, full of contrasting views on the place of personal connections in corruption, fits in well with the language in 'Mechanisms of corruption' (a less frequented node) and made for a relevant discussion of RQ1, RQ2, RQ3 and the sub questions RQ3a and RQ3b (see Table 7.1). Overall, it was interesting to group the recurring ideas and awareness that the respondents had on how corruption is actually carried out from its inception to transaction, and how this married up with their ideas of addressing the problem and the most sustainable way forward for these common corrupt practices to subside.

7.3.6 Health care corrupt practices

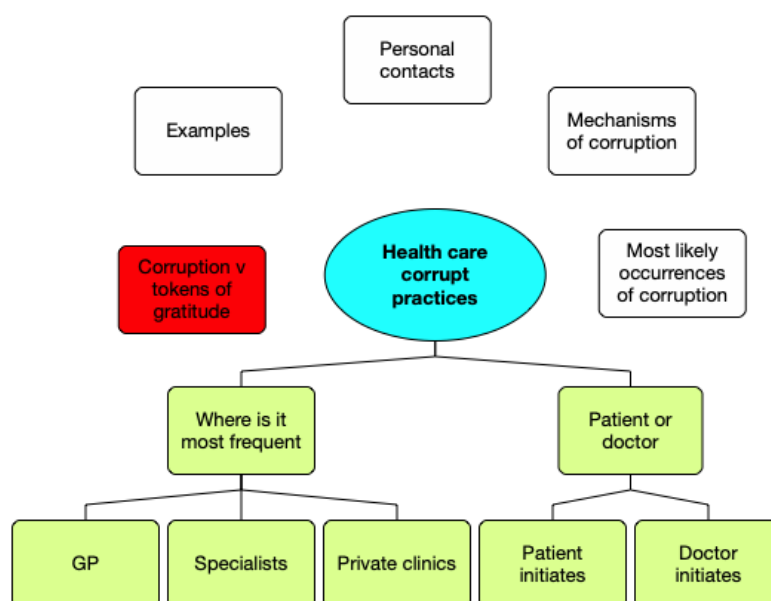


Figure 7.8 Visual presentation of the category Health care corrupt practices. The bright blue bubble represents the category, white boxes represent floating ideas, red box represents a dominant content node, and green boxes represent nodes with a moderate to low number of references. Source: Author

The category ‘Health care corrupt practices’ is similar in its conceptualisation to the ‘Common corrupt practices’ category. However, due to its specific focus on Slovak health care, which is also the case study of the thesis, it is given separate depth and room for analysis on a sectoral level. It outlines the discussion about which parts of health care, according to the participants’ views, are most affected and which party (patient or doctor) is more likely to initiate the corrupt exchange. This made it a relevant category for the discussion of RQ3 and its sub questions RQ3a and 3b which relate to strategies of carrying out corruption, but also to the role of social customs and rules (see Table 7.1). It is important to note that the nodes included here directly under the category are not exhaustive of the recurrence, repetition or forcefulness of material relating to health care that was coded. There were also instances of references depicted in the floating nodes around the category, such as ‘Examples’ and ‘Most likely occurrences of corruption’, as well as ‘Personal contacts’ and ‘Mechanisms of corruption’. However, the dominant portion of the content in these nodes related to their respective original category.

7.4 Conclusions

The categories presented above represent the rest of the thesis structure from here onwards. They will ultimately be drawn to concluding remarks that distil them into even fewer overarching themes, in order to complete the qualitative thematic analysis steps as outlined by Green et al. (2007). It is important to note that the borders between the categories are porous and, as demonstrated by the presence of floating ideas in some of the figures above, several parts of one category may provide for a different perspective in another. Such open-minded approach to grouping qualitative ideas is essential for ensuring a rigorous approach to researcher reflexivity, as well as ensuring that the analysis does the content justice without artificially keeping to self-devised borders between categories.

Chapter 8: Gratitude Payments

8.1 Introduction

This chapter comes as the first of the empirical body of chapters, addressing the most prominent of themes elicited in the data collection process, the divide between the conceptual understanding of bribes vis a vis gratitude payments. The chapter therefore directly informs the overarching research question (*To what extent is the theoretical difference between grand and petty corruption reflected in the real-life understanding of corruption in Slovakia's health care?*), as well as RQ3 (*What are the strategies utilised to carry out grand and petty corrupt practices?*). However, it provides perhaps most insight into the RQ3b (*To what extent are social rules and customs important in the carrying out of corrupt practices?*), as the heart of the discussion on gratitude payments comes from ascertaining what is acceptable in a culture, based on its social rules and customs.

I manually conduct thematic and textual analysis of the nodes included in this category, namely 'Corruption v token of gratitude' and 'Time scale importance'⁴⁵, through physical reading and annotating of data, as well as with the help of NVivo. Investigation of this divide in the language of the participants lies at the heart of the discussion which juxtaposes theoretical frameworks of corruption as a phenomenon and the real-life understanding of it by participants in this research project. Specific, identifiable trends include the language used to describe both bribery and gratitude payments and these are summarised in the results sections below.

⁴⁵ An umbrella term to signify the difference between the timing of giving gifts: before and/or after procedure/treatment. Generally, giving after would be expected to represent the more acceptable option and would not be associated with corruption, but with gratitude.

The first step in the category analysis was multiple readings of the two nodes that make up the category: 'Corruption v token of gratitude' and 'Time scale importance'. It is important to emphasise the necessity of staying close to the original coded data, as all ensuing data visualisations, such as word trees generated from text frequency search, are dependent on adding sufficient level of detail to their appearance. Their accuracy is dependent on being able to cross check the content created by NVivo with the content examined manually. This was particularly important in this study, as I discovered that NVivo is not always able to effectively pull stemmed words from the original Slovak. For example, 'pred' and 'dopredu' (both meaning 'before') were not pulled out despite sharing a word stem when entering the command to NVivo. Manual analysis allowed for words with synonymous meaning such as 'pred', 'dopredu' and even 'predtým' or 'skôr' (ahead of time) to combine into larger datasets with the same theme by entering them all in the search box like so: 'pred' OR 'dopredu' OR 'predtým'. The words are highlighted in Examples 8.2 and 8.4 overleaf and their translated counterparts in blue boxes for illustration. These are also shown overleaf. The manual coding ultimately meant that I was able to guess what the trends would be leaning towards before even utilising NVivo further- in this manner I was able to arbitrate the results' accuracy by looking at the original data and acted as a check for my own processes.

Corruption vs Gratitude

ELITE 8

I don't think that we should be putting doctors in jail for taking a **bottle of wine and two sausages**. That's a complete farce... But if you take three grand for operating on someone. And if someone who doesn't give you that money doesn't get that operation, then yeah that's corruption.

So I, as a person who works in health care, explicitly hate it to the letter. Especially the high corruption. This other thing, like whether you give a doctor a **bottle** to say thank you, that's absolutely fine. I think that's just natural.

KC: And why is that?

ELITE 8: Well if someone helps you and you want to say thank you you give them something. It doesn't have to be just money, but something.

ELITE 1

There is quite a large difference in the timeline. If it happens before the procedure then I see it as a condition of the procedure. If it is after then it seems to me to be a form of attempt and voluntary. As in it is all done and I just want to express some personal gratitude ex post.

It depends what form it takes. If it is financial then I don't think that's ok. If it is something different like a **flower** or **some bottle of something** then that's okay I think. But it must be after the fact.

ELITE 2

Well I think that that's more of a thank you from the patients

It used to be a thank you. And those who **gave it beforehand** did it because they wanted the staff to take more of an interest in them. **But I know that from a legal standpoint both cases are considered to be corruption**. Be it financial or in another form. But all they are trying to do is make sure that everyone gets the same level of care as the rest. The thinking and the mentality won't be changed this way though. The next problem is that this has been going on for very many years. It will not be fixed by one legal decree. The next problem is that big Pharma used to originally and historically corrupt the doctors, take them to congresses and give them financial incentives. What we need is to start slow and from a small scale surgeries and change the management of hospitals and in ministries and make sure the doctors are remunerated as they should be. Especially those who see this happening in real time and want to fight for some equity of experience and decency and justice.

ELITE3

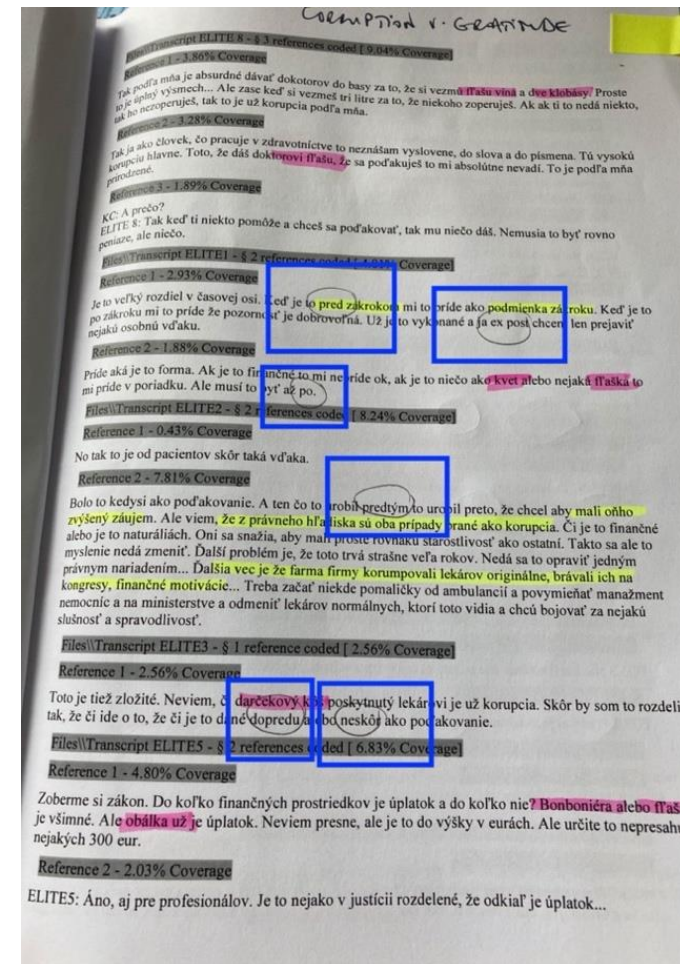
This is quite a complex issues. I don't know whether something like a **gift basket** offered to a doctor is corruption. I would probably separate whether it is happening before or after the fact as a thank you.

ELITE5

Let's take the law. What is the financial cut off for considering something as corruption and what is not? A **box of chocolates** or a **bottle of wine** is what we call an attention payment. But an **envelope** is a bribe. I don't know what the cut off is in Euros exactly. But I know it does not exceed something like 300 EUR.

Yes, especially for professionals. There is some demarcation to show where the bribe begins....

Example 8.1 Manual analysis of node 'Corruption v Gratitude' translation by author, orange represents yellow highlighter in Example 8.2, Source: Author



Example 8.2 Manual analysis of node 'Corruption v Gratitude', Source: Author

Time scale Importance

ELITE 8

I don't know about it before or after. But I do think that there are conditions that progress quite quickly and the window for any procedure is critical. Maybe there is a different kind of room there for this, as in yeah I will operate on you but if you give me something I will do it sooner.

ELITE1

There is quite a large difference in the timeline. If it happens before the procedure then I see it as a condition of the procedure. If it is after then it seems to me to be a form of attention and voluntary. As in it is all done and I just want to express some personal gratitude ex post.

It depends what form it takes. If it is financial then I don't think that's ok. If it is something different like a flower or some bottle of something then that's okay I think. But it must be after the fact.

ELITE3

I would separate between whether it's given before or after as a form of gratitude.

KC: So the timeline is crucial?

ELITE3: Yes, that's how I would put it.

FG1.2

But a box of chocolates you give as a thank you I reckon. However, money you give to get something more and better. Box of chocolates after. Money you give beforehand.

If I want something better I give money ahead of time.

FG1.3

And I would give both (laugh)

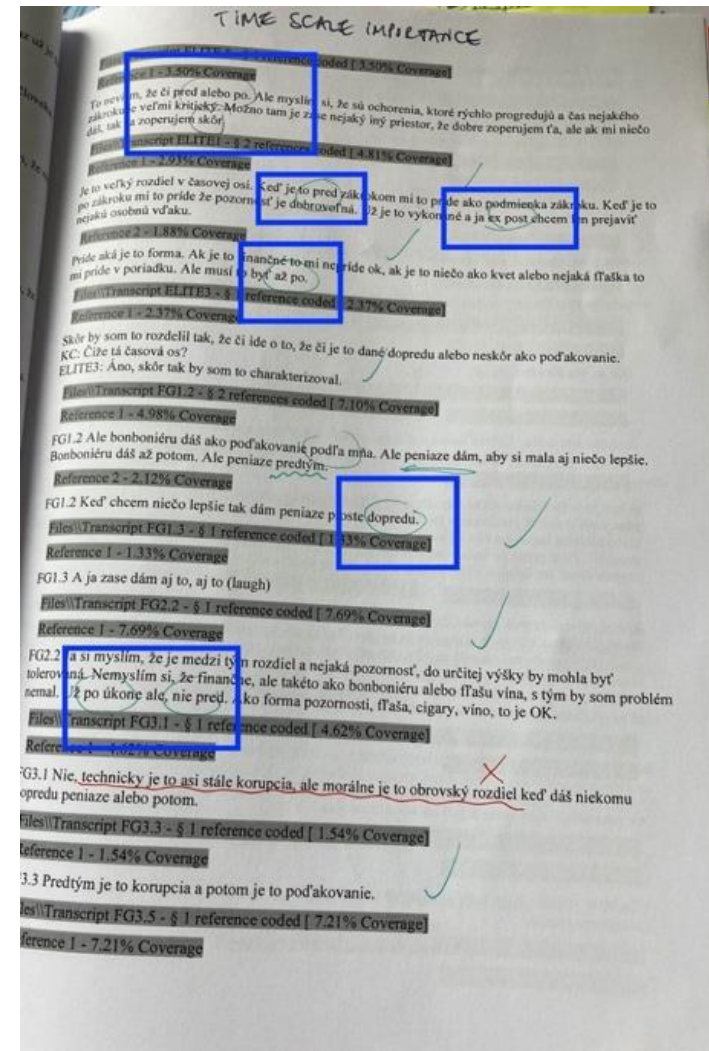
FG2.2

I think that there is a difference between some attentive gift, and to a certain sum this could be tolerated. I don't think it should be monetary, but something like a box of chocolates or a bottle of wine, I don't have a problem with that. Only after the fact though, not before. But as a form of attentive appreciation something like a bottle, cigars, wine, that's OK.

FG1.3

No. Technically I think that it is still corruption, but morally it probably makes a huge difference if you give someone money before or after.

FG3.3 It's corruption when it's before and when it's after it's a thank you.



Example 8.4 Manual analysis of node 'Time scale importance', Source: Author

Example 8.3 Manual analysis of node 'Time scale importance' translation by author, green ticks lacking but layout identical for comparison, Source: Author

Once carried out, I was able to extract recurring themes from the coded phrases, and these were then colour-coded to show which parts were going to be analysed in the NVivo process later on. The themes extracted in Example 8.2 and its translated counterpart were as follows:

1. Examples of tokens of gratitude (pink highlighter)
2. Timeline of giving expressions (in circles)
3. Legal distinctions as perceived (yellow highlighter).

The following section discusses the above themes in order, alongside the terminology associated with gratitude payments and bribery, as expressed by the participants. Due to the specific nature of the legal language and its prominent presence in another node ('Legal deficiencies') however, the relevant debate relating to the participants' awareness of current legislation on bribery will be discussed in the category 'Reasoning and Reporting'.

8.2 Gratitude payments- Timeline of giving expressions

Following the manual analysis and emerging trends, I performed several word frequency searches within NVivo for this category. The word frequencies in Table 8.1 are set for 80 most frequent words in the 'Corruption vs token of gratitude' category. This query has generated a similar range of words to my manual analysis. You will notice in Table 8.1 that the 'similar words' column, however, clearly illustrates the shortcoming described above of NVivo not pulling out words of similar grammatical stem alongside the selected word- the column is visibly a mere duplication. It is also clear that many of the words generated are words without real meaning on their own- these are for example the conjunctions, prepositions, interjections, adverbs, as well as transitive auxiliary verbs (various forms of 'to be' or participles of other verbs),

or various forms of the same word depending on grammatical gender, number, case, and tense. I have included these categories where necessary to illustrate this in the translations. These words are possible to remove from future searches by adding them to the NVivo ‘stop word’ list (NVivo is not sophisticated enough to eliminate a whole group of words such as prepositions), but the task would be overwhelmingly laborious to do individually, and so the rigorous manual cross checking with the results generated proved to be a sufficient and a more content-focused checking tool.

In Table 8.1 the words highlighted in **green** refer to the defining terminology of a gratitude payment as opposed to corruption. **Yellow** words are those that refer to specific examples of the gratitude payments and **pink** words relate to timing terminology. At a mere 80 words span, the software has not picked up on some other words encompassed in the original data, for example the singular mention of ‘envelope’ or ‘tickets’ in the node. It would require a table larger than is visually friendly to present and with the impossibility of spending hours deselecting ‘stop words’ off the list, the list itself would have to span several hundred words. I opted for the re-reading of original data being a quicker and a more efficient and informative way of filling in for the gaps in the software-generated content.

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage	Similar Words
pod'akovanie (thank you, gratitude)	11	21	1.21%	pod'akovanie
niečo(something)	5	18	1.04%	niečo
pod'akovať(to thank)	9	13	0.75%	pod'akovať
Korupcia(corruption)	8	12	0.69%	korupcia
Proste(simplely)	6	12	0.69%	proste
Úplatok(bribe)	7	11	0.63%	úplatok
Človek(a person)	6	10	0.58%	človek
Lebo(because)	4	10	0.58%	lebo
Potom(after)	5	9	0.52%	potom

Pre(for)	3	9	0.52%	pre
Rozdiel(difference)	7	9	0.52%	rozdiel
Sme(are)	3	9	0.52%	sme
Určite(certainly)	6	9	0.52%	určite
Napríklad(for example)	9	7	0.40%	napríklad
Podľa(due to)	5	7	0.40%	podľa
Toho(it, accusative case)	4	7	0.40%	toho
Ani(neither)	3	6	0.35%	ani
Chcem(I want)	5	6	0.35%	chcem
Korupciu(corruption, accusative case)	8	6	0.35%	korupciu
Nejakú (some)	6	6	0.35%	nejakú
Pozornosť(attention, attention payment)	9	6	0.35%	pozornosť
Toto (this)	4	6	0.35%	toto
gifts	5	5	0.29%	gift, gifts
Bol(was)	3	5	0.29%	bol
Bola(was, feminine)	4	5	0.29%	bola
Bonboniéru(box of chocolates)	10	5	0.29%	bonboniéru
Dala(she gave)	4	5	0.29%	dala
Dáš(you will give)	3	5	0.29%	dáš
Keby(if)	4	5	0.29%	keby
Možno(maybe)	5	5	0.29%	možno
Nejaká(some, feminine)	6	5	0.29%	nejaká

Nejaký(some, masculine)	6	5	0.29%	nejaký
Neviem (I do not know)	6	5	0.29%	neviem
Taký (the kind, masculine)	4	5	0.29%	taký
Zase (again)	4	5	0.29%	zase
Bolo (it was)	4	4	0.23%	bolo
Fakt (really)	4	4	0.23%	fakt
Finančné (financial)	8	4	0.23%	finančné
Fľašu(bottle, accusative case)	5	4	0.23%	fľašu
Lekárovi(doctor, dative case)	8	4	0.23%	lekárovi
Nič (nothing)	3	4	0.23%	nič
Nie kto (someone)	6	4	0.23%	niekto
Prácu (work, accusative case)	5	4	0.23%	prácu
Pred (before)	4	4	0.23%	pred
Príde (will come)	5	4	0.23%	príde
Stále (still)	5	4	0.23%	stále
Tiež (also)	4	4	0.23%	tiež
Tým (by that)	3	4	0.23%	tým
Urobil(he did)	6	4	0.23%	urobil
Všimné (attention payment)	6	4	0.23%	všimné
Vždy (always)	4	4	0.23%	vždy
Berú (they take)	4	3	0.17%	berú
Chceš (you want)	5	3	0.17%	chceš
Dali (they gave)	4	3	0.17%	dali

Dávam (I give)	5	3	0.17%	dávam
Dostal (he got)	6	3	0.17%	dostal
eur	3	3	0.17%	eur
Jej (hers)	3	3	0.17%	jej
Kávu (coffee, acc case)	4	3	0.17%	kávu
Mal (he had)	3	3	0.17%	mal
Mala (she had)	4	3	0.17%	mala
Myslím (I think)	6	3	0.17%	myslím
Nedá (It cannot)	4	3	0.17%	nedá
Nejaké(some, plural)	6	3	0.17%	nejaké
Nejako (somehow)	6	3	0.17%	nejako
Nemyslím (I do not think)	8	3	0.17%	nemyslím
Netreba (there is no need)	7	3	0.17%	netreba
Niektorí (some, pl)	8	3	0.17%	niektorí
Nikto (nobody)	5	3	0.17%	nikto
Ona (she)	3	3	0.17%	ona
Pocit (feeling)	5	3	0.17%	pocit
Predtým (before, ahead)	7	3	0.17%	predtým
Problem (problem)	7	3	0.17%	problém
Skôr (early)	4	3	0.17%	skôr
Vec (thing)	3	3	0.17%	vec
Veľmi (very)	5	3	0.17%	veľmi
Vína (wine, genitive)	4	3	0.17%	vína
Vlastne (actually)	7	3	0.17%	vlastne

Vtedy (then)	5	3	0.17%	vtedy
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Table 8.1 Word frequency table generated from the node ‘Corruption v Token of Gratitude’, set for 80 most frequent words. Translation of words and colour coding added by Author, Source: Author

Table 8.2 shows a reduced number of words from the NVivo list, a mere 50, because the word frequency search within the child node of ‘Time scale importance’ was specifically aimed at expressions of timing importance for people’s understanding of corruption vis a vis gratitude payments. It is obvious that the same problem with filler words such as prepositions, interjections or conjunctions taking up a lot of the count is present here, but the prevalent timeframe-specific words are encompassed in pink. As with the previous table, the generated content does not include some expressions that may have only appeared once in the coded node, such as ‘ex post’ (visible in Example 8.2), which were then manually added to further content analysis in the NVivo software. It is clear here that the selected words from manual analysis in Examples 8.4 and 8.3 are, however, mostly reflected here. This finding indicates that the processes applied are working with a sufficient level of reliability. The positioning (i.e., high frequency of use) of these words in the table further reinforces their prominence in people’s understanding of the difference between corruption and gratitude payments. In other words, when asked the question: ‘Do you make any distinction between a bribe and a token of gratitude?’ the participants would have spontaneously presented the time frame of the act as integral to their decision on the terminology- i.e. ‘before’ is gratitude and ‘after’ is a bribe.

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage	Similar Words
Niečo(something)	5	11	1.50%	niečo
Dopredu (ahead, before)	7	8	1.09%	dopredu
Pred (before)	4	8	1.09%	pred
Určite (certainly)	6	8	1.09%	určite
Korupcia(corruption)	8	7	0.96%	korupcia
Lebo(because)	4	6	0.82%	lebo

Myslím(I think)	6	6	0.82%	myslím
Predtým(before)	7	6	0.82%	predtým
Človek(a person)	6	5	0.68%	človek
Dáš(you'll give)	3	5	0.68%	dáš
Lepšie(better)	6	5	0.68%	lepšie
Peniaze(money)	7	5	0.68%	peniaze
Pod'akovanie(gratitude payment)	11	5	0.68%	pod'akovanie
Podľa(due to)	5	5	0.68%	podľa
Pride(will come)	5	5	0.68%	príde
Skôr(early)	4	5	0.68%	skôr
Bolo(it was)	4	4	0.55%	bolo
Chcem(I want)	5	4	0.55%	chcem
Dám(I'll give)	3	4	0.55%	dám
Nejaká(some, feminine)	6	4	0.55%	nejaká
Pocit(a feeling)	5	4	0.55%	pocit
Potom(after)	5	4	0.55%	potom
Rozdiel(difference)	7	4	0.55%	rozdiel
Toho(of that)	4	4	0.55%	toho
Tým(by that)	3	4	0.55%	tým
Bonboniéru (box of chocolates)	10	3	0.41%	bonboniéru
Časová(time [line])	6	3	0.41%	časová
Inak (otherwise)	4	3	0.41%	inak
Každóm(every)	6	3	0.41%	každóm

Majú(they have)	4	3	0.41%	majú
Morálne(morally)	7	3	0.41%	morálne
Nebude(it will not be)	6	3	0.41%	nebude
Neviem(I do not know)	6	3	0.41%	neviem
Pretože(because)	7	3	0.41%	pretože
Prípade(case, prepositional case)	7	3	0.41%	prípade

Table 8.2 Word frequency table generated from the node 'Time scale importance', set for 50 most frequent words. Translation of words and colour coding added by Author, Source: Author

For Table 8.2, the targeted search for words of time frame importance was reliant on the initial coding process being rigorous enough not to leave any other time adverbs or allusions out. I had to conduct yet another re-reading of the original data to ensure that this was indeed the case- it was not enough to rely on the software here, but the need to be familiar and diligent with the analysis of original data was paramount. Afterwards, I was confident that I was able to capture all expressions.

It was clear that the next step in the analysis of this section would naturally have to be the collation of these terms for giving gifts/bribes both before and after the procedure and compare their prominence with the demographic attributes of participants. The next step in NVivo for this endeavour had to be the collation of these expressions into a whole that could then be contrasted with demographics, as NVivo can only compare groups of data, not individual expressions. I ran a query in NVivo and was able to save the query results having collated all the expressions identical or synonymous to 'before' and 'after'. Since, as mentioned above, NVivo was not able to pull out the words needed automatically and based on their contextual similarities, I had to manually enter all forms of words representative of 'before' or 'after' semantically (e.g., 'before' OR 'beforehand' OR 'earlier than' etc.) and search for these as a long group. Subsequently, I created a new node with all of these synonymous expressions amalgamated into one and this is visible in Figure 8.1 overleaf. This node of amalgamated expressions called 'before (for gratitude payments)' then behaves as one category/group of data to be able to cross check against selected attributes. Figure 8.2 overleaf illustrates how the software has emboldened the relevant expressions that I manually collated into one node through a more laborious, but more meticulous search query.

before (for gratitude payments) (2)

Summary Reference

File Name	In Folder	References	Coverage
Transcript ELITE 8	Files	1	0.07%
Transcript ELITE1	Files	1	0.06%
Transcript ELITE3	Files	1	0.12%
Transcript FG1.2	Files	2	0.58%
Transcript FG2.2	Files	1	0.13%
Transcript FG3.1	Files	1	0.31%
Transcript FG3.3	Files	1	0.23%
Transcript FG3.5	Files	1	0.78%
Transcript FG4.2	Files	2	0.12%
Transcript INT1	Files	3	0.11%
Transcript INT11	Files	1	0.09%
Transcript INT12	Files	1	0.12%
Transcript INT15	Files	1	0.23%
Transcript INT16.2	Files	2	0.32%
Transcript INT2	Files	2	0.19%
Transcript INT4	Files	1	0.08%

before (for gratitude payments) (2) Code Annotations

Summary Reference

Files\Transcript ELITE 8
1 reference coded, 0.07% coverage

Reference 1: 0.07% coverage

8: To neviem, že či **pred** alebo po. Ale myslím si

Files\Transcript ELITE1
1 reference coded, 0.06% coverage

Reference 1: 0.06% coverage

časovej osi. Keď je to **pred** akrokom mi to príde ako

Files\Transcript ELITE3
1 reference coded, 0.12% coverage

Reference 1: 0.12% coverage

že či je to dané **dopredu** alebo neskôr ako poďakovanie.
KC

Figure 8.1 Node created from results of the text search query for all expressions synonymous to or identical with the Slovak equivalents of 'before', Source:Author

Figure 8.2 Example of the emboldened expressions synonymous to or identical with the Slovak equivalents for 'before' as done by NVivo 12, Source:Author

I took both amalgamated nodes consisting of the expressions for 'before' and 'after' and selected the demographic attributes of gender, age categories, and education categories and found these results, as depicted in Figure 8.3 overleaf:

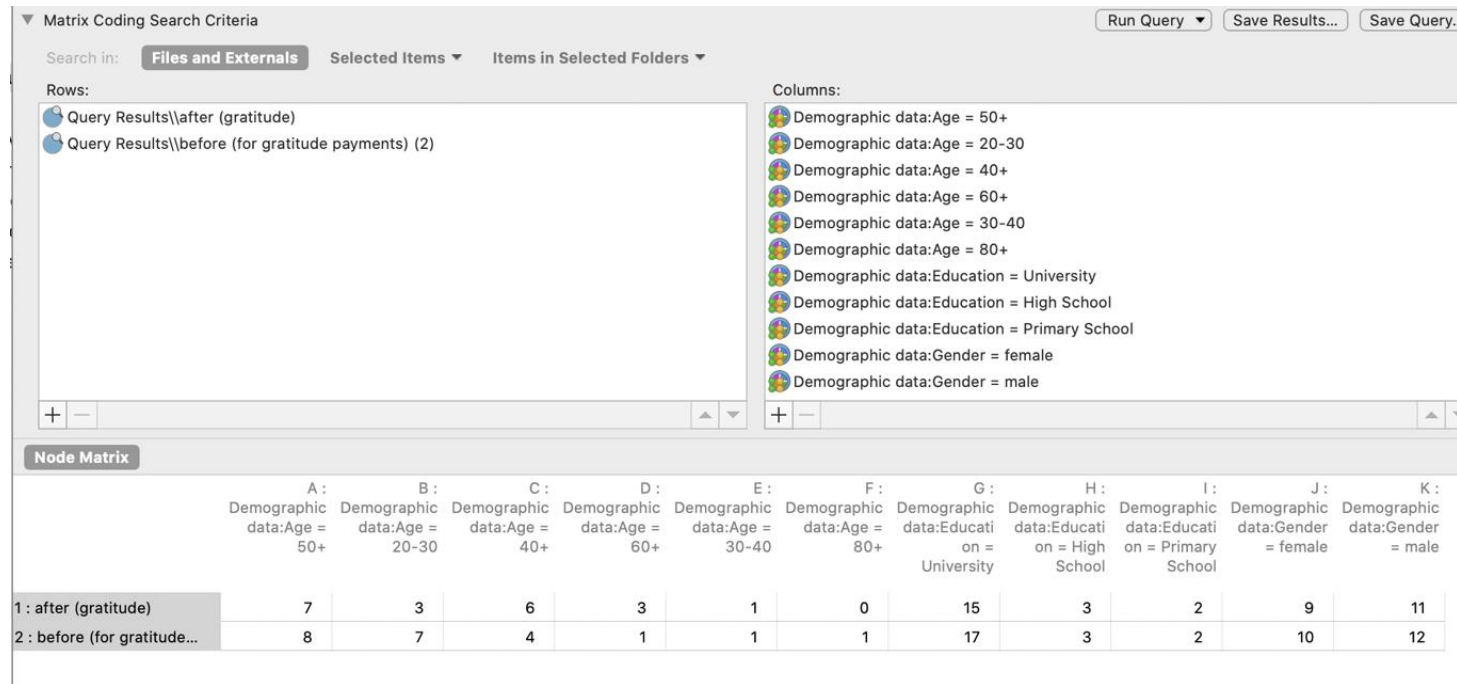


Figure 8.3 The two nodes collated for expressions synonymous to or identical with the Slovak equivalents for ‘before’ and ‘after’ in a matrix with demographic attributes, Source:Author

The results show the validation specific demographic groups gave to the time frame importance of corrupt transactions, and the difference perceived by participants when assigning the label of ‘corruption/bribe’ or ‘gratitude/thank you’, based on when a gift is given. The results are split quite evenly, which suggests that nearly all demographic groups employ this distinction based on the timing of transaction in their understanding of corruption vis a vis gratitude payments. It is important to emphasise that this is not necessarily a binary understanding akin to ‘agree’ and ‘disagree’ or ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Instead, what we are seeing here is a pattern that shows an understanding of the difference between payments representing corruption, versus payments representing gratitude in the framework of timing them correctly.

In other words, these results show the recognition of participants of these defining characteristics of timing, which play a significant role in how they internally allocate the labels of the unacceptable 'corruption', as opposed to the acceptable 'gratitude'. In the manual analysis of all coded references relating to time frame, only 4 coded references did not make a distinction between corruption and gratitude payments based on the timing of the gift giving. That is 4 out of 25 entries coded, which points towards a significant trend of responses - that the majority of participants distinguish between corruption and gift-giving based on the timing of the transaction. This difference of label allocation based on timing of the transaction seems to be significant in the participants' justification of their own pardoning of some acts and their condemnation of others.

8.3 Gratitude payments- Examples of tokens of gratitude

The manual and word frequency analysis has highlighted some key expressions as examples for what the participants consider to be merely gestures of gratitude, as opposed to bribes. The expectation of what these would be was based on the theory on informal practices such as *blat* which specifies the importance of goods and foods (Ledeneva 2009). In congruence with this expectation, the tokens mentioned are as follows: bottles of alcohol, sausages, flowers, boxes of chocolates, coffee, gift baskets or tickets to a show. These are also consistent with the examples given by the participants in online fora, who also suggest alcoholic beverages or sweets and/or experiential gifts, as seen in Examples 8.5 and 8.6 overleaf.

Fóra > Moje zdravie

Co dať doktorovi ako poďakovanie?

Zdravie a choroby What to give a doctor as a thank you?

10. jún 2020

Čo by ste odporučili ako poďakovanie pre doktora a starostlivosť

0

karhu · 10. jún 2020

Even a chocolate is seen as a bribe...give him a good online rating instead

dnes, keď sa aj na cokoladu pozerá ako na uplatok, radim kvety, blahozelanie s dakovanim, dajte mu zahrat do radia ci nehanjte pozitivne hodnotenie na lekar.sk

3

sylsik81 · 10. jún 2020

nic-akycholvek darcek je uplatok ...

7

gemberka17 · 10. jún 2020

Najlepšie čo môžeš urobiť je nechať pozitivne hodnotenie na lekar.sk , nič iné by som nedávala/nenosila. Pekná recenzia s dobrou gramatikou a stylistikou viet stačí. Poteší aj lekára (ak si to občas pozrie) aj ostatných pacientov, keď budú vedieť že sú v dobrých rukách.

16

danielahamar · 10. jún 2020

Daj poslať kvety donaskovou službou a daj tam napísať ďakujeme, není meno, nie je dokaz

0

Flowers via delivery service

hindakus · 10. jún 2020

Chocolate or wine is normal to bring afterwards for check up

Tak to nechápem, priniesť čokoládu alebo víno je bežné a keď to človek donesie až na kontrolu, keď už lekár svoju prácu odvieďol, je to čiste poďakovanie a nie uplatok. Este sa mi nestalo, ze by lekár darček odmietol a uprimne starsia babka by sa aj urazila, keď trepe k lekárovi domacu zavareninu alebo kolac, keby si to lekar nevzal

5

Some preserves or a cake- home made.

Example 8.5 Example of the discussion on theme 'What to give a doctor as a thank you?' on the public forum modrykonik.sk, translations in coloured boxes by author, Source: modrykonik.sk

hasrmistr · 10. jún 2020

@danielahama kvety, nie su uplatok, ako jedine na celom svete. tak meno aj adresu s tč kludne na listok napisat

1

flowers

adamadent · 10. jún 2020

niec co sa da zjest/ vypit...ziadna vystavka.

0

Something to eat/drink

AUTOR · 10. jún 2020

co hovorte na nieco z tohoto

<https://dobryrum.sk/produkt/plantation-jamaica...>

<https://dobryrum.sk/produkt/cihuatan-cinabrio-1...>

<https://dobryrum.sk/produkt/plantation-black-ca...>

<https://dobryrum.sk/produkt/plantation-trinidad...>

0

Suggests several types of rum

bara_borka · 10. jún 2020

keď niekomu niekto dava niečo za ucelom poďakovania a neocakava za to protisluzbu, cize je to ako dar, nie je to uplatok.

2

mondolina · 10. jún 2020

Keď sa dáva poďakovanie PO službe neberie sa to ako úplatok.

2

sonnenshein · 10. jún 2020

My doctor got a drive in a Mustang

Moj lekar dostal jazdu na mustangovi. žute, nie konovi. Ale az po, a kedze sme s muzom vedeli ze ten miluje americke mustic cars, bol dojaty k slizam. A ja tiez, lebo si to viac ako zaslužil.

0

A bottle

miriam11 · 10. jún 2020

Keby som vyberala tak fľašu prvého linku.

0

My doctor said herself she wants cakes. Even told me which shop.

zuzuliatko123 · 12. jún 2020

Moja si sama povedala .že chce koláče. Dokonca a cukrára. Vra nič iné nechce.

Example 8.6 Example of the discussion on theme 'What to give a doctor as a thank you?' on the public forum modrykonik.sk continued, translations in coloured boxes by author, Source: modrykonik.sk

These examples of language associated with 'gratitude' rather than a 'bribe' are consistent across the board. It was important to be able to map out the exact example words and the associations these had with the notion of corruption and/or token of gratitude. As is clear from Figure 8.4 (overleaf), the association is most frequently with that of 'gratitude', with language such as 'at least' or 'definitely' when referring to bringing a box of chocolates (or any other of the given examples). The respondents clearly feel confident about expressing themselves with these examples and there does not seem to be any language of condemnation associated with the box of chocolates as a gift given to the healthcare staff. It is possible that this is also due to the relatively low assigned

value to these gifts, and this is buttressed by the language associated with them, which was often word choice such as ‘only [a gift]’, or ‘just something small like’. From the literature on informal practices, *blat* and gratitude payments (Heidenheimer 1970, Ledeneva, Lovell et al. 2000, Ledeneva 2009, Ledeneva 2009, Baez-Camargo and Ledeneva 2017), I would expect to see this type of language to emerge as illustrative of a difference between the negative connotations associated with corruption and positive connotations of gratitude. From this literature on informal practices, corruption can be classified into three groups, ‘good’, ‘bad’ and ‘ambiguous’ with connotations of ‘helping out’, ‘mutual care’ and even ‘friendly support’ (Ledeneva 2009). Gifts such as those described that denote foods or goods (which historically were given due to their scarcity in communist societies) fall into the ‘good’ and ‘ambiguous’ categories. The participants’ acceptance of these is therefore expected and congruent with the indications presented by literature. There are, however, often references to a better ‘service’ or ‘attention’ given when such a token of gratitude is presented and this seems to indicate that the participants do not see this kind of gift as merely a polite gesture, but as a means of securing a good standard of care, without perceiving this as something nefarious.

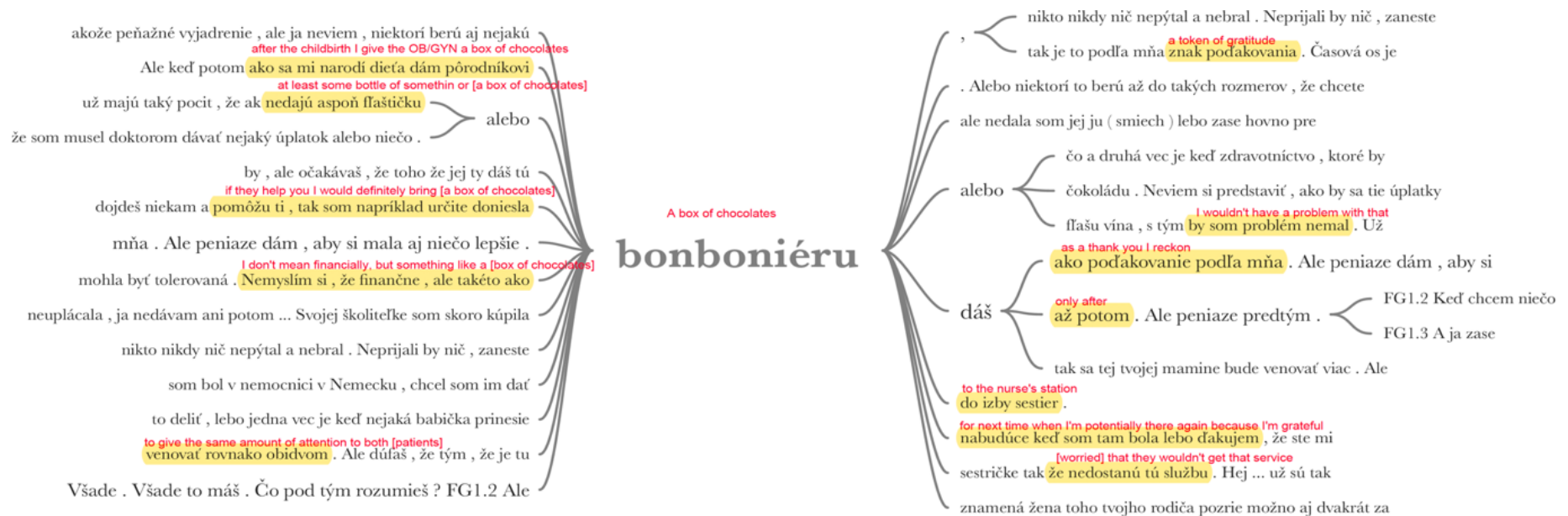


Figure 8.4 Word tree generated from the word ‘box of chocolates’ from all nodes in the project codebook. Highlighted sections and translations in red by author, contextual words set for 13, Source:Author

This focus on gifts and informality is one of the key idiosyncrasies when discussing the customs associated with corrupt practices in Slovakia. The consistency with which the participants pointed out the very same examples and avoided the label of ‘corruption’ as seen in Figure 8.4, as well as made a clear distinction between money-giving and gift-giving, is one of the key findings underlining the demarcation in understanding of what is acceptable and what is not. The participants do not necessarily refer to legislation or any type of regulation- these responses are instinctive and reflect their understanding as based on real life.

When generating the word tree and the text frequency search, I compared the results when generating only from the nodes included in this category, as opposed to all the nodes present in the codebook. Figure 8.5 shows the word tree generated only from the category and Figure 8.4 shows the word tree and associations from all the nodes. It is visually immediately clear that limiting the search to just the category nodes takes away a lot of the contextual data otherwise present in the rest of the nodes. I have therefore made sure that for similar text searches and word tree generating I use all nodes with a greater contextual reach of words (at least 13+ contextual words) to ensure I am not losing any important content or nuance in the textual analysis. As such, the categories serve as a targeted and helpful starting point for the analysis of data as a whole, but for exercises such as this one the search had to be expanded beyond the coded category, in order to do the presented discourse justice. This is part of the ever-evolving process of researcher reflexivity, as well as the project being representative of the qualitative analysis process, which is by nature iterative.



Figure 8.5 Word tree generated from the word 'box of chocolates' from just the nodes included in the category 'Gratitude Payment', contextual words set for 10, Source:Author

8.3.1 Results and discussion

This part of analysis has highlighted the consistency of certain spontaneous examples when asked about the difference between corruption and tokens of gratitude. These tokens were condensed to a few most recurring examples: ‘box of chocolates’ which received 17 mentions in the codebook, ‘bottles of alcohol’ which received 11 mentions, ‘coffee’ with 9 and ‘flowers’ with 7. The less frequent ones were a ‘gift basket’ with 2 and ‘tickets’ and ‘sausages’ with 1. It is worth mentioning that some types of gifts are also likely to be conditioned by the location and affluence of the region/household. People of fewer means are likely to bring their own produce such as sausages, eggs, poultry, preserve or similar in lieu of purchased gifts- the personal touch of this might possibly make it even more difficult for healthcare professionals to refuse such a gift for fear of offending the giver. Several of the participants raised this particular idea of home produce such as eggs or jams being given, mostly by the older generation (their grandmothers/mothers) and as such this practice dates back to times of scarcity of goods and foods- this folklore trend is likely to have been passed down the generations in discourse.⁴⁶ The language associated with these examples was that of moderation, understanding and justification. Such phrases across all examples included:

- absolútne mi to nevadí (I absolutely do not mind that)
- s tým by som problém nemal (I don’t have a problem with that)
- ocenit’ prácu toho personálu (to appreciate the work of that staff)
- aspoň nejakú pozornosť (at least something small for them/some thoughtful/attentive thing)
- to neberiem ako korupciu (I don’t see that as corruption).

The recurring theme therefore is a clear distinction between gratitude or thoughtfulness and corruption and bribes. The participants were openly reluctant to associate gifts with corruption. There is also remarkable consistency among the examples presented by the participants, which points to the rooting of these in customary, learnt, socially constructed behaviour. In other words, even if the participants do not have first-hand

⁴⁶ The cardiologist Viliam Fisher was recently charged with corruption over taking 3,000 EUR, a box of chocolates and three ducks by a family where the patient died- the family subsequently requested all the ‘gifts’ back. (<https://dennikn.sk/107361/kardiolog-fischer-sa-priznal-ze-zobral-uplatok-vyviazol-s-podmienkou/>) [last accessed 25/04/2021].

experience with these, it is clear that these examples are what the participants imagine, observe and understand to be the reality of gratitude payments, as opposed to bribes.

Figure 8.6 has collated all the grammatical variations of these examples and cross tabulated them with some demographic values. The trends are not vastly differing across the board, but it is interesting to note that participants around the ages of 30 and 40 tend to refer to these examples less than the rest and that university-educated participants have a tendency to mention alcohol and sweets more than other examples.

The screenshot shows a software interface for a Node Matrix. On the left, under 'Rows:', there are four items: 'Query Results\bottle', 'Query Results\box of chocolates', 'Query Results\flowers', and 'Query Results\Coffee'. On the right, under 'Columns:', there are ten demographic categories: Age = 50+, Age = 20-30, Age = 40+, Age = 60+, Age = 30-40, Age = 80+, Education = University, Education = High School, Education = Primary School, Gender = female, and Gender = male. Below this is a 'Node Matrix' table with 4 rows and 11 columns.

	A : Demographic data:Age = 50+	B : Demographic data:Age = 20-30	C : Demographic data:Age = 40+	D : Demographic data:Age = 60+	E : Demographic data:Age = 30-40	F : Demographic data:Age = 80+	G : Demographic data:Educati on = University	H : Demographic data:Educati on = High School	I : Demographic data:Educati on = Primary School	J : Demographic data:Gender = female	K : Demographic data:Gender = male
1 : bottle	2	4	0	3	3	0	12	0	0	5	7
2 : box of...	6	6	4	1	1	0	13	3	2	11	7
3 : flowers	3	1	1	2	0	0	4	2	1	6	1
4 : Coffee	5	1	1	1	0	0	6	1	1	7	1

Figure 8.6 Nodes collated from expressions of Slovak equivalents to ‘bottle’, ‘box of chocolates’, ‘flowers’, ‘coffee’ in a matrix with demographic categories, Source:Author

Females are also more likely to associate gratitude with sweets and coffee than alcohol or anything else. This may point to the social and cultural custom of males gifting flowers to females in situations of gratitude, apology or shows of respect. Such customs are obvious and propagated daily, for example, with every press conference led by the female head of state in Slovakia, President Zuzana Čaputová, all present males tend to turn up with flowers prior to the event.



Figure 8.7 Example of public officials bringing flowers to President Zuzana Caputova for various meetings, left to right: PM Igor Matovic, ex-president Andrej Kiska, Speaker of the National Council Boris Kollar, Deputy PM for Finance and Minister of Economy Richard Sulik, Source:

https://www.tvnoviny.sk/exkluzivne/1991277_ruka-vo-vrecku-bozk-a-zive-kytice-protokolistka-hovori-co-lidrom-v-palaci-vyslo-a-co-nie

It is also interesting that the ‘coffee’ result from a word tree generated was exclusively associated with nurses, as opposed to doctors (5 out of 9 mentions specified ‘to the nurse’, ‘the nurses’ station’, ‘for a nurse’, one other specified ‘for a female teacher’) and this was always an utterance spoken by a female participant. This is indicative of there being another possible trend in gender/status perception of which gifts are appropriate to give to which occupation based on either hierarchical position or gender- no male doctor was associated with flowers or chocolates. Also, the specificity of the coffee (ie a tub of ground beans as opposed to a cup) has ties to such products being considered fairly luxurious pre 1990s as imported goods, compared to their ubiquitous presence nowadays. The fact that this understanding has survived over the generations is indicative of the role tradition plays in constructing these behaviours and general understanding of phenomena. Doctors were, on the contrary, associated with ‘bottles’, ‘tickets’, ‘sausages’ and even ‘envelopes’, which fall into the category of open ‘bribes’ rather than gifts and theoretically into the ‘bad’ corruption, as opposed to the ‘good’ and ‘ambiguous’ (Heidenheimer 1970). Bottles and sausages were almost exclusively noted as acceptable by male participants in my research, whereas there was an even split of acceptability between mentions of ‘envelopes’- none of the envelope mentions were associated with nurses, however. This delineation is also confirmed by recent research into the problematic by Stepurko et al. (2013), who confirm on the examples of Bulgaria, Lithuania, Romania, Hungary and Poland that the perception of in-kind gift giving tends to be much less negative than that of hard cash.

These selected examples are consistent with independent research conducted into the problematic by the Slovak Health Policy Institute in their 2013 study of informal payments (Mužik and Szalayová 2013). Here the top three positions were occupied by ‘chocolates and other sweets’, ‘bottle of alcohol’, and ‘bouquet of flowers’, followed by ‘cash from 101-333’ EUR, ‘cash from 34-100’EUR, ‘a symbolic gift (up to 20) EUR’, ‘service exchange’, ‘cash up to 33 EUR’, ‘gift over 20 EUR’, ‘eggs, meat and other foods’, ‘cash over 334 EUR’ and other (Example 8.7). It is therefore possible that the general awareness of the examples presented by the participants of this study is shaped by the general public discourse on this topic and these are indeed representative of a real-life experience that shapes society’s understanding on the subject.

Examples of informal payments

Tabuľka 21: Predmet neformálnych platieb

	Vyžadovaná korupcia	Nevyžadovaná korupcia	Prepitné	Spolu	
Box of chocolates	bonboniéra alebo iné sladkosti	2,3 %	31,2 %	18,5 %	52,0 %
	fľaša alkoholu	4,1 %	23,4 %	10,5 %	37,9 %
	kytka kvetov	0,3 %	8,2 %	5,4 %	13,9 %
Bottle of alcohol	hotovosť od 101 do 333 €	6,9 %	4,5 %	1,4 %	12,7 %
	hotovosť od 34 do 100€	5,1 %	5,8 %	0,7 %	11,5 %
	symbolický dar (do 20 €)	2,5 %	6,3 %	2,3 %	11,0 %
Flowers	poskytnutie určitej služby	2,9 %	3,8 %	1,2 %	7,9 %
	hotovosť do 33 €	3,3 %	3,0 %	0,6 %	6,9 %
Cash 101-333 EUR	dar nad 20 €	1,5 %	3,7 %	0,8 %	6,0 %
	vajíčka, mäso, iné potraviny	1,2 %	3,3 %	1,0 %	5,5 %
	hotovosť vyššia ako 334 €	2,8 %	1,9 %	0,2 %	4,9 %
Cash 34-100 EUR	iné	0,2 %	1,8 %	0,3 %	2,2 %

Zdroj: autori

Example 8.7 A table of most frequently-presented gratitude payments to doctors by patients. Left column outlines types of gifts as described above with translation on the side, ‘Vyžadovaná korupcia= Corruption required’, ‘Nevyžadovaná korupcia= Corruption not prompted’, ‘Prepitné= Gratuity’, ‘Spolu= Total’, Source:HPI (2013)

It appears, therefore, that the theoretical assumption associated with RQ3b: ‘*Social rules and customs are understood as one of the processes of corruption that links corrupt practices on grand and petty levels; as such they will prove as important determinants in carrying out corrupt practices*’ is directly informed by this section, which points to a strong significance of tradition and custom conditioning the type of gift given, as well as the demarcation between corruption and a token of gratitude as a whole.

In a recent debate on the subject of gift v. bribe, held by the weekly news outlet tyzden.sk (2020)⁴⁷, a special prosecutor for corruption Jan Hrivnak has emphasised the rampant nature of corruption and bribery in healthcare and has specifically isolated the terms ‘justification’ and ‘apology’ or ‘exculpation’ as reasons behind any person’s labelling a bribe to be a ‘gift’ or a ‘token of gratitude’/‘token of attention’. ‘Gift’ as a term is only used in the Slovak Civil Code and designates something completely different to what a ‘bribe’ is under the Slovak Criminal Code. According to Hrivnak, conflating the two terms is only beneficial to those who try to excuse their actions to themselves and others as not criminally punitive. In real terms, however, neither the timing of the gift nor its nature alters its role for the purposes of the law. The debate on this terminology lies at the heart of the understanding that the participants portrayed in this section and in the research as a whole. It is also in direct connection to the research questions 1 and 2 specifying the possibility of petty corruption ‘justifying’ grand corruption or vice versa in people’s minds.

⁴⁷ See whole debate shared in a public forum here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vMQh8VVfW0> [last accessed 9/11/2020]

8.4 Gratitude payments- gratitude vs bribery

Moving on to the concept of 'bribes' as opposed to 'tokens of gratitude', the notion of the 'envelope' and 'money' was associated with corruption and bribery. The language seen in Figure 8.8 overleaf associates the 'envelope' with a transaction, as opposed to a gesture⁴⁸. There is talk of 'price', 'the right time' to pay, and the direct contradiction between gifts and envelope in the bottom part of Figure 8.8- one as a token of attention and one as a bribe. Conducting the textual analysis in this way, the association of language with the different examples represents a difference of understanding for the participants. Interestingly, however, five participants (all women) have alluded in their responses on gifts and/or envelopes to their child births as reasons for the transaction/gift. There was no other spontaneous health care environment mentioned in this magnitude with relation to this topic and this was also the case spontaneously brought up in the same online forum that I reference in this project (modrykonik.sk).

⁴⁸ One of the participants actually recounted a story whereby she attempted to give an envelope containing tickets to a doctor ex post, but the mere look of the envelope made it completely unacceptable for the doctor to accept. It would appear that the symbolic value of the envelope as the more palatable/softened way to deliver a bribe outweighs its actual contents for the recipient and the mere mention and look of it signifies bribery.

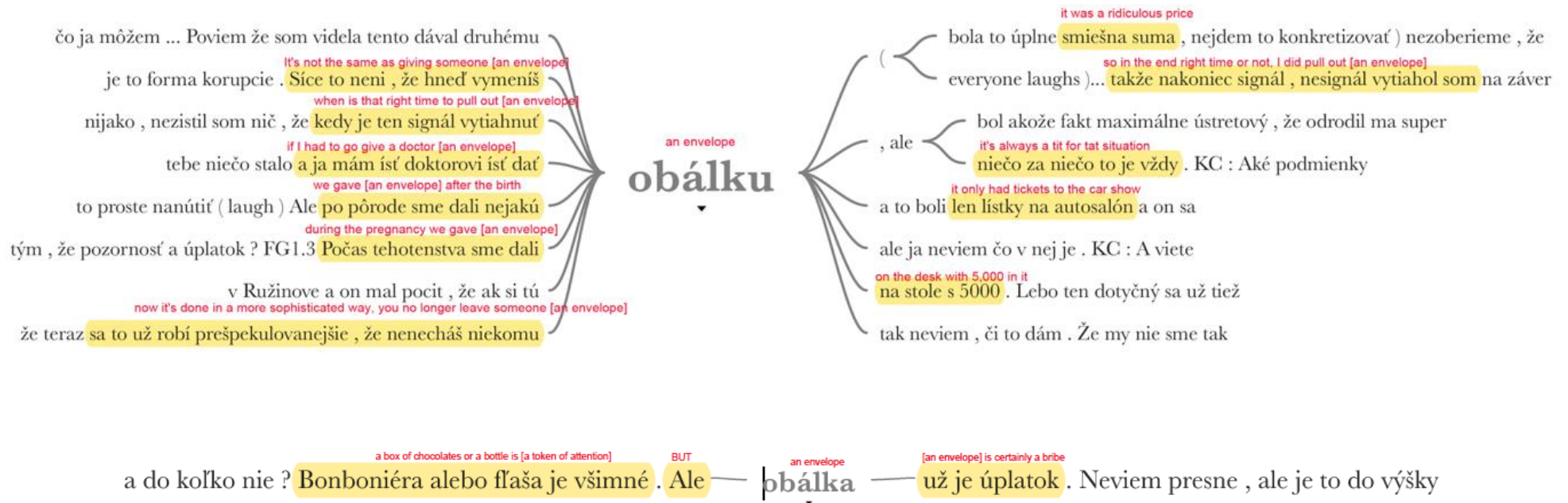


Figure 8.8 Word tree generated from both nominative and accusative cases for the word 'envelope', contextual words set for 13, translation in red and highlighting by author, Source: Author

A news outlet has picked up on the topic of paying for childbirth being discussed by mothers online and collated the responses in an article in 2015, pointing to the illegality of paying extra for childbirth (see Figure 8.9) overleaf.

Figure 8.9 illustrates the language utilised in this forum and it is notable that the similarity of paying extra for childbirth is picked out here too. Other similarities include the examples of gratitude payments vis a vis envelope: ie chocolates, coffee, dessert. This kind of similarity increases the validity of the expressions used by the participants in my study as a representative sample of the type of discourse led on the topic in Slovakia.

Mamičky v diskusii na internete priznali, že uplácali za pôrod

12.02.2015 10:43 | Internet | mk

Mothers admit to having bribed for their child births in an online discussion forum

Dávať úplatky nie je normálne, ani legálne. Viaceré ženy pod rúškom anonymity sa na diskusnom fóre pochválili, že lekárovi dali aj obálku.

Na stránke pre mamičky modrykonik.sk vzniklo diskusné fórum s názvom **Koľko peňazí ste dali doktorovi za pôrod?** Pre podozrenie z korupcie sa o diskusiu začala zaujímať prokuratúra.

Vo fóre ženy píše koľko platili za pôrod oficiálne, keď mali zmluvneného lekára, no pribúdajú aj príspevky od žien, kde píše koľko dali neoficiálne. Na diskusiu upozornil dennik.sme.sk.

We gave him a dessert, coffee and 150EUR

XXXX mala som vybaveného doktora, staral sa o mňa od 5tt. raz za mesiac ma chcel stále vidieť, keď niečo zavola som mu. po porode - cisarskom za mnou chodil ako sa mam. dali sme mu dezert, kavu a 150€. a to bral viac ale je to kamarat manzelovej krstnej. je to smutne ze to tak funguje ale nebudem rizkovať svoje zdravie a ani zdravie babatka. aj pri druhom idem k nemu

With my first daughter he got a 100 EUR and with my son 50 EUR, it's true that it's 'black' money but this is how it is

XXXX pri prvej dostal dr. 100eur a pri synovi 50eur, je pravda ze su to cierne peniaze ale v dnesnej dobe je to zial tak ze ked nedate nic tak o vas nezakonnu. a spravanie horsie ako ku cigankam

With my first one I paid nothing even though the doctor specifically asked me in private

XXXX pri prvom som neplatila nic, aj ked si to doktroka medzi 4 ocami vyziadala. Nechala som to tak, ze ved ma valakto odrozi. A mala som "stastie", zrovna v den mojho porodu som vyfasovala dr., ktora odomna ziadala peniaze za porod. A ten porod tak aj dopadol. Dieta skoro neprezilo.

XXXX 100€ este v 2009, a na poradne som chodila s obalkou...

I paid a 100 EUR in 2009 and kept coming to clinics with an envelope

XXXX 300 euro a bol pri mne asi 20 minut !!!

I paid 300 EUR and he was there for like 20 mins!

XXXX Ja som mala vybaveného lekára. Nakoľko nemal v den porodu sluzbu tak prišiel a pýtal 350 € LENŽE tiež peniaze si rozdelil na polku zo službukonajúcim lekárom. Kebyže môj pôrodník v deň pôrodu slúži, tak by sa neplatilo nič.

I gave the doctor 200 EUR and a box of chocolates and a pack of coffee to the charge nurse

XXXX 200€ doktorovi a bombonieru a kavu riavnej sestry. Nemyslim ze to bolo vela.... V preplnenej cakarni ma zobral hned, aj mimo ordinacnych hodin. Ak by som mala zakazdym platit 10€ za prednostne vyšetrenie vyslo by ma to este drahsie. Ja som si nemhla dovolit stravit pol dna v cakarni....

XXXX Dala som teraz 100€ s tým že po pôrode možno ešte dám. Nie je mi jedno kto ma odrodí, chcem mať pri sebe ženu.... Zazmluvniť som si ju nechcela preto lebo polovica peňazí ide nemocnici a polovica jej a s tou polkou ktorú dostane nemocnica netušim čo urobia.

I gave 100 EUR and considered giving some more after the birth too. I'm not impartial as to who does the procedure, I want a woman there. I didn't want to contractually bind a female doctor because half of the money would go to the hospital and I don't know what that is used for

Figure 8.9 Example of discourse by mothers on having bribed doctors for childbirths, publicised by the portal omediach.com, underlining of relevant phrases and their translation in colourful boxes by author, Source: <https://www.omediach.com/internet/item/6007-mamicky-v-diskusii-na-internete-priznali-ze-uplaciali-pri-porode-riesi-to-policia>

Targeting the gratitude payment examples first showed association with terminology of informality/corruption in the participant discourse. Flipping this approach around to target the terminology instead serves as a check of whether similar results will be produced. The next step when looking at the tokens of gratitude v corruption theme therefore was to show how the terms themselves (i.e., 'token of gratitude' or 'token of attention') fare when searched for and what their associations are. For both 'pod'akovanie' (token of gratitude/thank you) and 'všimné' (token of attention), which denote the terms the participants liked to use instead of 'bribe' or 'corruption', the results were consistently similar. As seen in Figure 8.10 overleaf, the associations are very similar and include the likes of 'box of chocolates', 'bottle of wine', 'flowers', as well as language of gratitude ('return the favour', 'my own initiative') and a clear difference between this and bribery.

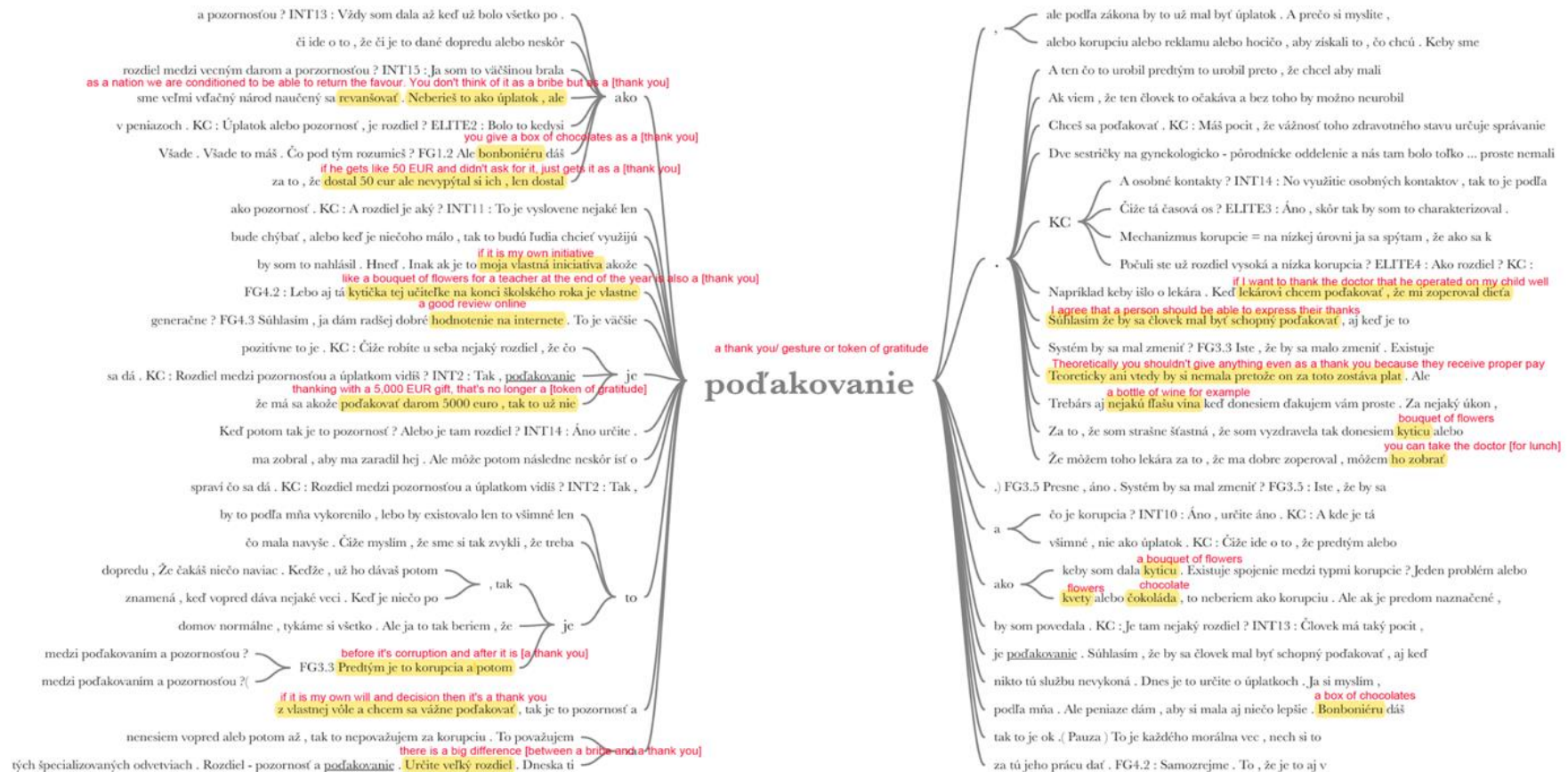


Figure 8.10 A word tree generated from all nodes in codebook for the Slovak equivalent of 'a thank you' or 'a gesture/token of gratitude' with contextual words set for 13, translations in red and highlighted sections by author, Source: Author

However, in Figure 8.11 overleaf generated for 'token of attention', there is a slight variation in the language. The term is still associated with gratitude and the same kinds of examples that express it, such as 'box of chocolates', 'flowers', 'bottles' etc. There is also a clear distinction by some that this is given as a gratitude payment and not 'as a bribe'. The difference between this kind of payment and a bribe in 'an envelope' is also emphasised. However, there are also cases where this attention payment is conflated with bribery and corruption. One participant answers the question 'What do you understand under 'corruption'?' with: 'As anyone, I would think it is some token of attention, some bribe'. Another participant answers in a similar vein to the same question: 'I would probably say that it [corruption] is that token of attention'. There is therefore a slight difference of nuance in the participant understanding of this term vis a vis its sister term 'gratitude payment'. It is recommended that deeper textual analysis is conducted into these terms in the future, as there seems to be a difference of understanding, whereby one term receives more benevolence from the participants than the other. This further reinforces the idea that real life understanding of corruption must be rooted in a diligent analysis of people's understanding and people must be forced to try and express this understanding in language that is natural and instinctive for them to use.

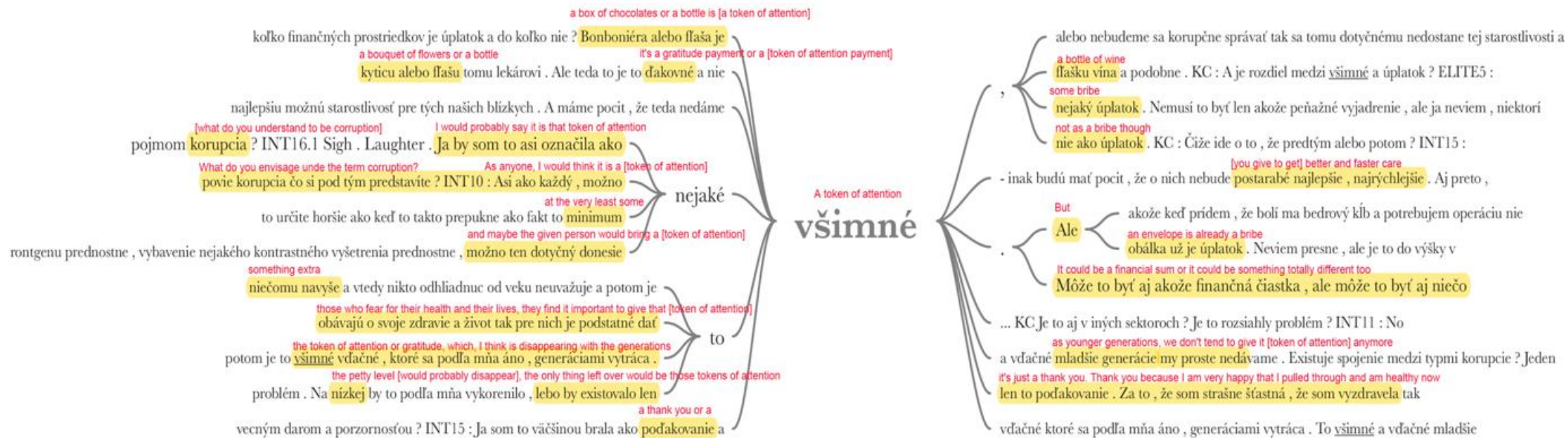


Figure 8.11 A word tree generated from all nodes in codebook for the Slovak equivalent of 'a token of attention' or 'an expression of thoughtfulness' with contextual words set for 13, translations in red and highlighted sections by author, Source: Author

8.5 Gratitude Payments- bribery

To further illustrate the difference between gratitude payments and bribes, it is important to be able to put in contrast the language associated with bribes. Both Figure 8.12 and Figure 8.13 overleaf refer to the term for bribe in Slovak, 'úplatok' or 'úplatky' - in the plural. As is visible from the highlighted language associated with the term, there are several mentions of 'money', 'salary' or 'pay', a frequent usage of the verb 'to take' or 'to pay' and also allusions to value judgments, such as 'greedy' or 'profitable'. There are several examples of sums that the participants find outrageous- 'ten grand' to 'millions' and also a mention of 'an envelope'. The language is indicative of bribes being associated with hard currency more than anything else for the participants and they often outline the notion of a bribe as correctly being something beyond regular pay- however, this notion seems to exclude their understanding of the acceptable gift giving procedure. In this sense, I expected to see an inclination to associate the negative connotations of corruption and bribery with money and financial means, as opposed to the widespread and condoned practice of gratitude payments, and this is further expanded on in the Category 'General Perceptions of Corruption'.

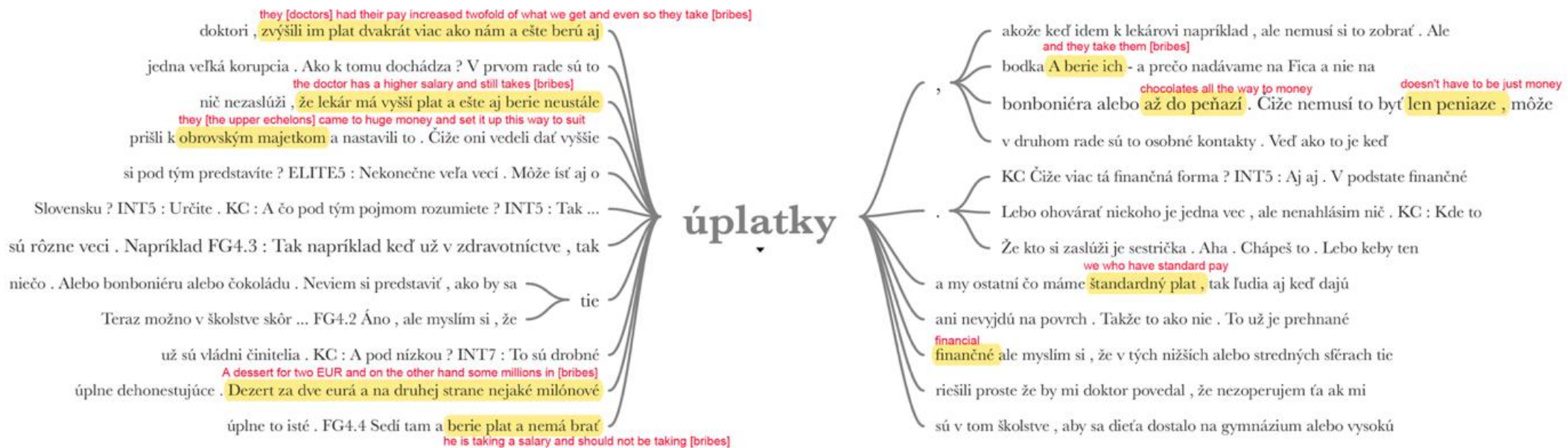


Figure 8.12 A word tree generated from all nodes in codebook for the Slovak equivalent of 'bribes' with contextual words set for 13, translations in red and highlighted sections by author, Source: Author

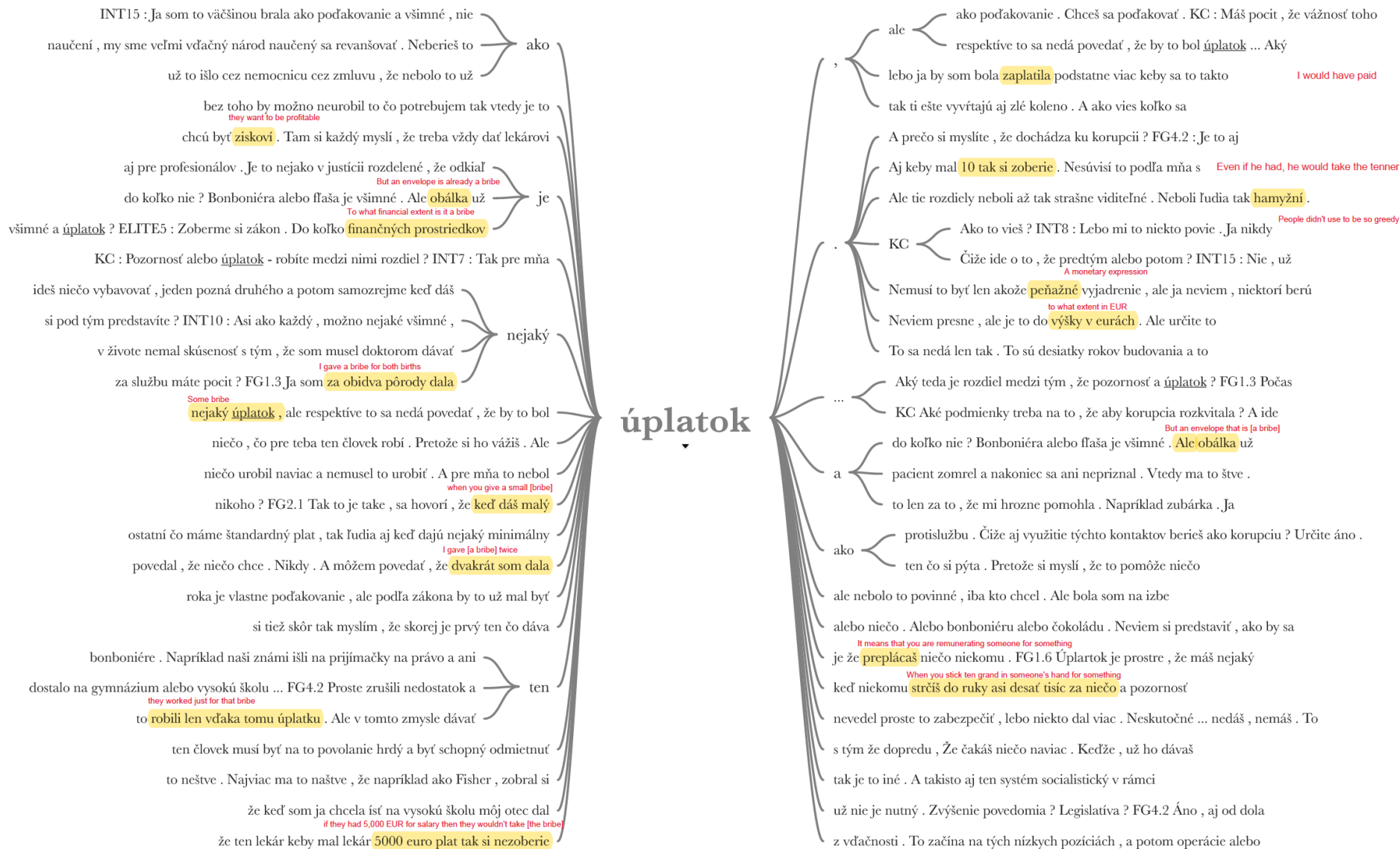


Figure 8.13 A word tree generated from all nodes in codebook for the Slovak equivalent of 'bribe' with contextual words set for 13, translations in red and highlighted sections by author, Source: Author

8.5.1 Results and discussion

This section of the analysis has focused on the terminology associated with bribes and gratitude, the specific language associated with the labels, as well as the examples given by participants. With regards to bribery, participants most frequently associated the notion of hard cash or an ‘envelope’ with words such as ‘pay’, ‘salary’, ‘to pay’, ‘to take’ and also with the examples of childbirth as the most frequent instance for such a transaction. There were notions of specific sums that the participants associated with bribery, as opposed to gratitude- i.e., 20-50 EUR seemed to be acceptable for a ‘thank you’ and anything from thousand upwards with bribery. There is also indication of the mere object of ‘envelope’ to signify money and bribery, regardless of contents, as this is likely to be used as a more palatable vessel for the delivery of the bribe visually. This idea of payment scale, however, was not rooted in any reference to the law by the participants, save one, who referenced a belief that the line of demarcation was somewhere in the region of 300EUR. The topic of legislation relating to bribery and participant allusions to it is explored at greater length in Chapter 10, which outlines the existing legislation on the subject and juxtaposes this with the participant responses.

However, from the analysis, it was clear that the labels that participants assign to informal behaviour, such as ‘gratitude’ or ‘attention’ payments are mostly associated with the examples of the immaterial kind. As such they remain mostly separate from those of bribery and corruption in the participants’ understanding of the phenomenon in real life. This is congruent with the general literature consensus on informal practices and corruption, whereby corruption is understood to be separable into three categories: good, bad and ambiguous- or ‘white’, ‘black’, and ‘grey’ (Heidenheimer 1970, Ledeneva 2008, Ledeneva 2009). Recent research in other post-Soviet countries (Romania, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland) has also confirmed that in-kind gift giving is more acceptable than that of hard cash (78% of respondents see hard cash payment as negative, only 51% see in-kind gifts as negative) (Stepurko, Pavlova et al. 2013). The examples given by participants of foods and produce, as well as the

gender/status-specific nuance in their allocation is also reflective of the idea of *blat* as ‘corruption with a human face’ (Ledeneva 2009) and not subject to the same amount of condemnation in discourse, as corruption and bribery openly.

The most notable nuance, however, came when generating a word tree for ‘attention’ payments, which the participants associated with both bribery and explicitly with corruption. The difference in the terminology devised by social construct appears to be present and requires further examination for purposes of accurate legislation formation. This type of area-specific nuance is congruent with the overarching architecture of the corruption phenomenon, which is believed to have a ranking specific to the society (Lampert 1984). The overarching RQ: *‘To what extent is the theoretical difference between grand and petty corruption reflected in the real-life understanding of corruption in Slovakia’s health care?’* is informed by this close examination of the difference understood between the practice of gratitude-showing and bribe-paying. This is done especially through the language utilised by the participants, so mild and benevolent with tokens of gratitude (marking this practice as ‘not problematic’ and a ‘sign of appreciation’) and so specifically money-oriented and judgmental with bribery (‘So they have their salaries increased and they still take bribes’; ‘they sit there and take the money’; ‘greedy’). It is clear that the difference exists in the participant understanding and I would expect this difference to appear in the participant responses. However, it was surprising to find that the difference is not as clear-cut as initially anticipated (based on previous research such as Stepurko et al, 2013) and that more qualitative, textual analysis must be conducted in future research, with this identified language ambiguities specified to future participants, as the next step in the deeper understanding of corruption.

Chapter 9: General perceptions of corruption

9.1 Introduction

This chapter follows the previous empirical chapter on gratitude payments and provides a broader view of corruption in real-life by the participants, to allow for greater contextual insight into the phenomenon. The chapter explores the largest category of coded references within the dataset, and all five nodes together (as seen below in Figure 9.1) represent nearly 250 references coded. The section is divided along the nodes themselves, as they all encompass separate facets of the collective perceptions of corruption, and each of the parts is given its own space for analysis. The analysis follows the same pattern of thematic and textual analysis throughout, utilising word clouds and manual analysis, as well as text frequency search.

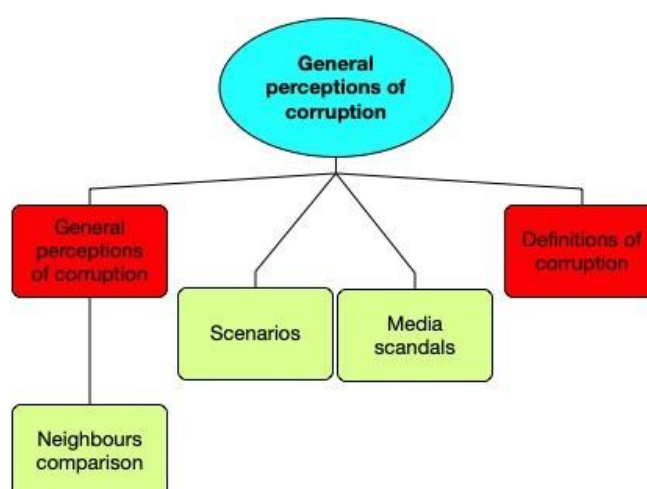


Figure 9.1 Visual presentation of the category General perceptions of corruption. The bright blue bubble represents the category, the red boxes represent the nodes with a high number of references (over 40) and green boxes represent nodes with a moderate to low number of references (below 40). Source: Author

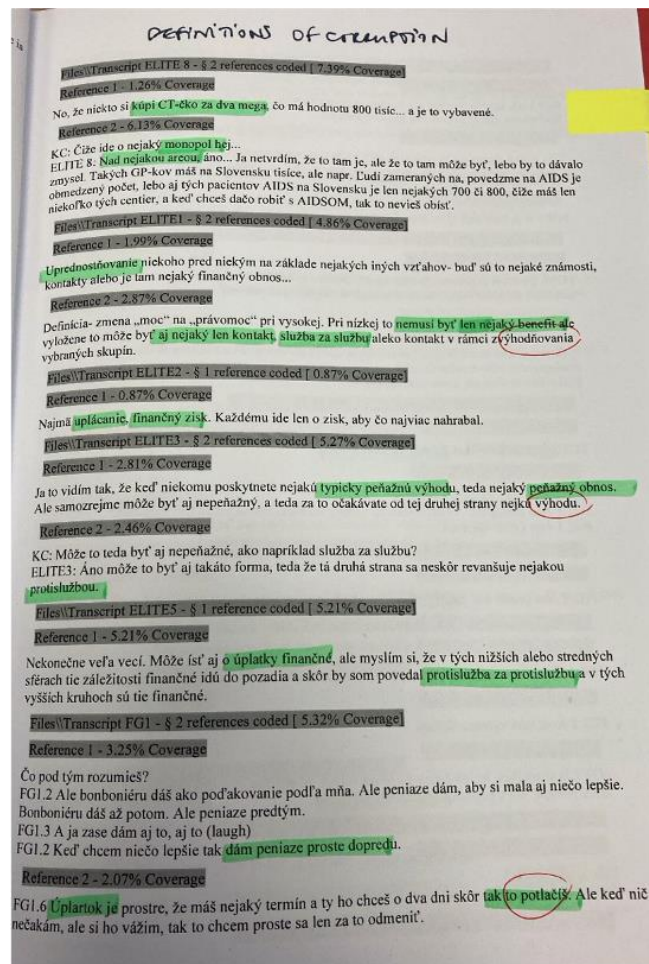
The word clouds have been translated within the visualisations to allow for better understanding of the positioning of words, their prominence, and thus

their underlying value to the participants' discourse. From a linguistic perspective, all the word clouds share a textual feature of vagueness of expression. There are several mentions of 'I don't know', 'somebody', 'somewhere', 'somehow', 'something', 'maybe'/'perhaps' and variations thereof. These expressions point towards an overarching trend of corruption being a nebulous concept to describe precisely and this further reinforces the need for studies like mine to be conducted. However, there are still interesting trends to observe that provide deeper insight into the participants' understanding of corruption and it was absolutely crucial to make sure that the initial analytical steps for this category are again conducted manually first to be able to pick out trends that go beyond the use of software tools. With its wide scope of focus on definitions, understanding and perceptions of corruption, the section is instrumental in addressing the overarching research question (*To what extent is the theoretical difference between grand and petty corruption reflected in the real-life understanding of corruption in Slovakia's health care?*), as well as RQ3 more specifically (*What are the strategies utilised to carry out grand and petty corrupt practices?*).

9.2 Definitions of corruption

This node was compiled primarily from the responses to the question: 'What do you understand by the term 'corruption'?' This question came early on in all the interviews and focus groups, in order to gain unfettered access to the participants' instinctive and uncensored responses early on, before they have had a chance to answer the rest of the questions and shape their view accordingly. This was a crucial steppingstone to getting their genuine responses before a level of depth was applied to probing their understanding further with additional questions. These included for example: 'Where do you think corruption is most frequent? What kind of conditions are needed for corruption to thrive?' It is obvious from Examples 9.1 and 9.2 (overleaf) that the manual analysis was able to pick up on the language used by participants to describe

what corruption is, according to their understanding. The green highlighting portrays the expressions and word choice that the participants used, and red circles narrow this down to specific words relating to the idea of gaining an 'advantage', as this appeared to be a frequent type of response. The responses include language such as: *výhoda* (advantage), *upřednostňovat* (preferential treatment), *benefit* (benefit), *finančný obnos* (financial sum), *všimné* (attention payment), *úplatky* (bribes), *pozornost* (attention payment), *kontakty* (contacts), *služba* (service), *protislužba* (counter service- exchange of), *nabok* (on the side), *navyše* (extra) and others. In connection with these words there were frequently mentions of: *najmä* (mainly), *typicky* (typically), or *proste* (simply). Whilst this indicated that the participants showed insight into the varied nature of corrupt transactions and are describing the kinds of corruption they find to be most common, it also points to the awareness that corruption is not exclusive to the cases described, but rather merely typical. This further points to the need for qualitative research to be conducted into corruption, because simple quantitative measures involving questionnaires or polls are unable to pick up on this level of nuance and complexity of understanding.



Definitions of Corruption

ELITE8

Well the fact that someone buys a CT machine for 2 million that is in fact valued at 800k...And that's it sorted.

KC: So it's about holding some monopoly over it yeah?

ELITE8: Yeah, over a specific area... I'm not saying that it's there, but that it can be because that would make sense to me. For example like you have so many GPs in Slovakia but take the number of people who are involved in, I don't know, say AIDS research. That's a limited amount because there are only about 700 or 800 patients with it in Slovakia too so you only have a few of those centres and if you want to do something with AIDS you can't physically bypass these people.

ELITE1

The preferential treatment of somebody before somebody else based on some different relationships- be it connections, acquaintances or because there is some financial gain...

The definition- I'd say it's more the 'right' than the 'power' with the grand corruption. With the petty there doesn't need to just be a benefit explicitly but it can be some sort of contact as well, some exchange of service or some contact in the context of preferential treatment and giving an advantage to selected groups.

ELITE2

Mainly bribery and financial gain. Everyone is after the gain and to make sure they rake in as much as possible.

ELITE3

I see it this way: when you offer a typically financial advantage to someone, so some financial sum. But of course it can also be non-financial and so you expect some advantage from the other party.

KC: So it can also be non-monetary, like a service for service?

ELITE3: Yes, it can take this form that the other side compensates with some counter service.

ELITE5

An infinite amount of things. It can be financial bribes, but I think that in the lower or middle classes the financial type takes a backseat and it becomes an exchange of service. In the higher echelons it is more financial.

FG1.2 But you give a box of chocolates as a thank you I think. I give money to have something better. Chocolates you give after. Money you give before.

FG1.3 I would give both (laugh)

FG1.2 If I want something better I would give the money ahead of time basically.

FG1.6 A bribe is basically that you have some appointment and you want it two days ahead so you push it along. But if I don't expect anything and I just want to express respect, I just want to reward them for it.

Example 9.1 and 9.2- Manual analysis of 'Definitions of corruption' with translation, green and red sections corresponding. Source: Author

The word frequency generated to the 60 most frequent words of this node is skewed slightly, due to the inclusion of language fillers, such as prepositions, conjunctions, different grammatical forms and cases of the same words- shortcomings that relate to NVivo's inability to pick out similar words in Slovak and automatically discard language fillers as described in previous sections. However, it is still showing interesting trends which relate to corruption being associated with financial advantages, bribes, but also exchange of services, as seen in the highlighted words in Table 9.1.

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage	Similar Words
Niečo (something)	5	35	2.85%	niečo
Korupcia (corruption)	8	18	1.47%	korupcia
Môže (it can)	4	16	1.30%	môže
Peniaze (money)	7	14	1.14%	peniaze
Nejaký (some kind)	6	10	0.81%	nejaký
Proste (simply)	6	10	0.81%	proste
Dám (I will give)	3	9	0.73%	dám
Nejaké (some kind, neuter)	6	8	0.65%	nejaké
Podľa (according to)	5	8	0.65%	podľa
Známosti (acquaintances, contacts)	8	7	0.57%	známosti
Máš (you have)	3	6	0.49%	máš
Myslím (I think)	6	6	0.49%	myslím
Výhodu (advantage, accusative case)	6	6	0.49%	výhodu
Bonboniéru (box of chocolates)	10	5	0.41%	bonboniéru
Dáš (you will give)	3	5	0.41%	dáš
Korupciu (corruption, acc case)	8	5	0.41%	korupciu
Nemusí (does not have to)	6	5	0.41%	nemusí
Neviem (I don't know)	6	5	0.41%	neviem
Služba (service)	6	5	0.41%	služba
Zase (again)	4	5	0.41%	zase
Chcem (I want)	5	4	0.33%	chcem
Chceš (you want)	5	4	0.33%	chceš
Dať (to give)	3	4	0.33%	dať
Dostal (he got)	6	4	0.33%	dostal
Finančne (financially)	8	4	0.33%	finančne
Lepšie (better)	6	4	0.33%	lepšie
Navyše (extra, surplus)	6	4	0.33%	navyše
Nič (nothing)	3	4	0.33%	nič
Niekoho (someone)	7	4	0.33%	niekoho
Občiansky (civil)	9	4	0.33%	občiansky
Potom (after)	5	4	0.33%	potom
Presne (exactly)	6	4	0.33%	presne

Službu (service, acc)	6	4	0.33%	službu
Služieb (services)	7	4	0.33%	služieb
Súhlasím (I agree)	8	4	0.33%	súhlasím
Úplatky (bribes)	7	4	0.33%	úplatky
Výmena (exchange)	6	4	0.33%	výmena
Zákona (the law)	6	4	0.33%	zákona
Berú (they take)	4	3	0.24%	berú
Človek (a person)	6	3	0.24%	človek
Dni (days)	3	3	0.24%	dni
Dostať (to get)	6	3	0.24%	dostať
Dva (two)	3	3	0.24%	dva
Finančná (financial, feminine)	8	3	0.24%	finančná
Finančné (financial, neuter)	8	3	0.24%	finančné
Forma (form)	5	3	0.24%	forma
Ísť (to go)	3	3	0.24%	ísť
Lekárovi (to the docto)	8	3	0.24%	lekárovi
Moja (mine)	4	3	0.24%	moja
Nad (over)	3	3	0.24%	nad
Nejaká (some kind, feminine)	6	3	0.24%	nejaká
Pod (under)	3	3	0.24%	pod
Povedal (he said)	7	3	0.24%	povedal
Pozornosť (attention payment)	9	3	0.24%	pozornosť
Prednostne (preferentially)	10	3	0.24%	prednostne
Protislužba (counter-service)	11	3	0.24%	protislužba
Protislužbu (counter-service, acc)	11	3	0.24%	protislužbu
Skôr (early, rather)	4	3	0.24%	skôr
Sme (we are)	3	3	0.24%	sme
Všimné (attention payment)	6	3	0.24%	všimné

Table 9.1 Frequency search of node ‘Definitions of corruption’ set at 60 words with translations embedded. Highlighting denotes all nouns associated with corruption. Source: Author

As mentioned in the introduction and shown in Table 9.1 above, the word with greatest frequency and prominence is the word ‘something’, with nearly twice as many occurrences as the second most frequent word, ‘corruption’. While this points to the general elusive nature of the definition for corruption, it is also important to understand that in spoken language and vernacular, this word can also be used in the context of ‘It is something like this...something to do with...something that looks like...’ and as such doesn’t necessarily contain meaning in and of itself. Having said that, it is obvious from the highlighted words in the table that the trends picked out by the manual analysis are visible in the software-generated analysis too, increasing the reliability of the findings. Corruption is mostly associated with monetary and financial context, but there are also several mentions of service exchange, attention payments, contacts,

advantages, and preferential treatments. The participants try and make a very clear distinction between the language for bribery and that of gratitude but when they are asked to conceptualise corruption in their own minds, these previously carefully delineated concepts conflate into one. It would indicate that the participants are aware of the parallels between these terms. However, there is clearly a socially constructed trend leading them to make a distinction between these terms for one to be operationally and practically convenient at given times.



Figure 9.2 Word frequency cloud for node 'Definitions of corruption' set at 60 words, the size and proximity to the centre denotes prominence of words. Translations embedded in red. Source: Author

The more readily interpreted visual depiction of the frequency results is seen in Figure 9.2. The greater the size of the word and its proximity to the centre, the

greater its frequency of use and relative weighting to the rest of the words. The wide variety of words used to describe corruption both in a synonymic capacity, as well as a descriptive capacity, is clear from the depiction. The biggest association is that with money, finances, or advantages and there are also frequent mentions to services, contacts, and attention. From the perspective of verbs, these are centred around the idea of taking, giving, exchanging, getting, and wanting. Corruption, in the view of the participants, is therefore a complex issue that includes references to monetary, as well as immaterial and informal gifts and practices and is not a straightforward definition. It is a definition based on conditions, uncertainty, blurred lines, but definitely with a dominant transactional dimension to it and elements of personal desire.

9.3 Corruption in the media

This node was created as an amalgamation of responses to the question: ‘How does it make you feel to see a corruption scandal publicised in the media?’ in the hope that in their responses, the participants would let me in on the specific language they would use to cope with the reality of corruption. It is shown that a lot of the time the media do shape the populace’s view of corruption and corruption measures taken by the government (Gallina 2013, Naxera 2015) and I felt it was important to gauge the participants’ stances on the subject. The initial manual analysis (as seen in Examples 9.3, 9.4 and 9.5, 9.6 overleaf) was able to delineate three separate sections of interest within the node: in **yellow** the specific language and word choice to describe their feelings is visible, the **green** highlighter represents expressions of language that show a perceived lack of consequences in the country for corrupt behaviour, and **red boxes** represent a lethargic, defeatist language as coping mechanism.

The language in the yellows is quite repetitive and includes expressions of lack of surprise, anger, frustration, and helplessness. The green presents the judiciary branch and law enforcement in a bad light. This is intriguing because the participants also regularly expressed sentiments that suggested they held the view not enough cases were being prosecuted. The red, most worryingly,

buttresses the impression expressed in an earlier chapter of the thesis, which outlines the civil society being quite inactive in the fight against corruption and the general passivity in the civil forum (Buncak, Dzambazovic et al. 2009, Nemeč 2018). The language used by my participants embodies expressions normalising the behaviour, marking corruption as ‘standard’, ‘everyday matter’ and makes it clear that in their view there’s nothing that can realistically be done about it: *‘What can you as one person do about it? Yeah, but what can you do... Everyone does it... One expects this kind of thing in Central Europe...Nothing changes... It’s a standard thing these days... It’s really commonplace...Nothing gets done’*. Interestingly, the participants do not just allude to cases of grand corruption, more likely to be televised, but also to those cases of petty corruption that have been brought to light and that appear to them ‘ridiculous’ in comparison (for example, doctors being victimised for taking a duck as informal payments in comparison with millions of EUR of EU funds misappropriated for agricultural or road-development projects). It is possible that the tolerance of petty corrupt acts gets reinforced in the public rhetoric by the specific presentation by the media and juxtaposition of ridiculous cases with those that impact the state budget directly.

MEDIA SCANDALS

Files\Transcript ELITE 8 - § 1 reference coded [0.92% Coverage]
Reference 1 - 0.92% Coverage
Tak si z toho **frustrovany, seric ka to** A čo s tým spraviš...

Files\Transcript ELITE 1 - § 1 reference coded [4.35% Coverage]
Reference 1 - 4.35% Coverage
Asi je to choré, ale ja to už ani **nevnímam ako nezvyčajné**, skôr mi to príde **ako nejaká súčasť**. Robí to v podstate každý, ale tento má smolu, že mu na to prišli. Hej pri tej nízkej korupcii. Pri tej vysokej je to iné, ale to že niekto dvíhne telefón a kamarátovi lekárovi, že môžem prísť po ordinálnych hodinách, tak to už nevnímam...

Files\Transcript ELITE 2 - § 1 reference coded [3.50% Coverage]
Reference 1 - 3.50% Coverage
Ide o to, že aký. Lebo médiá sú tiež **nedôveryhodné**. Dajú taký škandal, ktorý vyhovuje vláde a politikom. A tých ľudí namotávajú, **nie je to vždy objektívne**. Keď pracujem v tej nemocnici a vidím čo sa deje ak svinštvá tak to sa nemedializuje. Ale povyberajú také až sprostosti, ktoré slúžia na prekrytie tej skutoč korupcie.

Files\Transcript ELITE 3 - § 1 reference coded [2.83% Coverage]
Reference 1 - 2.83% Coverage
Tak ako človek je z toho **znechutený**, ale nie je z toho **prekvapený**, pretože žijeme v strednej Európe takže človek očakáva, že sa takéto niečo bude diať a teda človek je aj **sklamany** alebo **znechutený**.

Files\Transcript FG1.2 - § 1 reference coded [4.36% Coverage]
Reference 1 - 4.36% Coverage
FG1.2 Tak ono teraz sa už boja, zober si tak, že predtým sa nosilo akože teraz sa to tak medializuje akože kačica a ja neviem čo.

Files\Transcript FG3.3 - § 1 reference coded [3.34% Coverage]
Reference 1 - 3.34% Coverage
FG3.3 Ide o to, kde sa tá korupcia udeje. Keď sa udeje v Rakúsku odstúpi minister. **Keď sa udeje u nás tak neodstúpi nikto.**

Files\Transcript FG3.4 - § 1 reference coded [0.86% Coverage]
Reference 1 - 0.86% Coverage
FG3.4 Nijaký.

Files\Transcript FG3.5 - § 1 reference coded [6.55% Coverage]
Reference 1 - 6.55% Coverage
FG3.5 Že jeden z tisíc si pomohol. **Ale nevyjde všetko nikdy na svetlo.**

Files\Transcript FG4.2 - § 1 reference coded [0.46% Coverage]
Reference 1 - 0.46% Coverage
FG4.2 **Ale to nie sme len my, to je všade.**

Files\Transcript FG4.3 - § 1 reference coded [4.61% Coverage]
Reference 1 - 4.61% Coverage
FG4.3 Ale to si tak **ponadávaš pred telkou**. **Akože čo máš ty ako jedinec robiť?**

Files\Transcript FG4.4 - § 1 reference coded [2.73% Coverage]
Reference 1 - 2.73% Coverage

Media Scandals

ELITE8

I mean you are **frustrated by it, it pisses** you off. But **what are you going to do about it...**

ELITE1

It's probably pathological to say this, but I **don't see this as anything unusual anymore**, it almost appears to me to **be a part of it all**. **Everyone basically does it**, but this one was just unlucky that he got found out. With the petty corruption. With the grand one it's different, but picking up a phone to call their doctor friend with a 'can I come over after office hours' I mean I don't really perceive that as...

ELITE2

It's all about what kind [of scandal]. Because the media isn't particularly trustworthy either. They present some scandal that actually suits the government and the politicians to present. And the people get reeled in, it's not always objective. When I work in the hospital and I see what's going on, what kind of crap happens and it doesn't get publicised. But they select absolutely ridiculous stuff that really serve to cover up the real corruption.

ELITE3

I mean one is definitely **disgusted by it, but not surprised because we live in Central Europe so you kind of expect that** something like this would be happening. And so one is **disappointed or disgusted/disillusioned**.

FG1.2

I mean, they're kinda afraid now- think about it, people used to be bringing stuff but now it's all media centric like ducks and things.

FG3.3

It's about where the corruption takes place. I mean when it happens in Austria you get the minister stepping down. **When it happens in this country nobody steps down.**

FG3.4

I get no [feeling].

FG3.5

I think that like one out of a thousand helped themselves. **But not everything comes out to light.**

FG4.2

But that's not just us, it's everywhere.

FG4.3

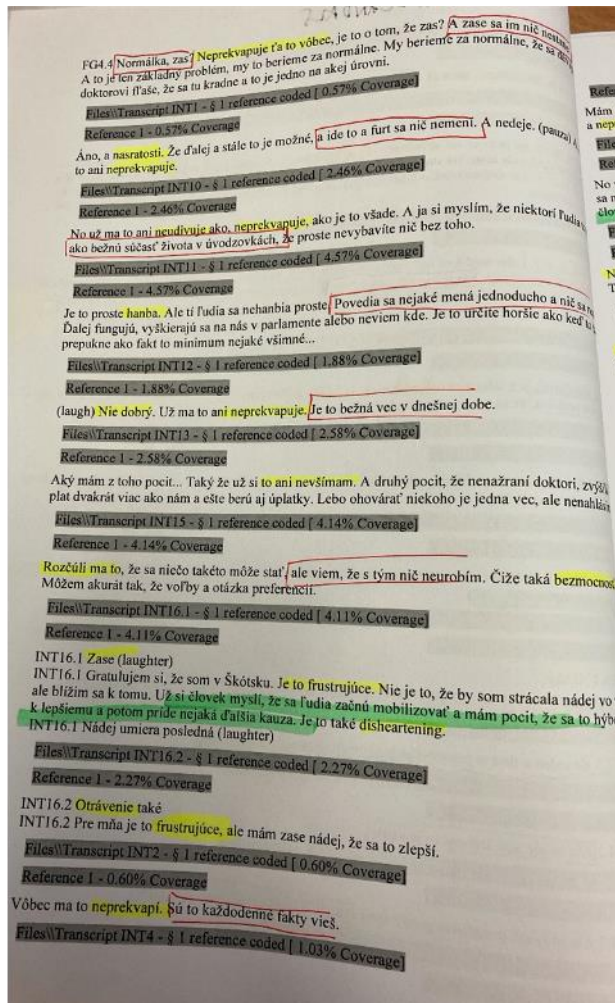
I mean you kinda **swear in front of the tv don't you**. But **what are you as an individual supposed to do about it?**

Page 2

FG4.4

Normal, I mean 'again'. **It doesn't surprise you at all**, it's all about 'again'? **And nothing happens** again. And that's the basic problem, we consider this to be normal. We take it to be normal, that the doctors get bottles of booze, that there's a lot of stealing going on in this country, regardless of the level.

Example 9.3 and 9.4- Manual analysis of node 'Media Scandals' with translation, green and red sections corresponding, orange corresponds to yellow highlighter. Source: Author



FG4.4

Normal, I mean 'again'. It doesn't surprise you at all, it's all about 'again'? And nothing happens again. And that's the basic problem, we consider this to be normal. We take it to be normal, that the doctors get bottles of booze, that there's a lot of stealing going on in this country, regardless of the level.

INT1

Yeah, and you feel pissed off. That it's still happening, that it's still possible and that nothing changes. (Pause) And so you're not surprised.

INT10

I mean I'm not surprised, not bewildered, but it's everywhere. And I think that some people consider it to be a usual part of life in quotation marks, that you basically can't get anything done without it.

INT11

It is basically shame. That these people don't seem to have any shame. That some names are mentioned and nothing happens. They keep going, smirking at us in the parliament or wherever or wherever. It's definitely worse than when things like that break through

INT12

(Laugh) Not a good feeling. It doesn't surprise me. It's a common thing in this day and age.

INT13

What kind of feeling... I mean I barely notice it anymore. And another feeling, that these greedy doctors I mean they had their salaries increased twice and they keep taking bribes as well. Because I mean badmouthing someone is one thing, but not reporting them...

INT15

It angers me that something like that can happen but I know I can't do anything about it. So this kind of helplessness. I can probably only you know, vote.

INT16.1

Again (laughter). I congratulate myself on living in Scotland. It's very frustrating. It's not that I'm losing hope but I am close to it. You think that people would start mobilising but I get the feeling that it is moving in the right direction and then there's another incident. It's disheartening.

16.2

You feel kinda down about it. It's frustrating for me, but I have hope that it'll get better.

INT2

I'm not at all surprised. It's everyday facts of life you know.

Example 9.5 and 9.6- Manual analysis of node 'Media Scandals' with translation continued, green and red sections corresponding, orange corresponds to yellow highlighter. Source: Author

Interestingly, the language used in the green, which points to a perceived lack of consequences, is validated by a recent televised debate on the topic Gift vs a Bribe by the weekly paper tyzden.sk⁴⁹. In response to viewer questions, the panel (consisting of a Special prosecutor for corruption, Special Court judge for corruption, a lawyer specialising in medical litigation, and a data analyst on corruption) unanimously agreed that actions falling into the category of petty corruption (including gratitude payments regardless of the timing of giving) rarely get criminally prosecuted and if they do, the sentence is always explicitly symbolic, such as a fine and/or a warning. This room for interpretation, rather than explicit rules and regulations, seems to be entirely at the discretion of the prosecutor and the judge. It would therefore appear that such feelings of perceived lack of repercussions in the language of my participants are at least to some extent validated and confirmed by the standards set up by the legal handling of the corruption cases coming before the courts. The official government statistics on this on its website, vlada.gov.sk/statistiky/, claim 367 logged cases of corruption in 2015, out of which only 79 were prosecuted and the statistic itself has not been updated since 2016⁵⁰.

Table 9.2 (overleaf) denoting the frequency word search for node ‘Media scandal’, set up for 50 most frequent words after manually removing several conjunctions and interjections, presents a slightly more nuanced picture than the negative outlook of the initial manual analysis. It is interesting that the word ‘hope’ has made it so far up the list of frequent words, juxtaposed with the most frequent word ‘nothing’, both as answers to what publicised corruption scandals make the participants feel. It would appear that the view of the participants is not entirely glum and uniformly sceptical, but there appears to be some balancing of emotions as well. Having said that, the vast majority of the highlighted words represent lack of surprise, frustration, expressions of repeated

⁴⁹ See whole debate shared in a public forum here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V_kC6b0hxx4 [last accessed 9/11/2020]

⁵⁰ For more details, visit <https://www.vlada.gov.sk/statistiky/> [last accessed 17/02/2021].

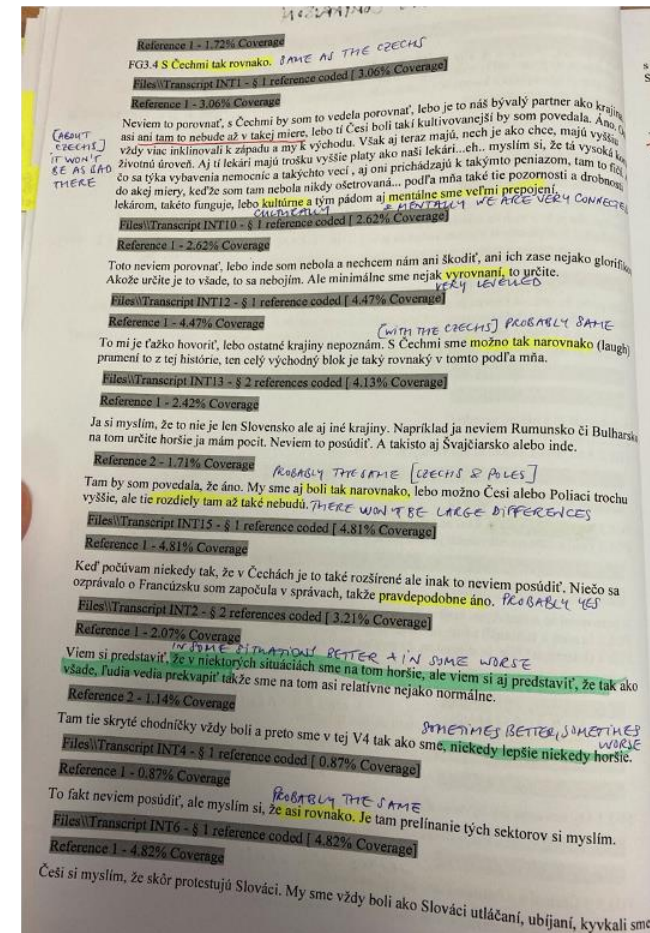
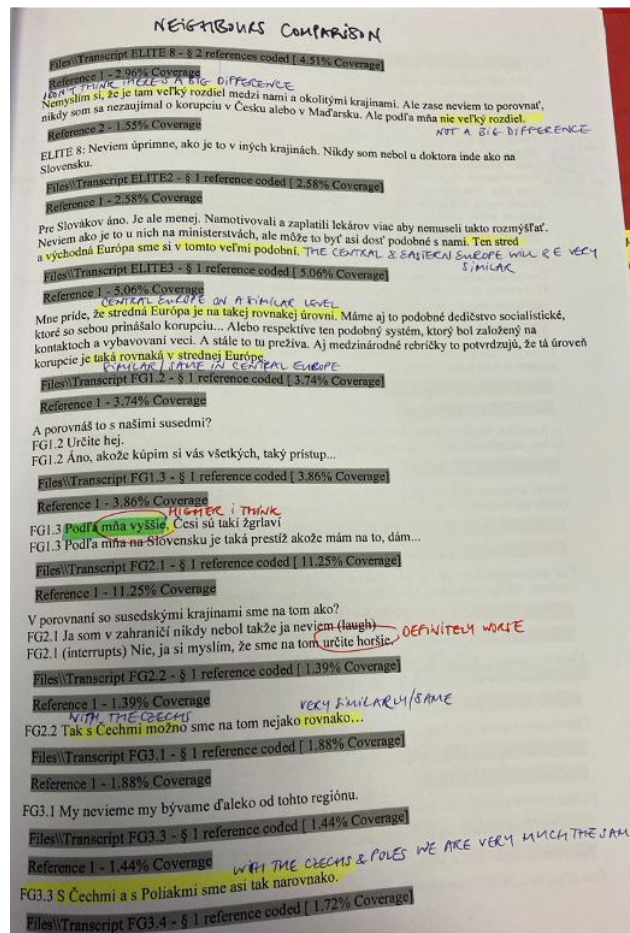
behaviour and more worryingly than not, include corruption into everyday discourse with words expressing recurrence and embeddedness, such as: ‘again’, ‘everywhere’, ‘commonplace’, ‘everything’, ‘normal’ or ‘a part of’ [life]. This node has been revelatory in its capacity to showcase how my participants really feel about everyday displays of corruption in the public platform. More research would need to be conducted into ascertaining whether their view is directly shaped and influenced by the media’s portrayal of the phenomenon, or rather reflected by it.

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage	Similar Words
Nič (nothing)	3	9	1.54%	nič
Človek (a person)	6	7	1.20%	človek
Pocit (a feeling)	5	6	1.03%	pocit
Neprekvapuje (it does not surprise)	12	5	0.85%	neprekvapuje
Ľudia (people)	5	4	0.68%	ľudia
Niečo (something)	5	4	0.68%	niečo
Zase (again)	4	4	0.68%	zase
Dobry (good)	5	3	0.51%	dobry
Nadej (hope)	5	3	0.51%	nadej
Nejaké (some kind)	6	3	0.51%	nejaké
Proste (simply)	6	3	0.51%	proste
Udeje (it will happen)	5	3	0.51%	udeje
Vela (a lot)	4	3	0.51%	veľa
Vôbec ([not] at all)	5	3	0.51%	vôbec
Všade (everywhere)	5	3	0.51%	všade
Všetko (everything)	6	3	0.51%	všetko
Berieme (we take)	7	2	0.34%	berieme
Berú (they take)	4	2	0.34%	berú
Dostal (he got)	6	2	0.34%	dostal
Ďalej (further)	5	2	0.34%	ďalej
Fakt (really)	4	2	0.34%	fakt
Frustrujúce (frustrating)	11	2	0.34%	frustrujúce
Korupcie (corruption, prepositional)	8	2	0.34%	korupcie
Ľudí (people)	4	2	0.34%	ľudí
Môže (it can)	4	2	0.34%	môže
Môžem (I can)	5	2	0.34%	môžem
Nedeje (is not happening)	6	2	0.34%	nedeje
Nejaká (some kind of, feminine)	6	2	0.34%	nejaká
Nerobím (I don't do)	7	2	0.34%	nerobím, nerobíme
Neviem (I don't know)	6	2	0.34%	neviem
Nevnímam (I don't perceive)	8	2	0.34%	nevnímam
Nijaký (none)	6	2	0.34%	nijaký
Normálne (normal, standard)	8	2	0.34%	normálne

Smiešne (ridiculous, laughable)	7	2	0.34%	smiešne
Strane (side)	6	2	0.34%	strane
Súčasť (a part of)	6	2	0.34%	súčasť
Určite (certainly)	6	2	0.34%	určite
Úplatky (bribes)	7	2	0.34%	úplatky
Viem (I know)	4	2	0.34%	viem
Zas (again)	3	2	0.34%	zas
Znechutený (disgusted)	10	2	0.34%	znechutený
Akej (which)	4	1	0.17%	akej
Aké (which, plural)	3	1	0.17%	aké
Bariéru (barrier)	7	1	0.17%	bariéru
Bezmocnosť (helplessness)	10	1	0.17%	bezmocnosť
Bezplatné (free, fee-free)	9	1	0.17%	bezplatné
Bežná (commonplace)	5	1	0.17%	bežná
Bežnú (commonplace, acc case)	5	1	0.17%	bežnú
Bližim (I am approaching)	6	1	0.17%	blížim
Boja (they fear)	4	1	0.17%	boja

Table 9.2 Frequency search of node 'Media scandal' set at 60 words with translations embedded. Highlighting denotes all nouns associated with feelings about the. media.
Source: Author

In a visual representation of the frequency shown overleaf in Figure 9.3, it is important to note the prominence of the word 'neprekvapuje' ('it does not surprise') and its proximity to the word 'človek' (a person). The participants in that way are expressing what they believe to be the general feeling of all people. I did expect to see language of scepticism, but expressions such as 'disgusted', 'frustrated' and 'helpless' underline with acute insistence that the study and the curbing of corruption is a very relevant endeavour in this region (the region as a whole displays trends of significant portions of household expenditure being used for subsidising corrupt practices (Szende and Culyer 2006), and that corruption as a whole is understood by real life participants in real life terms to be a serious societal problem.



Example 9.7 and 9.8 Manual analysis of node 'Neighbours comparison' with translations embedded. Source: Author

The Examples 9.7 and 9.8 with embedded translations contain references to similarity between corruption levels among the neighbouring countries in **yellow**, **greens** are unsure, and **reds** indicate where participants thought that Slovakia is worse off than other countries surrounding it.

Interestingly, 13 out of the 19 responses in this node indicated that participants thought Slovakia was on a similar level to its neighbours, and the most frequent reference of comparison was with the Czech Republic. This underlines the ongoing relationship and closeness between the two countries. This observation reflects the research already conducted into corruption for the CEE region and for the Czech Republic specifically, which shows similarities of corruption levels and also similarities of specific sectors affected, including health care, education, law enforcement etc (Grodland, Koshechkina et al. 1998, Puček 2014, Koudelková, Strielkowski et al. 2015). The main difference lies in the fact that while health care may figure on one of the top 5-10 spots of affected sectors in the Visegrad Group countries, nowhere is it as consistently high as in Slovakia. This may be due to a less active civil society in Slovakia, but also due to the worse state of healthcare than in neighbouring countries. A 2016 study into the performance of health care systems in the Visegrad countries found Slovakia to be the 3rd out of the 4 countries with both the Czech Republic and Poland ahead, in terms of health care performance, quality, and efficiency of service delivery for the population (Dlouhy 2016). There is evidence to suggest that the working conditions for doctors in the neighbouring countries are better and a lot of Slovak doctors (over 2,000 in 2017)⁵¹ left for primarily the Czech Republic, creating the impression that the working conditions and state of health care is worse in Slovakia than it is in neighbouring countries, leading to more serious problems. Therefore, it appears that the participants' observations in this research project are astute and in line with the research on corruption within the Visegrad countries.

The participants even alluded to thinking that similar types of sectors will be affected by corruption, healthcare included. Only 3 responses thought that Slovakia was worse off than its neighbouring countries in levels of corruption

⁵¹ For more details on the brain drain statistic, visit <https://www.techmed.sk/4211-slovenskych-lekarov-pracuje-v-zahranici/> [last accessed 17/02/2021].

and, on several occasions, references were made to the whole of 'Central Europe' without any prompting. The language included phrases such as: *podobní (similar)*, *nie je veľký rozdiel (there's not a big difference)*, *na rovnakej úrovni (on the same level)*, *rovnako (the same)*, *narovnako (the same)*, *veľmi prepojení (very interconnected)* and similar. This indicates that the general understanding of corruption by participants does not encompass only Slovakia but brings the region in spontaneously as one entity. It would be prudent to conduct more research on corruption in a qualitative manner within this region going forward, as the general indication from participants' responses here is that there is a possibility that any observations from a sector in one country may be relevant region-wide and across countries.

However, as is obvious from Figure 9.4 overleaf, the most prominent and most frequently used word when addressing this question is 'neviem' (I don't know) and is used 11 times in total within this node, in sharp contrast to the second most frequent 'určite' (definitely). It is therefore impossible to make any kind of definitive conclusions from this particular node, but it is of value to see what the participants' language portrays in terms of their understanding of corruption as a concept and that there is a level of contradiction and discrepancy in the understanding. They do not see this as a Slovakia-specific issue, but rather as an issue that bears a similar look outwardly to states who share a similar history and socio-economic development and encompasses seemingly similar sectors.

Following the principle of repetition and forcefulness, these groups, based on their prevalence in the node, included, but were not exclusive to:

- ‘How widespread is corruption in Slovakia’ (12% of references [of this node])
- ‘How corruption used to be and how is it today’ (12% of references)
- ‘How to tackle corruption’ (10% of references)
- ‘Has there been any progress made on this front so far’ (5% of references)
- ‘Why corruption is so widespread’ (17.4% of references)
- ‘Allusions to fear’ (5.5% of references).

9.5.1 How widespread is corruption in Slovakia?

Each of these groups included language that was characteristic of a certain viewpoint. For the first group addressing the levels of the spread of corruption, the corresponding question was: ‘Do you think that corruption is widespread in Slovakia? If so, where and why?’ The responses included the following: celkovo (overall), všade (everywhere), skoro až súčasť kultúry (almost like a part of the culture), všeobecne známy problém (a generally well-known problem), všade úplne všade sa kradne (everywhere, stealing is going on everywhere), určite áno (definitely yes), áno určite (yes definitely), horší problém proste nie je (there’s not a worse problem out there), je to rozsiahle vo všetkých sektoroch (it’s widespread across all sectors), na Slovensku určite (in Slovakia definitely), vo všetkých oblastiach (in all sectors), bežné (common), rozľahlý problém (a widespread problem), súčasť každodenného života (a part of everyday life), ja to počúvam z každej strany (I keep hearing this from everywhere), celé Slovensko (across all of Slovakia). These responses encompass 15 participants out of the 15 references allocated to this group (i.e. 100% of responses) and present their unanimous view of corruption being uncontestedly widespread across the country. In their view, corruption has permeated all sectors and all walks of life and the allusions to the problem being ‘standard’ or ‘part of the culture’ point to the extent of the phenomenon being ingrained in everyday thinking.

9.5.2 How corruption used to be and how is it today?

The responses in this group of references relate to observations made by the participants about the state of corruption in the current climate, as per their understanding, and to their knowledge on how corruption has developed over the years. The language included the following:

- Now it's presented more like corruption, before it was something normal (*Sa to prezentuje viac ako korupcia než predtým sa to bralo ako niečo normálne ELITE1*),
- It's a bit different it's gone in a different direction- there's room for corruption now (*Je to iné, posunulo sa to iným smerom- priestor na korupciu je tam ELITE3*),
- It's everywhere where there is some state department that makes decisions (*Kde vlastne je nejaký štátny úrad a o niečom rozhoduje ELITE3*),
- It's not getting curbed because the laws are not changing radically (*Neustupuje to lebo zákony sa nejako radikálne nemenia ELITE5*),
- I don't think that at all that health care is the most affected, but maybe because it's got the greatest tradition of it [corruption] (*To si vôbec nemyslím, že zdravotníctvo je najviac ovplyvnené možno to má najväčšiu tradíciu FG4.1*),
- Yeah, I think it's tipping towards phoning someone rather than paying directly these days (*Áno a skôr že sa to preklápa do toho že zavolám niekomu FG4.4*),
- Yeah, it happened to me last time when I was at the doctors and I didn't give them anything and my friend was looking at me saying- why did you not give them anything? Why should I? Well you know, what if you need them again? (*Áno mne sa minule stalo že keď som bola u doktora pozerala na mňa známa, že a vy ste mu nič nedali? Prečo by som mala? No ale to ste mali dať, čo keď ho budete nabudúce potrebovať? FG4.4*)
- No, people are definitely pissed off about it, some moan about it all the time that it's so visible on the lifestyle they [doctors] have, whether it's true or not that they take money- I mean you cannot be able to afford some of these things if you are just a normal person with normal pay (*Nie, ľudí to nasiera určite, niektorí pindajú neskutočne, je to vidno na životnom štýle či je to pravda alebo nie- nemôžeš si jednoducho dovoliť toho čo si normálny človek nedovolí INT1*),
- Things simply do not work and you can try and appear as if you want to do good, but if your kid doesn't get taken to a good school- what are you going to do? (*Veci proste nefungujú a keď sa chceš tváriť že chceš po dobrom, ale keď ti nezoberú decko do dobrej školy, čo spraviš FG4.4*).

It is obvious here that there is no real pattern of responses in this group, but there are allusions to the stagnation of solutions aimed at corruption and lack of legislative action perceived. The participants also allude to corruption having developed and changed its façade over the years and become more serious and ostentatious. There is also evidence of the tradition of giving bribes/gifts, as well as receiving judgmental comments by others when this is not done.

9.5.3 How to tackle corruption

This group of responses outlines the spontaneous opinions given by participants not in answer to any particular question, but as observations of how corruption could be tackled from their points of view, specifically in health care. The language used included the following phrases from the 12 references coded:

- If corruption does not start to get punished somehow, then... *(Pokiaľ sa nezačne tá korupcia nejako trestať, tak...FG4.2)*
- I think maybe we should try and copy what another country where the system works better does and try adapt that or something... *(Ja si myslím, že to odpozerat' od nejakej inej krajiny a proste skúsiť to prispôbiť od modelu, kde to funguje...FG1.3)*
- That's not really an answerable question [how to fix it]. Maybe some other type of health insurance where you pay for some basic level of care, then higher and then even higher... *(To je nezodpovedateľné...Možno nejaký iný systém toho zdravotného poistenia, že platíš si základné, nejaké vyššie a ešte vyššie...FG1.7)*
- But the doctor can refuse it and it [the solution] is a question of when they all start doing that really.. *(Ale ten doktor to môže odmietnuť. A to je len otázka toho, že to začnú konečne odmietat'...FG4.1)*
- *[about a whistleblower in the workplace]...* It's about the fact that somebody went and decided to do it and I admire it, but also know that she will not be getting another job in Slovnafť... *(Ale je to o tom, že sa niekto rozhodol a ja to takisto obdivujem ale takisto viem, že už v Slovnafte robotu nedostane FG4.1)*
- I mean if there were more CT machines for example, then by nature yeah, it wouldn't be that difficult to get an appointment...*(Tak keby bolo viac tých CTčiek alebo čo tak nie je problém dostať termín...FG4.2)*

- If there were at least a few exemplary cases, then maybe people would get spooked... (*Keby bolo aspoň zopár exemplárnych prípadov, tak by sa aspoň niekto zľakol...*)
- I think it's about setting an example yourself as an individual... (*Ja si myslím, že ísť príkladom, to je to, čo máš robiť ako jedinec...FG4.4*)
- And there should be greater oversight. And there should be some control of how they [doctors] come by property... (*A mala by tam byť väčšia kontrola. A nejakým spôsobom by mala byť nejaká kontrola nadobudnutia majetku...INT1*)

From these responses it is obvious that a few strands of opinions are prevalent and these are the contesting opinions of greater oversight/stronger legislation, versus the opinion of starting from personal decisions to curb corrupt behaviour. There is also a suggestion of fine tuning the health insurance policy, as Slovakia currently operates on a half-privatised system. Better insurance policies, alongside regulation of predatory pricing, are a suggestion that is made in public discourse often, as one of the solutions of illegal bribes for skipping waiting lists and similar (UN 2011, Gaitonde, Oxman et al. 2016, Weissman 2016). The same suggestion was brought in by two elite interviews from my sample (ELITE2 and ELITE5).

9.5.4 Has there been any progress made on this front so far?

Several participants expressed the opinion that there has already been some progress made in their view. These came predominantly from elite level interviews with greater insight into the problematic from within the sector. For example, an employee in a pharmaceutical quality assurance firm stated that: *'In some branches we have already made fairly significant steps forward. For example, in the pricing of medicines- I think we are doing very well there because of the European framework of prices, which means we have to work with an average of three lowest prices in the EU'* (ELITE8). Another elite interview of a university professor looking into corruption from the point of view of international business outlined that: *'I think this is kind of generational at this stage. When we watch these affairs unfold and a lot of the time you see the younger workers in the state department and in the public sector come forward as whistle-blowers because they can no longer stand by. I would hope this trend continues and they are increasingly unable to avert their eyes from*

this' (ELITE3). Some members of the public also expressed their hopeful views: 'I think it's moving in the right direction' (FG3.3) 'I think the awareness is increasing, as is the moral learning curve' (INT1). Overall, there appears to be examples of hopefulness and a definite perception of the participants that perpetual corrupt behaviour is not an unalterable outcome in Slovakia.

9.5.5 Why is corruption so widespread?

This group of references is the most populated one and offers several strands of understanding and reasoning by the participants. The original question that prompted most of these responses was: 'What conditions do you think must exist in a society to let corruption thrive and develop?' The reasons/conditions for corruption include by and large economic references to inequality and a badly managed transition from centralised to market economy, for example:

- 'supply-demand (*ponuka-dopyt* ELITE1),
- opening of the market (*otvorenie trhu* ELITE3),
- problems would be of a different nature- competition (*problémy by boli potom iné-konkurenčné* FG4.1),
- small market (*malý trh* FG4.4),
- room to manipulate high-level resources (*možnosti manipulácie s vysokými zdrojmi* INT1),
- big societal differences (*veľké spoločenské rozdiely* INT1),
- there was no need to steal before because of the massive central planning (*predtým kvôli tomu centrálnemu plánovaniu nebola taká potreba kraďnúť* INT1)'.

They also include references to an insufficient amount of resources and a failure of the system which then lead to the inevitability of corruption:

- you constantly have to beg [to get what you're entitled to] (*fakt sa musíte doprosovať* INT10),
- the system works so badly (*system funguje tak zle* INT14),
- the system is so badly set up (*system je tak zle nastavený* INT2),
- the system is set up in a way that means you can't get by without corruption (*system je nastavený tak, že bez tej korupcie neprejdeš* INT4),

- it is inevitable- if you don't want to die, pay (*nevyhnutné- nechceš zomrieť, zaplat' INT2*),
- *classic horror stories about not being able to get access to things' (ELITE7).*

Last but not least the participants also presented their views on the remnants of traditions and the personal choices that people make to take part in corruption:

- the people have become more greedy (*ľudia sa stali hamyžnejšími INT1*),
- there is no basic morale here (*tu neexistuje základná morálka FG4.4*),
- those grandmothers would always bring those geese and those ducks to the doctors (*vždy tam tie babky nosili tie husy a kačice tým doktorom FG4.2*).

Clearly, the participants are very much aware of the variety of reasons that exist and most likely interact to create the conditions for corrupt behaviour. Quite astutely, they point out the relation between corruption levels and economic factors relating to the transition from centralised Soviet economy to the open capitalist market economy, which is the argument made by several scholars in literature (Kaufmann and Siegelbaum 1997, Goel and Budak 2006). The addressing of the systemic insufficiencies is also mentioned to a comparable extent, as well as the factor of morality and personal choice.

9.5.6 Allusions to fear

The final group in this category is most likely also the one that had the starkest resonance during interviews and focus groups. The participants alluded several times to instances of engaging with corruption as a result of fearing for their health and loved ones. One elite interview with a doctor from the UK who spent some time in the healthcare sector in Slovakia outlined specifically that: *'they may not talk about it outwardly or be particularly proud of the fact that they might use these underhand mechanisms to ensure the safety of their families and health of their loved ones. (ELITE7)'* Other participants also used similar language: *'Health is basically just fear for your husband, kids, your parents. It's a sensitive subject and it is your life that is at stake'; 'I don't think people*

really think about it too much- If you have to, you'd give a kidney [to get well].' There were also parts of the 'allusions to fear' group that actually referred to the fear of reporting corruption in light of the possible consequences. This was also affected by the recent murder of a Slovak investigative journalist, Ján Kuciak and his fiancée, who was looking into corruption in high echelons of the government and this ultimately toppled the last Fico government in 2018: *'Until you are personally affected by it, you won't really say a word about corruption'. 'No one wants to end up like Kuciak'.* However, on two occasions in Focus Group 3 there were also references to the courage of the press and certain amount of pride in taken in that: *'All investigative journalists are going forward, they're not afraid', 'It feels like it's finally getting a move on in the right direction'.* The Slovak press have actually done very well in the past few years in the World Press Freedom Index, ending up above France and the UK and the Czech Republic in 2020 and over 50 spaces higher than Hungary⁵². Additionally, there have been fundamental changes in the Slovak Prosecutor General's office in 2020 with several judges (13 to date), as well as ex-Chief of Police, ex-Chief of the Criminal Agency (NAKA), and several other influential politicians (including the ex-Shadow secretary for justice Monika Jankovská) arrested and charged with corruption-related charges and their connection to the named defendant in the case of Kuciak's murder, Marian Kočner⁵³. The participants of this study included their observations as private citizens on the status quo in their understanding of corruption and its development in Slovakia in present day.

The word cloud generated for this section for 'General perceptions of corruption' (Figure 9.5 overleaf) resonates deeply for several reasons. First, the fact that the word 'I think' is at the very centre buttresses the fact that real understanding of the participants is explored here, as opposed to possible

⁵² <https://rsf.org/en/ranking> [last accessed 27/11/2020]

⁵³ <https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/566694-na-dusana-kovacika-podal-prokurator-usp-navrh-na-vzatie-do-vazby/>; <https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/569846-jankovska-sa-na-naka-priznala-k-svojej-trestnej-cinnosti/>; <https://domov.sme.sk/c/22355354/kocner-a-sudcovia-zasah-naka-online.html> [last accessed 30/11/2020]

expressions of certainty like ‘I heard’ or ‘I know’. Other words holding prominence are those of, for example: ‘people’, ‘a problem’, ‘corruption’, ‘definitely’, or ‘everywhere’. It is clear from the general connotation of these words and their central position that the participants recognise the connection between corruption and its pervasiveness with the role that people, rather than society or culture, play in their word choice. In a way, there is a sense of encouragement to be derived from this very simple visualisation, as it shows the ownership of decision-making. It also shows the grey areas of corruption understanding that the general public do not know how to categorise: ‘nothing’, ‘something’, ‘everywhere’, ‘everyone’, ‘a person’, ‘maybe’, ‘somewhere’, ‘I don’t know’, ‘some’, ‘a feeling’ etc. It is these areas that deserve more exploration and clarification by future research and systemic measures.



Figure 9.5 Word frequency cloud for node ‘General perceptions of corruption’ set at 50 words, the size and proximity to the centre denotes prominence of words. Translations embedded in red. Source: Author

9.6 Conclusions

This chapter has outlined several salient points regarding corruption understanding embedded in the participant responses. In the definitions section of corruption, it is obvious that the participants are more likely to understand corruption in terms of financial gain, but are not ignorant to other shapes that corruption can take, for example exchanges of services or certain types of gifts. In any case, the idea of gaining an advantage over others is emphasised and at the centre of the participant discourse.

For media, it is clear that the participants show awareness of the problem of corruption and their attitudes towards the presentation of corruption in the public forum are sceptical and unsurprised. The forcefulness of the language displayed in words such as ‘helplessness’, ‘disgust’ and also ‘frustration’ points to the participant awareness of the seriousness of the problem and a strong condemnation of it. There is also indication of defeatist language throughout which denotes the corrupt behaviour explored in the media as culturally embedded and normalised.

The comparison of corruption levels with neighbouring states points to a congruence between the participant views and existing literature and theory on the subject. The participants mostly believe that Slovakia is doing similarly to its neighbouring states with regards to corruption levels and the strongest comparison drawn is with the Czech Republic. The participant understanding points to the possibility of sectoral recommendations and improvements in corruption in one country to have the potential to induce change in similar sectors of neighbouring states. The similarity of the socio-economic development and of the historical legacies of these countries in CEE contributes to the shaping of the understanding of lasting phenomena by the participants.

Last but not least, the general perceptions of corruption section addresses several facets of the phenomenon for participants. The observations of language in this section point to the participant belief that corruption is indeed a

widespread problem that targets several sectors, and they also provide their views on the main factors conditioning the status quo. The participants overall believe that the economic disparity in the country is one of the key factors, as is a bad systemic set up for healthcare, and also the personal attitudes of individuals to corrupt exchanges. The participants believe that individual decisions and morality play a part in how corruption has been allowed to spread. The recommendations for tackling corruption range from tougher legislation and its enforcement to setting an example personally and making the right choices. There were also insights provided by mostly elite participants of progress already made in the field of corruption. Finally, the participants outlined an interesting discussion into the role of fear in corruption, which they believe motivates both corrupt exchanges, but can also be utilised in displays of courage, especially by the investigative press. The following chapter explores the ideas of reasoning behind corrupt exchanges and brings more depth into the concepts explored by the participants in this section.

Chapter 10: Reasoning and Reporting

10.1 Introduction

This chapter is situated in the middle of the empirical section of the thesis, in order to combine the recurring ideas about the general causes of corrupt behaviour in Slovakia, with opinions on the likelihood of reporting corruption. The nodes within this category therefore relate to two avenues of investigation: 'Reasons for corruption' and the respective child nodes: 'bureaucracy', 'culture norm', 'deficiency of services', 'low living standard', 'lack of morals', 'legislative deficiencies', 'mentality of people' and 'Soviet legacy'; and 'Reporting corruption' and its respective child nodes: 'Scepticism', 'Unlikely to report', 'Where to report' (as seen in category structure below, in Figure 10.1).

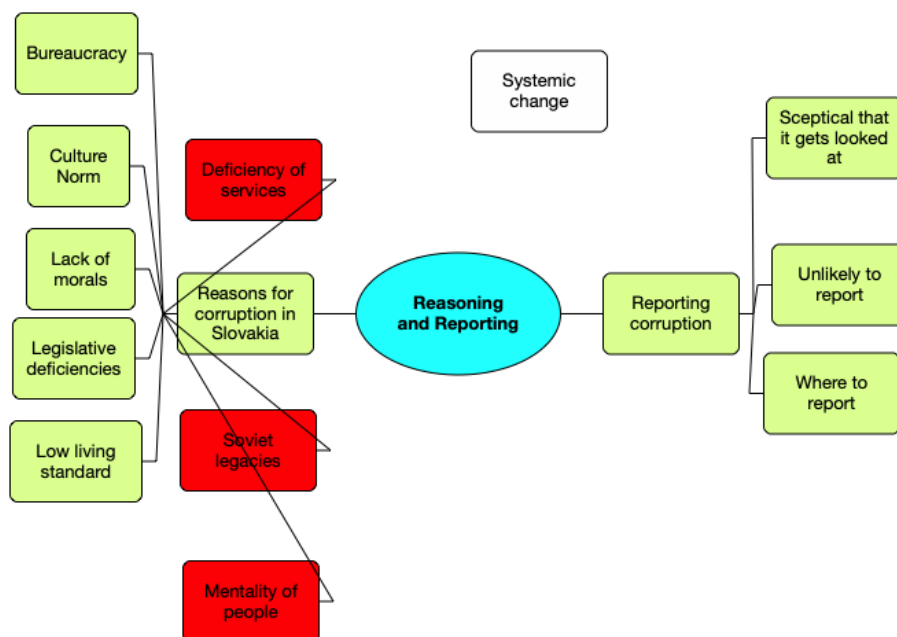


Figure 10.1
Visual presentation of the category Reasoning and Reporting. The bright blue bubble represents the category, the red boxes represent nodes with a high number of references (over 40), and green boxes represent nodes with a moderate to low number of references (under 40).
Source: Author

The chapter itself addresses, in a sequential fashion, the perceived causes of corruption and their knock-on effect on the perceived willingness to report corruption to the authorities- and, by proxy, the trust of the participants in the authorities. The chapter addresses the overarching RQ (*To what extent is the theoretical difference between grand and petty corruption reflected in the*

real-life understanding of corruption in Slovakia's health care?), as well as RQs 1 and 2 (*How does awareness of grand corruption inform/justify individual engagement in petty corruption? And vice versa*) by juxtaposing individual opinions on causes of corruption with views on the interaction between grand and petty corruption (RQ1&RQ2). Due to the high frequency of mentions of problems of the 'system' that I registered when conducting initial data immersion and manual analysis, the category also includes a floating idea of the node 'Systemic change', in order not to lose touch with any contextual factors while conducting analysis (as seen in Figure 10.1). Generally, the analysis follows the sequential structure of analysing individual child nodes and conducts word frequency searches, as well as presents full phrases for analysis, including anecdotal evidence.

The section pays special attention to the outlining of legislative deficiencies as understood by the participants, as this is a trend that has also arisen within the Category Gratitude Payments. I provide points of comparison with published guidelines on corruption, as advertised by the government on the website 'Prevenca Korupcie' (opis.gov.sk), which is a special platform created by the government to make information and legislation on corruption accessible in both form and language to the populace. This platform is used primarily to describe the laws themselves in laymen's terms for the populace and exists for those not trained in law to derive their own understanding of legislative provisions in place. Interestingly, even with this concession, there is a stark difference between the understanding of the participants of what constitutes a bribe/corruption, and the legislation in place.

Due to the similarity of content (such as references to behaviour based on values held by individuals or integrity) between the child nodes 'mentality of people' and 'lack of morals', I collated these into one section of analysis. It is important to reiterate here that corruption is a morally and ethically loaded phenomenon (Clarke 1983, Bracking 2007, Rothstein and Eek 2009, Morris and Klesner 2010, Bohn 2013, Berkovich 2015) and investigating the understanding of the participants on this front is therefore integral to creating a holistic picture of understanding in real life. The second part relating to reporting corruption outlines the majority of views that corruption is very unlikely to get reported,

the reasons behind this understanding, as well as awareness of the reporting mechanisms in place.

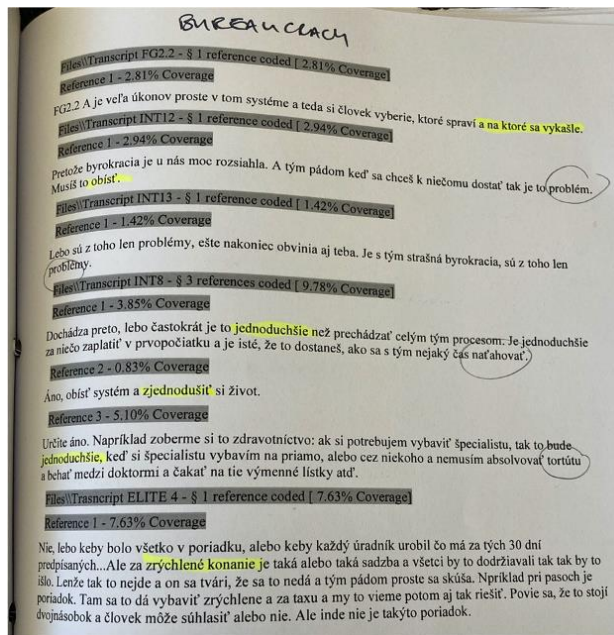
From an initial word frequency analysis, as seen in Figure 10.2, of the parent node 'Reasons for corruption in Slovakia', a trend appears that is visible throughout the different branches of the child nodes as well- the prevalence of the word 'people' in the participant understanding of reasons behind corruption. It is worth bearing in mind, therefore, the common denominator of all reasons the participants mention as the causes of corruption, is the awareness that it is 'people' who are at the centre. This points to the participant awareness of factors such as systemic problems, lack of funding or resources, or historical attitudes passed down the generations playing significant parts in corrupt behaviour, but also of the fact that all of these are man-made and dependent on people's choices and decisions. The associated verbs such as 'to want' or 'to arrange' along with language such as 'everyone', 'everything' and 'possibilities' points to the human capacity for ambition and a wish to get ahead of the rest, but also to the high level of permeation of society by corrupt practices.



Figure 10.2 Word frequency cloud of node 'Reasons for corruption in Slovakia' set to 30 words, translations embedded in red by author.
Source: Author

10.2 Bureaucracy

One of the themes that arose from the participants being asked the question: ‘Why do you think that corruption is so widespread in Slovakia?’ or alternatively ‘What conditions do you think corruption needs to be able to thrive in Slovakia?’ was the idea of excessive bureaucracy. As seen in Examples 10.1 and 10.2, the theme of bureaucracy obstructing administrative processes is also joined with the idea of trying to make life ‘easier’ for oneself.



Bureaucracy

FG2.2

And there are just so many steps embedded in that system so one has to choose **which ones not to give a damn about**.

INT12

Because bureaucracy is too widespread here. And so if you want to get to something, it's a problem. You have to **go around it**.

INT13

Because there's just problems out of it and in the end you end up getting charged yourself. It's really bad bureaucracy and there's just trouble ensuing.

INT8

Oftentimes **it is easier to do this [corruption]** than go through that whole system. **It's easier to pay for something on the off set** and there's a certainty that you get what you want than spend time trying to get there the hard way.

Yeah, it's about circumventing the system, **making your life easier**.

Definitely. For example, take health care: if I need to get myself a specialist, **it would be easier if I get that specialist directly or through someone I know and I don't have to undergo the torture and go back and forth with doctors, and referring letters and so on.**

ELITE4

No, because that would all be fine if all administrative workers did what they are supposed to do in the 30 prescribed days... and to be told that for **expedited proceedings** this is the fee and if they stuck to it then that would be fine. But that's not how it is and they pretend that it cannot be done and so you start trying the alternatives. For example with passports there's order. You can either get it done in an expedited manner for a fee and that's how it can be dealt with. You're told this will cost you double the normal price and you can decide whether that's what you want to do or not. But elsewhere it's not this clear and ordered.

Examples 10.1 and 10.2 Manual coding node ‘Bureaucracy’, translation by author; orange highlighted text represents the yellow highlighter. Source: Author

Bureaucracy and red tape are a notoriously rampant issue in Slovakia, with the Institute for Economic and Social Analysis (INESS) quoting over 222 hours spent by entrepreneurs on bureaucratic tasks on average⁵⁴. This type of difficulty with bureaucratic tasks that are extremely time-consuming is most likely also why business and entrepreneurship are listed as the highest perceived area of corruption in Slovakia (see Chapter 2) right before health care. It would make sense for corruption to be rampant in an environment where expediency might be required for businesses to be able to function and make a profit. It is therefore not surprising that, demographically, all the participants who have picked out the theme of bureaucracy so prominently are either entrepreneurs themselves or involved with the study of business and entrepreneurship. The participants' understanding of corruption and its prevalence is bound to be influenced and shaped by their own experiences and by their own surroundings. The idea of business being one of the sectors with the greatest levels of corruption in Slovakia is supported by independent polls and research presented in Chapter 2. The figures presented there suggest that business and health care continuously occupy the top two rankings of sectors affected by corruption. The language used by the participants here is also suggestive of corrupt practices being excused and seen as almost a reasonable solution to an unpleasant situation. The participants talk about 'problems', 'trouble', 'torture' and 'the hard way' as impressions of working within the confines of the system. The idea of bureaucracy being a significant factor in the understanding of corruption and partaking in corruption is also congruent with the existing theory and literature on informal practices and *blat* (Heidenheimer 1970, Ledeneva, Lovell et al. 2000, Ledeneva 2009, Baez-Camargo and Ledeneva 2017), which are outlined often in these categories as theoretical grounding for justifying a lot of these ideas in real life. The main ideas encompassed in theory of *blat* and informal practices in the Soviet era are those of circumventing the system which is stagnant, does not deliver, and is Kafka-esque to navigate in its amounts of stamps, referrals, and other bureaucratic tasks. These often involve several

⁵⁴ For more details, please see: <https://www.trend.sk/financie/byrokracia-slovensku-podnikatel-nou-zabije-222-hodin> [last accessed 1/2/2021]

Catch-22 situations, where a confirmation from one bureau is often required to get a sign off from another, which can refuse to perform the task if there is any deviation in formatting of documents, or there are any extenuating circumstances. Therefore, circumventing the system which does not provide remediation within its bounds is one of the themes explored by the participants. However, it is worth mentioning that only 4 participants of the whole sample (10%) made the explicit connection between corruption and bureaucracy, which is indicative of other reasons having greater bearing on the participants' understanding of causes of corruption.

10.3 Culture norm

The 'Culture norm' node denotes the participants' views on corrupt behaviour having gotten ingrained in everyday life and culture to the extent that it has become normalised behaviour. Previous literature suggests that corrupt behaviour is indeed significantly a cultural problem, however, such theoretical assumptions do not indicate direct causality between culture and corruption, and are often accompanied by exploration of the 'logic' behind the corruption (Giordano and Hayoz 2013, Warburton 2013, Kaufmann, Hooghiemstra et al. 2018). Having spent several years researching the problematic and having interviewed my participants for this study, the origins for corrupt behaviour seem to require a more complex answer comprising of several interacting reasons, rather than one. This is also why many of the answers within this category contain several facets of reasoning and several participants are coded against multiple nodes as a result. Within the 'culture norm' node, the participants utilise language that is evocative of corruption gaining a specific place in the culture of the society that is akin to 'tradition', 'custom', a 'norm', or seen as 'ubiquitous'. The participants speak of 'acceptability' by society, of the 'genetics' of society containing corrupt behaviour, of corruption having taken 'root' and as a result of 'social pressure' it has become 'tolerated' and 'taught'. The participants make a point of emphasising the role of trust in the

healthcare system, as well as role of trust in the quality of care received. The role of trust in corrupt behaviour has been explored in literature before and there is indication of trust playing a significant role in people’s behaviour (Rothstein and Eek 2009, Morris and Klesner 2010, Batory 2012) towards official structures and authority. The word frequency cloud in Figure 10.3 below shows once again the prominent position of ‘a person’ in people’s explanations of how corrupt behaviour has become ingrained in culture. It is visibly connected with the words ‘normal’, ‘corruption’, ‘problem’, ‘society’, ‘again’, as well as ‘rooted’, and ‘everyone’. At a glance the trends of used language clearly shows the interactive nature of corrupt behaviour with the pressures of society in the participant understanding. One participant emphasised from her own experience with her PhD supervisor, who was of very little help to her, that even though she felt unsupported, she still felt she had to get her supervisor something at the end of her studies as a thank you: ‘It’s interesting how ubiquitous this is now, that even if the person does fuck all for you, you still have that feeling that you should get them something...it’s this social norm that dictates it’ (INT4).



Figure 10.3 Word frequency cloud of the node ‘Culture norm’ set at 30 words, translations embedded in red by author. Source: Author

23 out of 24 participants within this node agreed that corruption has the signs of being a cultural norm in society, which is nearly 100% of all views coded against this node. This indicates the potency of the culture norm view - over a half of the entire study sample thought this was the reason behind corruption in Slovakia; or at least one of the reasons. Interestingly, when cross tabulated with demographic features, 18 out of these participants were university educated, 5 high school educated, and one primary school educated. This would point to greater levels of education creating a more pronounced view of corruption as embedded within society through tradition and custom, or, inversely, to a more apologetic stance on why corruption takes place, focusing on cultural norm rather than on individual agency. However, as mentioned already, several of these views are incomplete and several of these participants expressed views on reasons behind corruption that were coded against various nodes, not just the culture norm node.

Interestingly, it was females over 50 (7 of them) that constituted the greatest demographic group by age and gender to contribute to this node. There was a total of 14 females who contributed to this node, as opposed to 10 males, scattered relatively evenly across all age ranges. This could potentially point to a greater engagement with this justification for corrupt behaviour by females and especially females in this given age group.

The language utilised by the participants included the following phrases, relating to social/cultural norm as the root cause of corruption:

- Akceptácia spoločnosťou (**acceptance by society**), byť akceptovaný spoločnosťou (**to be accepted by society**)
- Súčasť kultúry (**a part of culture**), spoločenská norma (**a cultural norm**)
- Normálne (**it is normal**), normálny štandard (**it's a normal standard**), všetci to berú normálne (**everybody considers it to be normal**), považujeme to za normálne (**we all take it to be normal**)
- Spoločenský tlak (**social pressure**), spoločnosť je celá blbo nastavená (**the society as a whole is stupidly set up**)
- Pozostatok z tej minulosti (**it's a remnant of the past**)

- Kultúrna norma (it's a cultural norm), kultúrny problém (a cultural problem), spoločenská kultúra (a social culture)
- Zakorenené (it is rooted in/ deeply rooted), pramení to z nejakej zvyklosti (it stems from a custom of some kind), vychádza to z nejakej tradície (it comes from some kind of tradition)
- Nás to naučili naši rodičia (we were taught to do it by our parents)
- Zvyknutí proste (we are simply used to it), väčšina našich detí je zvyknutá uplácať (most of our kids are used to bribing)

It is apparent from this selection of phrases that participants do associate the presence of culture and societal pressure with the shape corruption takes today. The role of traditions and customs is emphasised, and this directly informs RQ3a and RQ3b.

10.4 Deficiency of services

One of the densest nodes for references coded (40) is the 'Deficiency of services' node. This node encompasses all opinions of participants that relate to their view that corruption is a result of a lack or a deficiency of service. Several participants did approach this question from a supply-demand viewpoint and have labelled corruption to be a 'supply' problem - that corruption exists in response to insufficient healthcare resources. Several others have also pointed to the insufficient amount of resources for healthcare such as equipment, hospitals, hospital beds or specialists ('not enough cardiologists, not enough neurologists' (INT1), 'Doctors are spread really thinly' (INT13)). The idea of doctors being spread thinly is supported by recent research (HPI 2014), whereby although specialists in numbers seem to be filled over capacity on paper (health insurance companies quote these to be filled to 205% capacity in 2014), there are problems with accessing these professionals, especially the following

specialties: cardiology, immunology, diabetic clinics, rheumatology, and endocrinology. The main problem seen to be causing this is the fact that any surgery or clinic can dictate their own opening hours, which are arbitrary, and access to specialists is also diminished by their multiple places of employment- i.e. several doctors work not only in state hospitals and polyclinics, but also in private practices (HPI 2014). Additionally, there is also a significant trend of doctors emigrating, causing brain drain that has been on the rise since the 90s (Chrancokova, Weibl et al. 2020). The participant responses support this view: ‘The doctors are leaving and the rest are not managing the demand...’ (FG1.5); ‘I think it’s always money...they [Slovakia] have a real problem with brain drain and doctors moving abroad...[medicine] is valued as a profession but financially devalued’ (ELITE7). Brain drain is not only the issue of emigration but also of the rapidly aging trend of healthcare professionals, with the average age of a doctor increasing by 2.5 years in the last ten years and the demographic of 60+ doctors increasing significantly (HPI 2014). Over half of GPs were working into their retirement age in 2013 (Beňová 2014). Doctors are not the only problematic group within health care, the lack of nurses is also alarming in Slovakia, with 5.8 nurses per 1000 inhabitants in 2012 and the OECD average being 8.8 nurses per 1000 inhabitants (HPI 2014). It appears, therefore, that the number of qualified workers is decreasing or in danger of diminishing further by nature of retirement and the long-term trend for doctors specifically is that of emigration outweighing immigration of healthcare professionals (Mužik 2014, Pažitný 2014).

Several participants also alluded to deficiency of services not only within health care but in all public sectors as a running theme, specifically in nurseries and pre-schools: ‘It was the same when you were kids, Dlhé diely (part of Bratislava) didn’t have any preschools, there was just one’ (FG4.2); ‘Now education has also come into the mix, especially because of lack of preschools (FG4.4)’. This idea of deficiency or lack is clearly depicted in the word frequency search in Figure 10.4 overleaf, where the word itself is repeated 8 times in total among the participants included in this node (17 participants in total). Interestingly, another trend that is quite obvious and comes across in the discourse is the turning to private establishments as one of the alternatives explored by the populace.

lack of resources has to be navigated and often the price involved in a bribe may even be competitive to that of a private clinic. Private clinics are in fact seen to be one of the potential sources of revenue for the country and as one of the solutions to the supply-demand problem, with over 9% of all surgeries being located in private clinics as of 2014 (HPI 2014) and with over 73% of these private clinics belonging to big chains such as ProCare, Wesper or Medcentrum; many of which are owned by financial groups such as PENTA, which also owns several news outlets and has been associated with several corruption scandals in the country, including the 2012 Gorila scandal (see Chapter 5). PENTA's director, Jaroslav Haščák, has in fact been arrested recently to face charges of bribery and corruption of government officials⁵⁵. It appears that while private clinics are on the rise, their association with financial groups such as PENTA create greater room for grand corruption and monopolisation of the healthcare resource. A way to combat this and increase the standard of care in state-run hospitals has been the transformation of state-run hospitals into limited companies with the state becoming a 100% shareholder (HPI 2014). Several healthcare institutions that have undertaken this transformation have been able to acquire better equipment, resources, and professionals, and have produced better results and patient satisfaction (HPI 2014).

The language utilised in this section focused on the monetary expressions of 'salary' or 'pay' for doctors being insufficient, as well as a general problem of insufficient health care resources put in place by the 'system' and the state. More contextual information on the use of the word 'deficiency' is shown in the word tree overleaf in Figure 10.5, which picks out, besides the general importance of deficiency, one participant's view which separates petty and grand corruption conceptually- i.e. deficiency of resources causes only petty corruption. This participant's response states that it is mainly petty corruption that exists 'because there is some real deficiency of something here' (FG4.4) and their statement goes on to suggest that in the 'higher echelons the principle

⁵⁵ For more details, visit: <https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/570458-v-hacakovej-pente-zasahuje-policia/> [last accessed 16/3/2021]

is the same, but the origin of the problem is different- there we are talking about some groups which function among themselves and are giving each other some specific jobs' (FG4.4). This type of insight is explored more in Chapter 11, but the initial idea of petty and grand corruption levels functioning on the same principle is already apparent here.

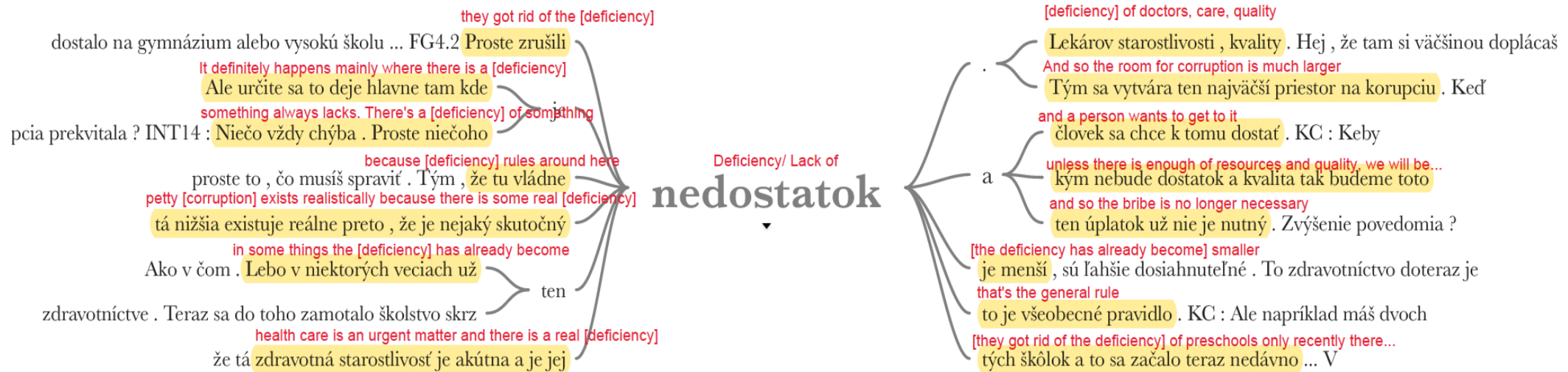


Figure 10.5 Word tree generated with the word 'lack of' in the node 'Deficiency of services', translations embedded in red by author. Source: Author

In terms of the demographic data on this node, out of the 17 participants who have highlighted deficiency of resources to be the main cause of corruption, or one of the main causes, 15 were from the Bratislava region and 13 were university educated. This points to the possibility that their view is skewed based on living in a large city which is overpopulated and may be struggling more than rural and peripheral parts of Slovakia to deliver health care services. On the other hand, it may be that these participants simply have a better insight in a region which is better at publicising and reporting on its service delivery and more prone to take feedback on board from the patients. The education levels may point to the participants having a more nuanced insight into causes of corruption, but this is not conclusive, and it is likely that there is overlap of participants responding to several nodes as possible causes of corruption. In a recent public debate on the topic of 'Bribe versus Gift' by the weekly newspaper *tyzden.sk*⁵⁶, a health care data analyst reported that data points to the lack of awareness of what constitutes standard care that everyone is entitled to. This misinformation in the public forum about what citizens are entitled to as standard level of care leads to artificial attempts to circumvent the system in place, out of distrust and scepticism.

10.5 Lack of morals, mentality of people

This section outlines the views of participants who believe that corruption in Slovakia is caused (either exclusively or among other reasons) by the behaviour of the individual, namely the lack of moral inhibitions and general mentality of the Slovak people. The nodes 'Lack of morals' and 'Mentality of people' are grouped together for analysis, due to their similarity of content, as well as the similarity of language used. The reason for their separation in the first place

⁵⁶ For full debate, visit https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V_kC6b0hxx4 [last accessed 12/12/2020]

stemmed from existing literature providing a morally and ethically loaded views of corruption (Clarke 1983, Bracking 2007, Bohn 2013) and from specific emphasis on ‘ethics’ and ‘morale’ by some participants.

The nodes together contain 64 references coded, made by 28 participants in total. Bearing in mind the total number of participants (over 40), this reinforces the notion that there is bound to be overlap across the participants who commented on these two nodes, as well as likely overlap of their contributions with those in other nodes of this category. Interestingly, there were more women than men inclined to subscribe to this understanding (19 women, 9 men) and women over 50 (8), over 60 (4) and over 20 (5) were the three largest demographic trends indicated. This could potentially show a greater engagement of women with introspection and looking for individual decisions as weight-bearing, rather than blaming a collective trend/culture in society. More research juxtaposing some targeted categories of causes to select from may be valuable to pursue in future corruption research, to see which measures certain demographics may respond to better than others. Subsequently, popular branches of health care, such as obstetrics that are more female-targeted and appear to be a source of corrupt activity pinpointed by the participants (as seen in Chapter 8), may be able to produce a specific set of effective counter measures.

The language included in these two nodes points towards a sceptical view of the populace as to the levels of morale and integrity among citizens:

- It’s about people, that they want to have something different, something more, something better (*To je proste o ľud'och, že chcú mať niečo iné, niečo viac, niečo lepšie (FG4.1)*)
- But there is no basic morale here, we all know that (*Ale tu neexistuje základná morálka, toto všetci vieme (FG4.4)*)
- There’s this brutal collective bubble there- that it’s not me doing it, it’s all of us. When you have a sick parent, what are you going to do? Will you be moralising? No, you won’t. (*Tam je brutálna bublina toho kolektívneho- že to nerobím ja, to robíme všetci. Keď máš chorého rodiča, čo spraviš? Budeš moralizovať? Nebudeš. (FG4.4)*)
- It’s in everyone that question of ethics and morale. *Je to v každom prípade otázka tej etiky a morálky (INT1)*

How can you uproot corruption, when people are this greedy? It'll always be around. It's a moral problem. *Ako sa dá vykoreniť korupcia, keď ľudia sú hamyžní. To bude vždy. Morálny problém.* (INT8)

- Everything it in people themselves...it's still about people... It's up to your own individual decisions. *Všetko je v ľuďoch... stále je to v ľuďoch, ... Je to na твоjich individuálnych rozhodnutiach* (INT9)
- It's [corruption] within everybody...the mentality of Slovaks has always been to give something out of gratitude. *Je to v každom...mentalita Slovákov bola vždy dávať niečo za vďačnosť* (ELITE2)
- We're sceptical and we're very envious. *Sme skeptickí, sme strašne závistliví* (ELITE2)
- It [corruption] comes from the natural human condition *Vychádza to z ľudského prirodzenia* (ELITE1)
- I find that to be just simply human... I don't think it will disappear because it comes from human nature *To sa mi zdá ľudské jednoducho... myslím, že to nezmizne, že to ide z ľudskej povahy* (FG4.1)
- Everything stems from this insecurity of people, that you try and would give away the very last [to be healthy]. *Všetko to vychádza z neistoty človeka, že sa snažíš a dáš všetko aj posledné...* (FG4.1)
- It's definitely within people, it was done from way back...it's within people and what is this deeply rooted is very difficult to get out of their heads. *Určite je to v ľuďoch, to sa robilo od nepamäti...je to už v ľuďoch a čo je zakorenené sa veľmi ťažko vytĺka z hláv* (INT11)
- I think it's about changing that mentality more than anything. *Ide o zmenu tej mentality skôr* (INT16.2)
- I mean it's in your subconscious... you have to change the thinking of these people. *To je tak podvedome proste...musíš zmeniť zmýšľanie tých ľudí* (INT5)
- It's that mentality and as I said before, this problem of order. Because there is no order, corruption happens. Corruption can only happen where there is lack of order. *Je to mentalita, je to nejaký zase ako hovorím poriadok. Keďže tu nie je poriadok tak korupcia môže byť len vtedy, keď nie je poriadok.* (ELITE4)

The language outlined above provides a selection of the expressions by the participants. The participants are aware of the importance of learnt and socially constructed behaviour and social pressure, as well as of personal agency and importance of individual decision-making. The language suggests an apologetic approach to explaining corruption, as if, in Machiavellian terms (Bracking 2007), the corrupt streak of mankind is inherent and would manifest itself through corrupt behaviour, regardless of other factors such as higher living standard,

wages, better systemic measures etc. It is difficult to say whether such an opinion is insightful or naïve, but it is important to emphasise that this thesis does not stand in a vacuum and participants have shown awareness of other factors interacting with this one to create the ‘perfect storm’ of conditions for corrupt behaviour to take root.

The participants have also shown insight into how mentality and moral values could be harnessed to battle corruption on a grassroots level and within civil society. The existing literature on civil society involvement is not overly flattering and suggests there are several challenges faced by civil society that lead to its lack of impact. Mungiu-Pippidi (2010) outlines problems with inactive civil society, namely the overly generic engagement with anti-corruption projects (lacking sectoral specificity), lack of funding for grassroots initiatives, the over-reliance on importing anti-corruption objectives from western societies into post-communist countries, and the confusion of the two roles of civil society. By this she means the small market for anti-corruption movements in countries such as Slovakia, leading to NGOs such as Transparency International acting as a government consultant but also as a watchdog- the two roles creating a conflict of interest. Funding is problematic due to many programmes needing a longer lifespan than oftentimes appears in the pitch for external funding to present results. The problem of EU funding not being centrally monitored but merely distributed by local governments is also emphasised, whereby the EU must accept that if the cycle of funding is not amended to provide safeguards against local government fund misappropriation, then civil society cannot act as a real auditor and monitor of public spending (Mungiu-Pippidi 2010). As a result, civil society efforts tend to grow political and paradoxically become associated with the rest of the corrupt political system once they get into the parliament (visegradinsight.eu quotes Hungarian *Momentum*, Slovakia’s *Together for the people* and the *Pirate Party* in Czech Republic as notable examples of civil society movements growing political). Mungiu-Pippidi (2010, 2013) states that civil society is much better controlled in countries with a larger number of civil society organisations, and it is obvious from the graph in Figure 10.6, that Slovakia is in the lower positions for this particular criterion.

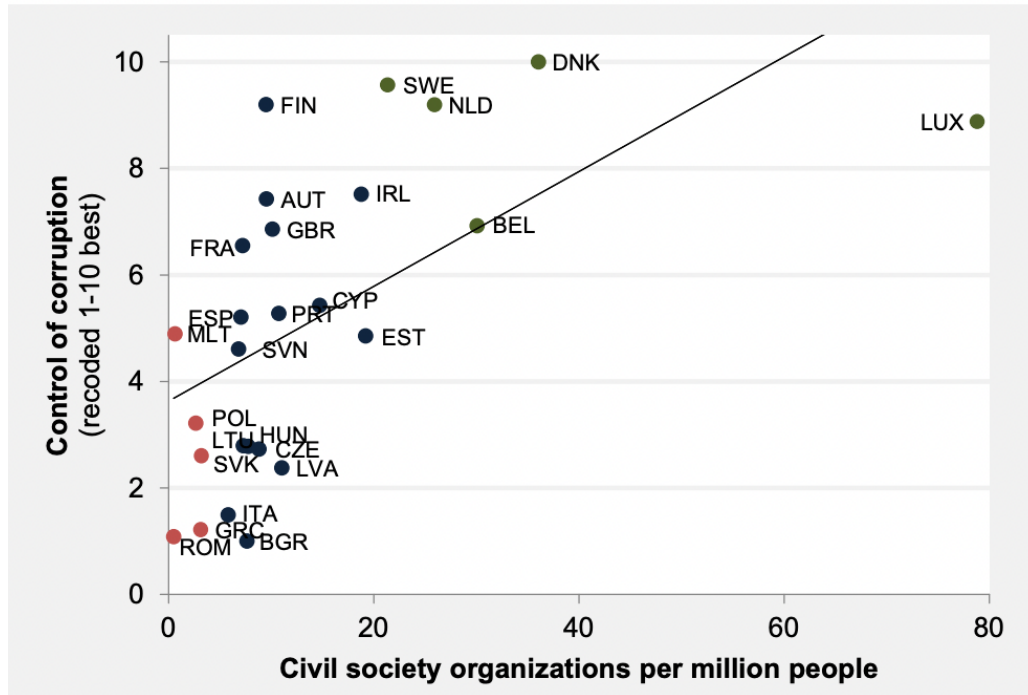


Figure 10.6 Civil Society Organisations and Corruption, Source: Quality of Government Standard Dataset, in Mungiu-Pippidi, 2013

The trend is the same with voluntary work organisations and corruption levels, where Slovakia, once again, figures in the lower parts of the depiction, suggesting a low engagement with social enterprise and grassroots initiatives (Mungiu-Pippidi 2013).

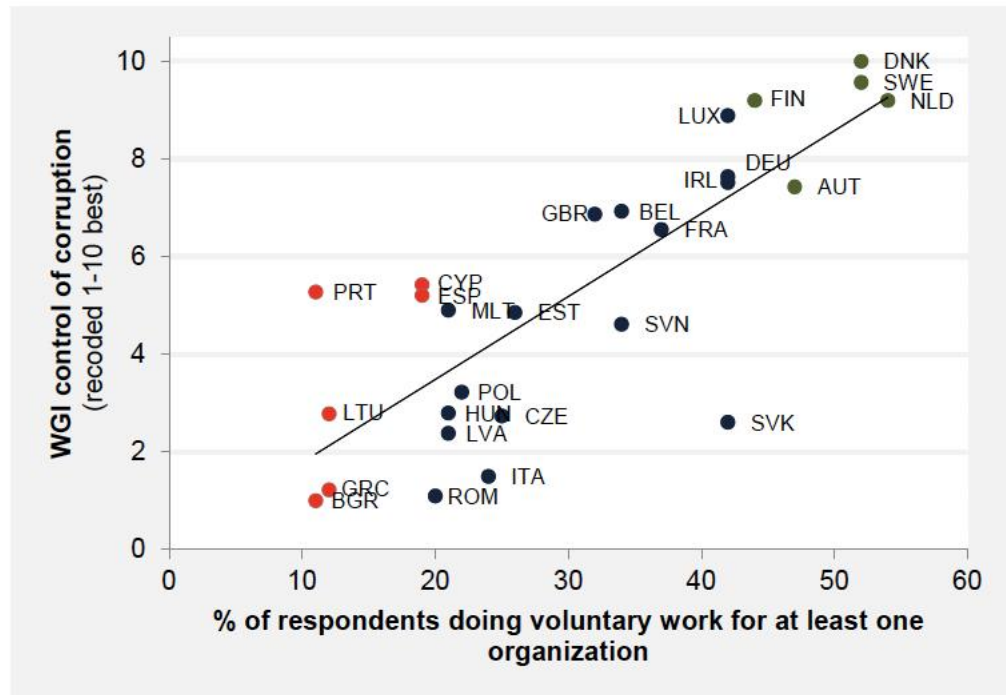


Figure 10.7 Voluntary work and corruption, Source: Standard Eurobarometer 72, in Mungiu-Pippidi, 2013

However, there were clear indications in my participant responses some 7-10 years after the publication of the existing theory on the subject, that they are aware of the importance of individual decisions and values put into action:

- ‘Just being informed won’t help, unless everyone participates in the endeavour’ (*Informovanosť by nepomohla, lebo kým sa na tom nebudú podieľať všetci*) (FG2.2)
- ‘I mean yes the post socialist countries have a different experience with corruption I suppose...but on the other hand it is absolutely a matter of choice and decision and your individual decisions’ (*Tie post socialistické krajiny majú inú skúsenosť s tou korupciou...ale na druhej strane je to aj vec voľby a rozhodnutia... Ale aj tvojich individuálnych rozhodnutí*) (INT4)
- ‘I think it’s about setting the right example yourself- that’s what you can do as an individual’ (*Ja si myslím, že ísť príkladom. To je to, čo máš robiť ako jedinec*) (FG4.4)
- ‘Yeah, it’s a question of ethics and morale that there exist some [doctors] still who will say even [to their friends] -do you know what I’m sorry I have this lady next I can’t see you before those who booked in’ (*Áno, určite áno. Zase to otázka tej etiky a morálky, že sú takí ešte doteraz čo povedia vieš čo nehnevaj sa mám tu túto starú pani beriem to porade, sú takí...*) (INT1)

- ‘It is dependent on individuals and on the level of morale of that given person- if one has a strong sense of integrity, they won’t feel the need to excuse this type of behaviour to themselves’ (*To závisí od individualít. Záleží aj na tom, aká je morálka toho daného človeka. Ak je ten človek natoľko silný, že má tú morálku zakomponovanú v tom, tak nebude si to ospravedlňovať*) (ELITE1).

This indicates that the participants are aware of the shortcomings presented by individual choice and their scepticism about believing that most people can do the right thing is palpable in their language. However, there is also a strong sense of participants realising that they are not powerless in the fight against corruption as individuals and that they realise their own role in systemic change. Such awareness counters the outlined argument that civil society is in fact inactive (Buncak, Dzambazovic et al. 2009, Nemeč 2018) and it provides a hopeful prospect of the populace taking responsibility for individual decisions in this and other social problems going forward. The Slovak Health Policy Institute has published a report on all reforms of the healthcare sector to date and indicated that while the patient organisations are on balance quite passive in their input for legislation generation (only 14 out of 300 submit amendments to laws), 77% of their amendments and notes were considered and accepted before healthcare legislation was published, which points to a high success rate of their input, when engaged (HPI 2014). This further reinforces the notion that bottom-up change is an effective tool for policy implementation and should be encouraged with anti-corruption measures. The thesis therefore contributes directly to research conducted into the theory of inactive civil society and anti-corruption measures within the EU and showcases that the sense of individual responsibility is present and under the right circumstances can be harnessed for positive change.

10.6 Soviet legacies

This node encompassed a multitude of views. The question corresponding with this node was whether the participants thought that levels of corruption had increased/decreased since the Velvet Revolution in 1989, and what their general observations were about the magnitude of corruption before and after- i.e., has it stayed the same, has it gotten worse, or is it the same level but of a different form? There were 34 participants who expressed their views on this question and who took to the general narrative of evaluating the power of Soviet legacies to impact on corruption levels or outlook today. This, again, indicates the levels of repetition and overlap of responses by participants to several nodes- the participants clearly do not think, on average, that there is only one significant cause of corruption in Slovakia. The importance of several causes interacting is further evidence of the multifaceted nature of corruption and the need for more research to be conducted into the regional nuances of corruption.

Out of the responses collated for this node, 14 participants expressed their view that corruption levels are higher than they were before 1989. Only 2 of the 14 participants were in the 20+ age range, and the rest were 40, 50 and 60+ participants, with one 80+ participant. Whilst these sample numbers are low, these results point to an increased awareness by the older groups compared to those in the younger age brackets, as gained from either increased life experience in general, or from having actually lived in Slovakia during the communist regime. However, the presence of the two younger participants also shows the ability of the younger generations to acquire insight through either conversation, research or education. Seven participants stated that they think that the level of corruption has not changed, merely the presentation or the façade of corruption. In other words, they believe that corruption levels have stayed the same, but that corruption has adapted to the new conditions of an open market, as well as capitalism in general. The idea of associating corruption levels in this region with transition economies is explored widely in literature (Ellman 2005, Wallace and Latcheva 2006, Fazekas, King et al. 2014, Arapovic, Depken et al. 2017). Research shows that the initial expectation of a linear

transition from centralised market to open market as meaning merely 'more market' and more opportunities is false. On the contrary, transition records show how unstructured economic policy involving large amounts of privatisation negatively impacted social securities, such as pensions, GDP and living wage (data shows that the share of the poor in former Soviet Union in the 90s rose from 3% to 25%) (Ellman 2005). Consequently, it gave rise to kleptocracy, increasing corruption especially on the levels of local governments (Ellman 2005). Literature suggests that some of these impacts are inevitable and that some points that give rise to corruption, such as income inequality or unemployment are the 'genetic flaws' of capitalism as a system and need to be mitigated by increased checks and balances (Kornai 2006). There are findings to support the notion that within post-communist societies, involvement with the 'black' economy, which arises as a result of too quick a transition with not enough safeguards, can be associated with lower levels of trust in the public domain and political and legal institutions (Wallace and Latcheva 2006). Such involvement in 'black' economy seems to spill into the perceptions of public life- however, it is not just black economy that impacts on corruption levels. Arapovic et al (2017) find evidence of a bilateral Granger causality between economic growth and corruption growth; however, this is limited to only one-year lags. When more than one-year lags are implemented, this causality disappears. Rather than dismissing this as a faulty model, Arapovic et al. (2017) instead make a more sinister remark that corruption is present and should be targeted by more sensitive tools of oversight, as the transmission mechanisms between increased government spending, economic growth, and corruption levels are short in nature and more elusive to capture (Arapovic, Depken et al. 2017). More evidence of the relationship between economic transition and corruption levels is provided by an investigation of the impact of EU funds on grand corruption in CEE (Fazekas, King et al. 2014). Fazekas et al (2014) find (using a sample of the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia) that there is significant impact of EU funds on institutionalised corruption, by providing additional public resources for corrupt rent seeking, and by failing to implement the necessary controls of corruption for these additional resources. In all three countries the EU fund spending was shown to be at the same level of risk (if not greater) than that of comparable national spending in the three countries (Fazekas, King et al. 2014). It is therefore astute that several of my participants

were able to pinpoint EU funds as an ideal environment for grand corruption practices, but also that they showed awareness of the impact of the transition from centralised to open market economy on corruption in Slovakia.

9 participants stated that they believe that corruption as we know it today has a direct connection to the legacies of the Soviet era and has been borne out of the previous regime. Two of these participants were in the 20-30 age range, but the rest, being all 50+, were speaking from their own direct experience or that of their immediate families or friends. Bearing this in mind, I would recommend that any research into the Soviet legacies embedded in corrupt practices of this region has a unique opportunity to be conducted in the lifetimes of participants such as those included in my research- at the point of the next generation, this unique insight and experience possessed by this generation will be largely lost. The gender split of responses for this node were 19 women and 15 men and the biggest demographic group were females over 50 (9). This continuous trend of the demographic group of females over 50 could point to greater insight displayed by women (especially highly educated women), or simply to greater confidence of expression for these women acquired by age and their social roles as mothers, colleagues, and/or leaders. It could also point to the fact that more women were involved in individual interviews than men and their responses were of greater detail, capable of encompassing more information.

As seen by the word frequency generation in Figure 10.8 overleaf, there is no strong indication of any trend other than corruption and its connection with 'more', 'always', and 'people'. What can be derived from Figure 10.8 is the consistent trend seen across the nodes in this category of participants believing that corruption is long-standing, rooted deeply in society, and can't be understood in isolation from outside factors.



Figure 10.8
Word
frequency
cloud of the
node 'Soviet
legacies' set
at 30 words,
translations
embedded in
red by author.
Source: Author

However, the node was not as straightforward to analyse as might seem at first glance of the responses outlined above. Several participants presented interesting views that added levels of cultural and regional nuance to their understanding of corruption and its historical journey within the region:

- 'I think the levels are the same, it's just the values that have changed... before you could get away with bringing a hen, now some enormous gifts are expected' (*Myslím, že úroveň je rovnaká, len zmenili sa hodnoty. Peňažné, tie dary. Sa zmenili od toho, že sliepka a teraz sa očakávajú nejaké enronmné dary*) (FG2.2)
- 'I think it's a different form of the same...doesn't mean there is less of it today, just that they have gotten better at concealing it' (*Myslím si, že je to skôr iná forma. To neznamená, že dnes je toho menej, len sa to naučili asi lepšie skrývať.*) (INT4)
- 'Especially in these post-communist countries...because of the great lack that was there, other routes to reaching goals, such as using your connections, were explored' (*Špeciálne v týchto postkomunistických krajinách, kde bol veľký nedostatok, používali sa iné cesty ako známosti*) (FG4.1)
- 'I think we used to do this from ancient times. Hens, eggs were brought to doctors and the doctor in their white coat that was something on the same level as a lawyer you know. These were those types of occupations where a person thinks you have to insure the result somehow' (*Určite to je v ľud'och, sa to robilo od nepamäti. Sliepky, vajcia sa nosili doktorom a ten doktor v tom plášti bolo to také iné ako takisto aj právnik. Sú to také zamestnania, kde si človek myslí, že to musí nejak poistiť.*) (INT11)

- 'In socialist times we had our own physicians, and it was normal to go see your own family doctor. But now you have to go and look for those doctors' (*Keď sme mali za socializmu svojho lekára, bralo sa to normálne, že ideš k svojmu lekárovi. Ale teraz si musíš tých lekárov hľadať.*)(INT13)
- 'I think in the conditions here in Slovakia it is somehow expected and maybe it's fear which still remains here from that previous time' (*Práve to som hovoril, že u nás v podmienkach Slovenskej republiky sa to nejako očakáva a možno je to strach, ktorý tu ešte pretrváva z bývalej doby.*) (ELITE1)
- 'Let's posit the question what era we are talking about here. We have that up until '89, from '89 until the EU accession and after. And where is corruption greatest? I think it is from '89 to the EU accession time' (*Položme si otázku od koľko do koľko rokov. Éra do 89, éra od 89 a teraz éra od EU. A kde tá korupcia je najväčšia? Podľa mňa je to v tom období od 89 po vstup do EU.*) (ELITE5)
- 'I think it stems from Slovakia's history. Communist stuff aside, I think it probably stems a lot from the issues Slovakia had in the 90s as well. Where the judiciary might not be particularly looked fondly upon and particularly trusted... there's quite a lot of distrust still' (ELITE7)
- 'I think it is with the accession the EU that there's more of it now' (*To je aj tým vstupom do EU a teraz mám pocit, že je toho viac.*) (FG1.2)
- 'It used to be a sort of smaller scale and privatisation of property has just allowed it to grow...same with grants' (*Toto súkromné vlastníctvo to umožnilo ten vznik korupcie. A čo z počutia viem, tak je to vždy tak, že grant sa musí tak navýšiť aby sme boli niekomu vďační a peniaze sa tak prelejú. Tak sa to proste robí.*) (INT14)
- 'I think that as far as political secrets go, which were at that time common, or more the fact that politics is very much dependent on different areas such as health care and education and so I think the impact may be higher... from my own research I see the impact of that socialist idea of a doctor or health care in general when they were put up on a pedestal, made into an ideal- and these people are still milking this image...' (*Ale čo sa týka tých politických tajností, ktoré tu boli podľa mňa bežné, alebo tak že politika súvisí s tými rôznymi oblasťami ako je zdravotníctvo a školstvo tak si myslím, že ten vplyv je tam väčší. A tým, že ja sa venujem tiež zdravotníctvu, tak vidím ten dopad takej tej socialistickej idej ako lekára alebo zdravotníctva celkovo, kedy z nich bol spravený taký ideál, piedestál- že doteraz z toho tie osoby čerpajú*) (INT4)

The language above presents several intriguing ideas about the development of corruption in Slovakia and its connection to the previous regime. As previously mentioned, theory on this subject frequently links corruption and informal practices in post-Soviet societies to the previous regime and practices of *blat* and informal payments (Ledeneva, Lovell et al. 2000, Heidenheimer 2009, Ledeneva 2009, Baez-Camargo and Ledeneva 2017). 7 participants have expressed that corruption is the country's 'inheritance' (FG3.1) or a 'remnant'

(16.2) from the previous regime, speaking of a ‘definite’ connection between the two (INT5). However, given the number of participants who reacted to this node (34), this is only a fifth of the participants who make a direct causal link. More often the idea expressed by the participants is that corruption was always present, but it has had the opportunity to grow more rampant due to the opening of the markets and also due to the opportunities to deal with supranational bodies and budgets (such as the EU funds). It is difficult to ascertain what corruption looked like exactly in communist times, but there seems to be an understanding among the participants that it was more “innocent” or somehow acceptable. On the other hand, nowadays with all the opportunity for growth, it has become more detrimental to society. Only two participants have commented that they think the levels of corruption are ‘appropriate’ for the time and opportunity presented before and after ‘89- in other words, that corruption has not changed at all, but has done well to adapt to the imaginary borders created by material opportunities.

The most important observations, however, were those of the medical profession itself within corruption. This involved considering not only how corruption levels have changed, but how the scope of the profession has allowed them to thrive pre and post ’89 in health care. The observations made point to the status of the doctor as highly respected and for corrupt practices having arisen out of a position of fear and reverence towards the profession from times that arguably predate the communist regime. Doctors and lawyers (as well as priests) are often portrayed as persons of great importance in the community in popular cinema and literature⁵⁷ and these images are likely to have stuck with

⁵⁷ For example, the famous work by J. Kalinčiak from the 19th century, *Reštavrácia*, where a powerful village elder runs for re-election and invites the whole village for a meal in his village establishment, trading food for votes; or the cult tv series *Nemocnica na okraji mesta* (The hospital on the edge of town) where the national artist Ladislav Chudík plays the upstanding Dr Sova, a model of success and integrity for generations to come. Even the Czechoslovak comedy hit *Slunce Seno* (The sun and the Hay) from the 80s with several sequels portrays doctors and educated folk as pinnacles of respect in the village- at one point there is a competition among neighbouring families as to whose daughter has married better: ‘If you get the engineer, then we are going to get a doctor!’

the populace and have been passed down the generations by tradition and rearing. While this is difficult to confirm for certain and it would be straying into the realm of anthropology and culture studies, it is an intriguing concept to consider the impact of tradition and popular culture on the understanding of corrupt practices, and by proxy on the lasting impression of some practices (gratitude payments and gifts) being more acceptable than others (bribes). The lasting impact of communism on the culture of values and survival has also been shown with statistical significance in post-communist countries (Sandholtz and Taagepera 2005). It is apparent that cultural factors and their development under communist regimes do have some impact on corrupt behaviour development and should not be disregarded. In some cultures, like the Nauru, it has been suggested that tradition and culture can even cause corruption (Atkinson and Silverman 1997, Kun, Kun et al. 2004). However, a deeper study of cultural traditions and country-specific popular culture of cinema, theatre, and literature should be given more emphasis in future research into corruption as possible paramount factors impacting on the development of corrupt behaviour. Recently, Slovakia has been producing several popular films wrestling with its post-communist past and also with its corrupt culture of the 90s, such as *Únos*, *Kandidát*, *Učiteľka*, and others, and this is indicative of the theme of corruption being very much alive in the public discourse.

10.7 Legislative deficiencies

This node, while only containing the reactions of 12 participants directly, has semantically spanned across several different categories, and participants often made references to their understanding of the law. Out of the 12 participants who considered the lack of legislation or lack of law enforcement to be the primary or at least a central reason for corrupt behaviour, 10 were university-educated. This trend potentially points towards greater level of information forming the understanding of corruption within the educated classes and within the sample of this study (40+) participants, a quarter of participants subscribing to this view is not insignificant. In literature on this, Lee et al. (2013) find that risk takers are less likely to view bribes as ‘seriously wrong’, whereas the opposite is true for the risk averse. Increased education levels and interest in politics is also associated with the feeling that bribery is not justified, which points furthermore to the idea that cultural factors, as well as demographic factors, impact on the understanding of corruption (Lee and Guven 2013). My research was unable to uncover any demographic data attached to reports of TI or other watchdogs, who construct polls among the general population, so it is left to future research to confirm or disprove the trend exhibited here.

The opinions and understanding of the participants were spread across several nodes and under specific language, such as ‘law’, ‘right’ or ‘legislation’. I have performed a word search query across all nodes using these three words and their derivatives to showcase the language used by the participants. This is visible in Example 10.2 overleaf and is representative of the more detailed language used in this particular node as well: ‘the rule of law is failing’, ‘we need to make sure that the laws are set up properly’ or the general awareness that the laws to curb corruption do indeed exist but lack follow through with enforcement and punitive measures. One participant also expressed the view that laws themselves are insufficient and regulatory bodies such as the medical council should step in with their own disciplinary measures, as should a basic pride of professionals to feel that there are rules within their profession that should be respected (FG4.1). Another participant pointed out that the main legal deficiency in Slovakia is the lack of law on lobbying. As a result, a lot of activity that may be recognised abroad as lobbying is labelled as corrupt (ELITE4).

<p>Eiles\Transcript_ELITE1 - § 1 reference coded [0.13% Coverage] Reference 1 - 0.13% Coverage</p>	<p>'that my faith in the functioning of the legal system in Slovakia and the police'</p>
<p>že moja dôvera vo fungovanie právneho systému na Slovensku a polícia</p> <p>Eiles\Transcript_ELITE2 - § 1 reference coded [0.10% Coverage] Reference 1 - 0.10% Coverage</p>	<p>'From a legal standpoint, both cases are taken to be...'</p>
<p>Ale viem, že z právneho hľadiska sú oba prípady brané</p> <p>Eiles\Transcript_ELITE5 - § 1 reference coded [0.13% Coverage] Reference 1 - 0.13% Coverage</p>	<p>'ELITE5: Let's take the law. To what extent of resources is this...'</p>
<p>ELITE5: Zoberme si zákon. Do koľko finančných prostriedkov je</p> <p>Eiles\Transcript_FG4 - § 2 references coded [0.05% Coverage] Reference 1 - 0.02% Coverage</p>	<p>FG4.1: 'But according to the law it is...'</p>
<p>FG4.1: Ale podľa zákona je to...</p> <p>Reference 2 - 0.02% Coverage</p>	<p>FG4.2: 'According to the law it is corruption, yes. But...'</p>
<p>FG4.2: Podľa zákona je to korupcia, áno. Ale</p> <p>Eiles\Transcript_FG4.1 - § 3 references coded [0.15% Coverage] Reference 1 - 0.05% Coverage</p>	<p>FG4.1: 'But by the law it is...'</p>
<p>FG4.1: Ale podľa zákona je to...</p> <p>Reference 2 - 0.04% Coverage</p>	<p>'Everything cannot be regulated through the law only. Yes, the laws should be adhered to, of course...'</p>
<p>nie všetko regulovať len cez zákon. Zákony sa majú dodržiavať samozrejme</p> <p>Reference 3 - 0.05% Coverage</p>	<p>'They did it right. In terms of the law and some sense of ethics'</p>
<p>urobili to správne. V zmysle zákona a v zmysle nejakej etiky</p> <p>Eiles\Transcript_FG4.2 - § 3 references coded [0.26% Coverage] Reference 1 - 0.09% Coverage</p>	<p>'I wouldn't take that to be corruption... FG4.2: 'By the law, yes, it is corruption. But...'</p>
<p>nebrala ako korupciu...</p> <p>FG4.2: Podľa zákona je to korupcia, áno. Ale</p> <p>Reference 2 - 0.09% Coverage</p>	<p>'...it is basically a thank you, but by the law it should already be...'</p>
<p>je vlastne pod'akovanie, ale podľa zákona by to už mal byť</p> <p>Reference 3 - 0.09% Coverage</p>	<p>'...two problems I think, even though according to the law it is one problem.'</p>
<p>dva problémy aj keď podľa zákona je to jeden problém.</p> <p>Eiles\Transcript_INT1 - § 1 reference coded [0.03% Coverage] Reference 1 - 0.03% Coverage</p>	<p>'an aunt...basically someone, who they have the right to put first, because'</p>
<p>teta... proste niekto, koho majú právo svojím spôsobom si uprednostniť, keďže</p> <p>Eiles\Transcript_INT10 - § 1 reference coded [0.13% Coverage] Reference 1 - 0.13% Coverage</p>	<p>'I don't have the evidence from a legal standpoint, and I can only say that...'</p>
<p>ja tie dôkazy nemám z právneho hľadiska, a môžem povedať len</p> <p>Eiles\Transcript_INT5 - § 2 references coded [0.23% Coverage] Reference 1 - 0.12% Coverage</p>	<p>'wouldn't give. But they were obliged by the law. Nothing is going to help in this case, because who wants...'</p>
<p>nedal. Ale boli povinní zo zákona. Nepomôže nič, lebo kto chce</p> <p>Reference 2 - 0.10% Coverage</p>	<p>'...my friends went to entrance exams into law and even the bribe didn't...'</p>
<p>známi išli na prijímačky na právo a ani ten úplatok nevedel</p> <p>Eiles\Transcript_ELITE 4 - § 3 references coded [0.28% Coverage] Reference 1 - 0.09% Coverage</p>	<p>'because it is the law that is failing. The legislature.'</p>
<p>Je to preto, lebo zlyháva právo. Legislatíva. KC: Čiže nie sú</p> <p>Reference 2 - 0.09% Coverage</p>	<p>'we lack a law on lobbying in Slovakia.'</p>
<p>potom nám ako Slovensku chýba zákon o lobizme. A to v</p>	
<hr style="border: 1px solid gray;"/>	
<p>Eiles\Transcript_FG4.2 - § 5 references coded [0.80% Coverage] Reference 3 - 0.16% Coverage</p>	<p>'...so that there is some legislation. I mean, legislation is there, but any checks on it...'</p>
<p>ale aj nejaká legislatíva. Takto, legislatíva vlastne aj je, ale kontrola</p> <p>Reference 5 - 0.16% Coverage FG4.2 Presne tak, legislatíva je ale trest nie.</p>	<p>FG4.2: 'Precisely so, legislation exists but no punishment...'</p>
<p>Eiles\Transcript_ELITE 4 - § 2 references coded [0.42% Coverage] Reference 2 - 0.21% Coverage</p>	<p>'It needs to be bottom-up, but there also needs to be legislation. It needs to be made clear, who...'</p>
<p>Ludia zdola, ale musí byť legislatíva. Musí byť jasné, že kto</p>	

Example 10.2 Text search for words 'law', 'right', and 'legislation' with translation by author. Source: Author

The insight into the problematic is clearly present, and the participants do emphasise the need for punitive measures to be as well-defined and as embedded in the legal system as the laws themselves- without punitive measures clearly stipulated, the legislation appears toothless. However, there are also obvious misconceptions about the legal specifications on corrupt behaviour among participants. For example, in the ELITE5 interview, the participant stipulates that the monetary value difference between a gift and a bribe is somewhere in the law (set at around 300 EUR). This is in fact not the official stance of the legislation. In Example 10.3 overleaf, taken from the government website opis.gov.sk, which provides the most comprehensive and intelligible guidelines on corruption for the regular citizen, corruption is in fact not clearly defined. Example 10.3, called ‘What is corruption’, admits, in the highlighted red box, that ‘corruption is not clearly defined in the legal order in terms of a unified definition that would encompass the common signs of various types of corrupt behaviour’. The very first sentence introduces corruption to the reader in presumably familiar terms and gives examples such as ‘an envelope with a certain sum, a holiday, a car, or a different type of advantage’. It is clear from this short example that corruption is comprised of several facets of behaviour and therefore further research such as this thesis conducts is necessary, in order to deepen our understanding of it. The thesis showcases that what is perceived by law to be a clear set of guidelines and definitions is often not reflected accurately in the participants’ real-life idea of corruption in practice, thus directly informing the overarching RQ (*To what extent is the theoretical difference between grand and petty corruption reflected in the real-life understanding of corruption in Slovakia’s health care?*) For example, it is apparent that the examples of gift v bribe, so laboriously differentiated between by the participants (see Chapter 8) are in fact on equal footing in the law- there is no difference between an envelope and a gift of chocolate in the eyes of the law, despite the respondents drawing this distinction clearly in Chapter 8, whereby an envelope is seen as bribery but chocolates as a gift.

Čo je korupcia

Možno ste sa s tým stretli: obálka s patričnou sumou, dovolenka, auto či iná výhoda. Správanie sa ľudí, ktorí úplatok poskytujú, ako aj tých, ktorí úplatok prijímajú, je v rozpore so zákonmi. Výsledkom toho je na jednej strane „spokojnosť“ jednotlivca nad poskytnutím neoprávnenej výhody a na strane druhej **poškodzovanie verejnosti a nezákonné finančné obohacovanie sa jednotlivca**, teda „nespokojnosť“ ostatných.

Aj keď pojem korupcia nie je v právnom poriadku presne definovaný prostredníctvom jednotnacej definície, ktorá by vystihovala spoločné znaky rozličných foriem korupčného správania sa, môžeme vo všeobecnosti konštatovať, že ide o protispoločenské a protiprávne javy vo verejnom aj súkromnom sektore, ako sú **trestné činy prijímania úplatku, podplácania, nepriameho úplatkárstva, volebnej korupcie** a niekedy aj zneužívania právomoci verejného činiteľa.

Korupcia má v celom svete spoločného menovateľa - snahu o jej zníženie, snahu o zastavenie úniku peňazí nás všetkých a ich ocitnutie sa v rukách ľudí, ktorí sa chcú protiprávne obohacovať. Slovenská republika, ako členská krajina Európskej únie, Rady Európy ako aj Organizácie pre bezpečnosť a spoluprácu v Európe, sa prijatím viacerých medzinárodnoprávných záväzkov a kľúčových dokumentov zaviazala obmedziť korupčné správanie i prejavy korupcie vo všetkých oblastiach spoločenského života. Môžeme tak urobiť spolu!

The term corruption is not clearly defined in the legal order in terms of a unified definition that would encompass the common signs of various types of corrupt behaviour. We can, however generally state that it denotes antisocial and unlawful phenomena in public and private sectors, such as crimes of accepting a bribe, bribing, indirect bribing, electoral corruption, and sometimes also the abuse of the power of a public servant.

Example 10.3 Screenshot of 'What is corruption', as explained on the government website opis.gov.sk, translation by author. Source: <https://www.opis.gov.sk/co-je-korupcia/>

This idea of conflating bribery and gift-giving is even more potent when we examine what the website says about the examples of bribes. This part of the guidelines is crystal clear and from a legal perspective there is no difference in the Criminal Code between the nature of a bribe and of a gift, given under any type of circumstances or with any goal in mind, however innocent. Example 10.4's last highlighted part (overleaf) stipulates that it is immaterial from a legal standpoint whether the bribe was given to obtain an advantage or a bare standard of any service- the very fact that an advantage is suggested or conditioned by a bribe when it comes to professional duty is in breach of the law. It would therefore appear that the popular understanding of corruption as presented by my participants, who drew lines between the acceptability of a gift and the unacceptability of a bribe, based on the timing of giving or the type of gift, do not stem from the law.

Čo je úplatok?

Úplatok je vec alebo iné plnenie majetkovej či nemajetkovej povahy, na ktoré nie je právny nárok (§131 ods. 3 Trestného zákona). Úplatkom teda môže byť:

- vec hnutelná (napr. peniaze, auto, šperk) alebo nehnuteľná (napr. pozemok, byt, nebytový priestor);
- plnenie majetkovej povahy (napr. oprava domu, prenájom bytu za zvýhodnenú cenu);
- plnenie nemajetkovej povahy (napr. pomoc pri doučovaní na prijímacie pohovory, prednostné vybavenie pasu alebo vodičského preukazu).

Na takúto vec či plnenie nie je právny nárok. Úplatok musí byť prijatý, žiadaný alebo daný si sľúbiť alebo sľúbený alebo poskytnutý v súvislosti s niektorým konkrétnym činom, ktorý patrí medzi trestné činy korupcie.

Za úplatok sa očakáva konanie porušujúce právne povinnosti konajúceho subjektu. Úplatkom teda nie je plnenie (na ktoré nie je inak právny nárok), za ktoré sa neočakáva konanie spočívajúce v porušovaní právnych povinností (napr. spisovateľ neformálne daruje svoju knihu policajtovi, aby ho zaujal).

Výška úplatku (hodnota veci alebo plnenia majetkovej povahy vyjadriteľná v peniazoch) nie je z hľadiska naplnenia znakov základnej skutkovej podstaty trestného činu rozhodujúca (napr. aj čokoláda za 1 euro).

Nie je rozhodujúce ani to, či úplatkom bolo sledované poskytnutie nezákonnej výhody, resp. výhody, na ktorú nie je právny nárok (napr. zapísanie skúšky, na ktorej sa študent nezúčastnil), prípadne ktorá niekoho zvýhodňuje oproti inému (napr. výhra vo verejnej súťaži), alebo či úplatkom bolo sledované riadne plnenie si povinností (napr. riadne vybavenie vkladu do katastra nehnuteľností). Už len samotný fakt, že niekto žiada, resp. prijme neoprávnenú výhodu za výkon svojich povinností, je porušením povinností.

A bribe is a thing or a different type of material or immaterial asset for which there is no legal right (P131, section 3 of the Criminal Code). A bribe can therefore be:

- A movable asset (e.g. money, car, jewel) or immovable (e.g. a piece of land, a flat, different premises)
- Of a material nature (e.g. fixing of a house, renting of a flat for a better rate than standard)
- Of an immaterial nature (e.g. help with study for entrance exams, preferential issuing of a passport or a drivers licence).

The amount of the bribe (i.e. the monetary value of the material asset) is not decisive from a criminal perspective (e.g. even a chocolate bar for 1EUR counts).

Example 10.4 Screenshot of 'What is a bribe', as explained on the government website [opis.gov.sk](https://www.opis.gov.sk), translation by author. Source: <https://www.opis.gov.sk/co-je-uplatok/>

It is therefore interesting to see that such distinction does not reside within the law but does reside in the popular understanding of corruption in Slovakia, as suggested by my participants (see Chapter 8). The website even provides examples of what bribery looks like, presumably to facilitate the understanding of the reader:

Podplácanie

Podplácanie (§332-§335 *Trestného zákona*) znamená sľúbiť, ponúknuť alebo poskytnúť určité plnenie majetkovej alebo nemajetkovej povahy zo strany podplácajúcej osoby, na ktoré by inak podplácaná osoba nemala nárok za to, aby podplácajúcej osobe poskytla určité výhody spočívajúce v porušení svojich povinností vyplývajúcich zo zamestnania, povolania, funkcie alebo postavenia, tzn. **aktívna korupcia, osoba podpláca.**

Príklad: štatutár stavebnej firmy sľúbi predsedovi výberovej komisie, že ak bude mestský projekt rekonštrukcie parku pridelený jeho firme, táto následne predsedovi výberovej komisie za tretinovú cenu zrekonštruuje dom.

Bribery (as defined by P332-335 of the Criminal Code) means to promise, to offer, or to provide a certain material or immaterial object from the bribing party, for which the bribed party would not normally have a legal right. This is given in order for the bribing party to be offered certain advantages in return that result in breach of duty in the workplace, official position or function, i.e. active corruption.

Example: a stakeholder of a construction company promises to the chair of a procurement committee that if a municipal project of a park reconstruction is assigned to their firm, this firm will renovate the chair's house for a third of their normal fee in return.

Example 10.5 Screenshot of 'Bribing', as explained on the government website [opis.gov.sk](https://www.opis.gov.sk), translation by author. Source: <https://www.opis.gov.sk/podplacanie/>

This principle of understanding bribery was also emphasised in a recent online debate on the topic of ‘Gift versus Bribe’ in health care, by the weekly newspaper *tyzden.sk*⁵⁸. It was made very clear from the outset that anything can constitute a bribe- from the most popular coffees and chocolates to the more ostentatious envelopes, cars, or even sponsorship gifts to certain departments that are conditioned by preferential treatment. It was also made clear that in matters of health care, the provision of health care is in fact classified as procurement of public service, and therefore the rules apply even more strictly here than elsewhere. However, and this is perhaps where the understanding of corruption in more lenient terms comes from for my participants, there are marked nuances within the application of the law. Owing to this, there is leniency applied by prosecutors in cases with trivial items such as chocolates or coffees and the prosecutor may even choose not to pursue the charges against a perpetrator like this. There is also the legal provision of ‘Active regret’ in the law, which can be applied if a perpetrator or the bribed party decide to confess pre-emptively, and their punishment can be significantly reduced or merely symbolic. It is important to point out, however, that according to these experts, both agents party to corrupt exchanges are equally culpable- i.e., the bribing party and the bribed party, for example.

The phrase uttered in the debate was that ‘not every bribe is the same and not every gift is the same’, alongside the claim that there is personal leniency in the interpretation of what is considered to be merely a ‘transgression’ and what is to be considered an outright ‘crime’. This level of leniency and room for interpretation only facilitate the tailored understanding of corruption by the participants in this study and no doubt the wider populace as well.

⁵⁸ For full debate, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vMQh8VfW0> [last accessed 12/12/2020]. Here, one public prosecutor specialising in corruption, one district judge specialising in corruption cases, a lawyer specialising in advocacy of health care corruption, a director of a pharmaceutical firm, and a healthcare analyst discussed the nuances of bribes versus gifts.

The most clear-cut examples of corruption given by the website opis.gov.sk are those relating to grand corruption and it is therefore not surprising that the participants were more likely to condemn that type of corruption more readily than petty- as the assumption is that their awareness of these is also greater and better defined.

Trestné činy súvisiace s korupciou

Trestný zákon vo svojich ustanoveniach upravuje aj **trestné činy súvisiace s korupciou**, t.j. protiprávnosť korupcie je obsiahnutá v ich skutkových podstatách.

Ide o:

- zneužívanie právomoci verejného činiteľa (§326 Trestného zákona),
- legalizácia príjmu z trestnej činnosti (§233-§234 Trestného zákona),
- machinácie v súvislosti s konkurzným a vyrovnávacím konaním (§241 Trestného zákona)
- machinácie pri verejnom obstarávaní a verejnej dražbe (§266-§268 Trestného zákona).

Crimes connected to corruption

The Criminal Code also outlines the crimes that are connected to corruption:

- The abuse of power of a public official (P326 Criminal Code)
- The legalisation of revenue from criminal activity (P233-234 Criminal Code)
- The machinations connected to tenders or public competition (P241 Criminal Code)
- The machinations connected to public tenders and public procurement (P266-268 Criminal Code).

Example 10.6 Screenshot of ‘Crimes connected to corruption’, as explained on the government website opis.gov.sk, translation by author. Source: <https://www.opis.gov.sk/trestne-ciny-suvisiace-s-korupciou/>

The level of confusion in the participants’ views on corruption from a legal standpoint, as well as their confusion as to variability of punishment, is also reflected in what the website showcases as ‘the most frequent punishments’ for corruption. There is no specification as to what example of a crime would ensue which punishment, no statistics indicating which of these is most likely or is most frequently used, and no explanation of the terminology for the reader. The severity of the top two punishments alone could potentially account for a trend in not reporting corruption out of fear of ending up without whistle-blower protection and in prison. More enlightenment of the populace could be administered by governmental sources such as this one, which would in turn facilitate a more unified understanding of corruption without this level of nuance and a greater level of visible, standard measures.

Najčastejšie tresty

Najčastejšie tresty za korupčné trestné činy, ktoré ukladá Trestný zákon sú:

- trest odňatia slobody (§46 Trestného zákona)
- peňažný trest (§56-§57 Trestného zákona - od 160Eur do 331 930Eur)
- trest prepadnutia majetku (§58-§59 Trestného zákona)
- trest prepadnutia veci (§60 Trestného zákona)
- trest zákazu činnosti (§61 Trestného zákona).

The most frequent punishments

The most frequent punishments for crimes of corruption as defined by the Criminal code are:

- Incarceration (P46 of Criminal Code)
- Monetary fine (P56-57 of Criminal Code- from 160EUR to 331 930 EUR)
- Confiscation of property (P58-59 Criminal Code)
- Confiscation of material (P60 Criminal Code)
- Ceasing of activity (P61 Criminal Code)

Example 10.7 Screenshot of 'The most frequent punishments', as explained on the government website opis.gov.sk, translation by author. Source: <https://www.opis.gov.sk/najcastejsie-tresty/>

A point of clarity within the 'Gift v. Bribe' debate was the condemnation of the notion of paying bribes to skip waiting lines or to amend appointment times. The legal experts on the panel agreed that this particular provision has already been put into law officially and appointment time arrangement has been classified as one of the fundamental medical standards of care and is therefore under no circumstances to be assigned any other fees.

1 This type of clarity facilitating the future of understanding of corruption seems
2 to be a particularly effective way of addressing the shortcomings outlined.
3 However, the government can hardly expect the population to be up to date
4 with this type of addendums, when websites such as this one containing
5 information on corruption (opis.gov.sk) go over six years without any updates or
6 publicising of changes with comprehensible examples. I was able to ask a few
7 questions live during the aforementioned debate and the panellists agreed with
8 one of my participants' views (FG4.1) that laws are not the only regulatory
9 measure available and that disciplinary action from the official bodies of
10 professions could also constitute an effective tool in curbing corruption further.
11 Some panellists even mentioned specific grassroots initiatives that were
12 undertaken by surgeries themselves, such as wearing stickers 'I don't take
13 bribes' on top of scrubs or white coats. It does seem reasonable to suggest that
14 personal initiatives such as this would also facilitate the spreading of
15 understanding among the general populace and potentially lead to amended
16 behaviour.

17 The panellists also agreed unanimously that there is no point at all to distinguish
18 between grand and petty corrupt activity in practice- from a legal standpoint,
19 corruption is one phenomenon and needs to be addressed as such. In other
20 words, one cannot solve petty corruption without addressing grand at the same
21 time, and vice versa. This was particularly relevant for the thesis and for the
22 RQs 1 and 2 as well as the overarching RQ and in some contrast to the popular
23 understanding of the phenomenon by my participants, some of whom did make
24 the petty-grand distinction and called for separate addressing of the levels (see
25 Chapter 11).

26

1 **10.8 Low living standard⁵⁹ (wage)**

2 This node denotes the opinions of participants that the low living standard of
 3 both medical professionals and the general public leads to corrupt behaviour out
 4 of material necessity to supplement existing salary or service. This node has 25
 5 participants coded against it, which suggests that it presents a popular reason
 6 for corrupt behaviour among participants. Out of these 25 participants, 19
 7 thought that low living standard was one of the key problems, which may be
 8 complemented by other, but not as pressing, causes. 17 of them are university-
 9 educated, which potentially indicates a greater level of insight into the living
 10 standard and wage situation in the healthcare sector among this demographic
 11 group. The distinction between petty and grand corrupt practices was made by
 12 the participants again, suggesting that the low living standard is only to be
 13 considered as a cause on the petty level. This outlook directly informs RQs 1 and
 14 2 and is embodied by language such as this:

- 15 • ‘The small corruption is definitely about that [low living standard]’ (*Tá malá je*
 16 *určite o tom.*) (INT13)
 17
 18 • ‘On the low level [increasing the living standard] would definitely uproot
 19 corruption’ (*Na nízkej by to podľa mňa vykorenilo*) (FG4.2)
 20
 21 • ‘They don’t have the salaries they deserve so they have to find it elsewhere’
 22 (*Nemajú proste platy a musia si to nazbierať niekde.*) (FG1.2)
 23

24 It is apparent that there is awareness among the participants of the medical
 25 profession (and others) being financially undervalued. There is also awareness of
 26 the need to incentivise professionals to not only rid them of the need to
 27 compensate for lack of salary elsewhere, but also to stop the problem with brain
 28 drain that is pointed out by one of the elite participants (ELITE7). In 2017, the
 29 statistical internet portal techmed.sk reports that out of cca 19,000 doctors
 30 graduated in Slovakia, over 4,000 work abroad (<https://www.techmed.sk/4211->

⁵⁹ This is a direct translation from the Slovak *nízka životná úroveň*, which in English is better thought of as raising the living wage, but for the purposes of transparency I have stuck with the original language translation throughout, but the reader should interpret this as low living wage.

1 [slovenskych-lekarov-pracuje-v-zahranici/](#)). The largest group (over 2,000) work
2 in the Czech Republic, second largest group (over 1,000) in Germany, and the
3 third largest group (over 300) in Great Britain. The other destinations for doctors
4 include Austria, Sweden, Norway, and other, mostly EU, countries. A Eurostat
5 report shows that Slovakia has nearly 300 inhabitants per doctor (and over 2,000
6 per one dentist), but this number does not take into consideration those doctors
7 who migrated, live and work abroad or the specialty of doctors (SKEU2016 2016).
8 In other words, while 300 per doctor may not be as high a number as other
9 countries, there is no ratio of inhabitants to GPs, to specialty doctors, to doctors
10 working in the private sector- all of which is important to consider when we
11 discuss the deficiency of services or specialists as possible causes of corruption
12 in the healthcare service. It is also important to point out that the wages of
13 doctors have in fact been increasing gradually from the 90s onwards. When in
14 2000 the average wage of a doctor was only 3% higher than minimum wage, in
15 2013 this was over 56% higher (HPI 2014). The relative wage in healthcare sector
16 has increased by the year 2013 to 116.3% of the average wage in the economy
17 generally (HPI 2014). The wages of doctors have increased to 150% of average
18 wage by the end of 2020 (platy.sk)⁶⁰. There is therefore an impetus to keep
19 increasing the wages of doctors and healthcare professionals and this would be
20 congruent with the governmental awareness of them being underpaid, which is
21 expressed by my participants. However, it is also apparent that these wage
22 increases are not perceived to have amended the situation enough to erase the
23 notion of doctors being underpaid, which comes through the language of my
24 participants.

25

26

⁶⁰ For more detailed breakdown of all healthcare worker wages as a percentage of average living wage, visit <https://firma.profesia.sk/aktuality/platove-data-zdravotnici-bezpecnost-zadarmo/> [last accessed 10/08/2021].

Population per medical doctor in selected EU countries, 2013

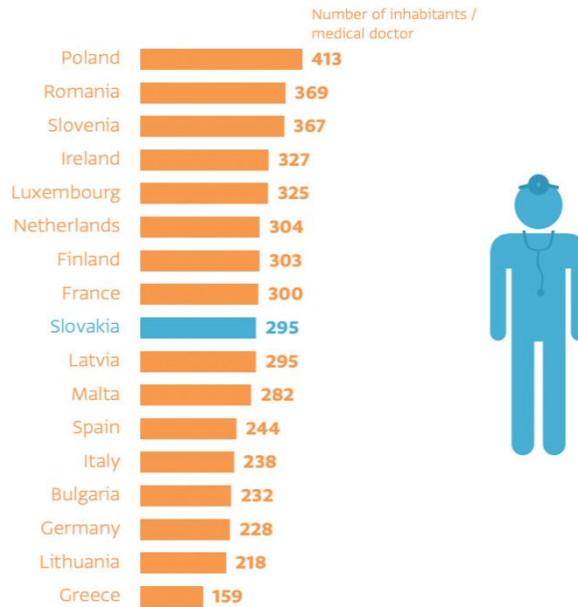


Figure 10.9 Population per medical doctor in EU, Source: Slovakia in Figures report, Eurostat 2016

1

2 It has also been suggested by research (Mungiu-Pippidi 2013) that corruption
 3 levels have the potential to increase brain-drain, as well as brain-drain
 4 potentially increasing levels of corruption by decreasing resources available. Due
 5 to the highly educated population in Eastern European countries, but also high
 6 levels of favouritism and corruption, brain-drain decreases chances of economic
 7 recovery for countries such as Slovakia and further deepens the problems of
 8 supply-demand.

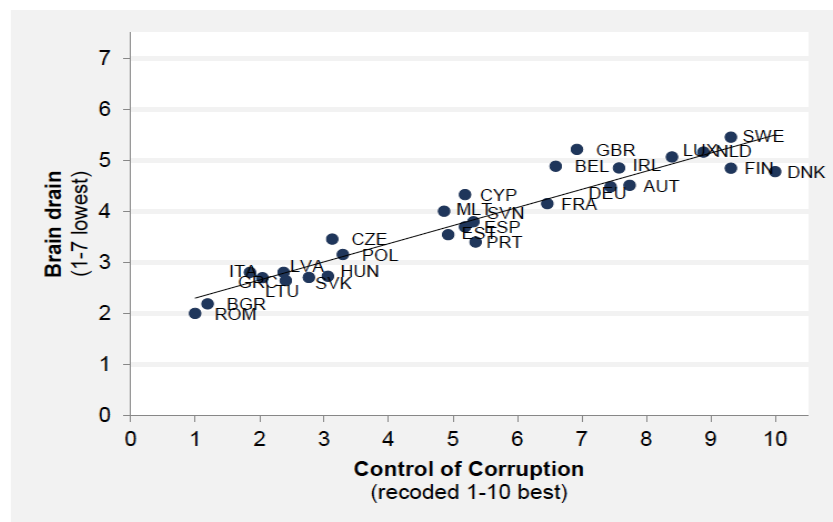


Figure 10.10 Control of Corruption in EU, Source: World Economic Forum, Global Competitiveness Report 2010-2011, in Mungiu-Pippidi 2013

1 facilitate the creation of such measures in the public sector. Guidelines inspired
2 by data presented in this thesis would ideally address general misconceptions
3 about gratitude payments being permissible, provide recommendations on
4 revitalising the healthcare sector to offer more resources and reduce waiting
5 times, and include professional healthcare boards and councils in ramping up the
6 disciplinary measures against unprofessional behaviour to restore a sense of
7 value and professional pride.

8 There was little support for the idea that low living wage is a key problem for
9 healthcare workers by the elites interviewed, but two elites working in
10 healthcare did allude to money and lack thereof being a possible incentive for
11 taking bribes or leaving the country to work elsewhere and under better
12 conditions. Several participants from the general populace also did not subscribe
13 to this view and directly said that they don't perceive the living standard to be
14 so bad in Slovakia, that it would justify corrupt behaviour. These participants
15 thought that it was rather the need to instil effective counter-corruption
16 measures with emphasis on punishments that was key. Secondly, they also
17 thought that effective curbing of corruption was a question of a person's
18 individual level of integrity and valuing of their own profession. In this sense it
19 appears that there is an impetus among the participants to perceive corruption
20 on a deeper and a more complex level of such behaviour reflecting badly on the
21 profession itself and one's personal standards should not be affected by the
22 living standards dictated by salary: *'Maybe a higher salary would plug some*
23 *holes, but this goes deeper than that. It is the personal level and standard of*
24 *the given person that is in question here'* (INT13). Another interesting point was
25 raised by a participant, viewing the living standard as not exclusively subject to
26 the governmental decisions and economic situation, but rather as a result of
27 accession to the EU: *'We used to have a fairly good living standard until we*
28 *joined the EU in the role of the EU's poor relatives...it became about comparing*
29 *how it's possible that I get this amount for the same job that someone*
30 *elsewhere [in the EU] gets paid about 5000 for?'* (INT14). This idea of a certain
31 acquired worldly perspective, shaping the understanding of the populace about
32 corruption, is worth exploring further. It is possible that the perception of the
33 living standard often gets conflated with unrealistic expectations and ambitions
34 of what one would like to receive; and this may be easier a trap to fall into in a

- 1 larger and a prosperous supranational body such as the EU. Such perceptions
- 2 may indeed alter the understanding of participants as to their entitlement to
- 3 services or standard of living, which may be correlated with their understanding
- 4 of some corrupt practices as acceptable.

1 **10.9 Reporting corruption**

2

3 This node outlines responses to the question: 'Do you think that people are more
4 likely to report corruption or not? If not, why do you think so?' It encompasses
5 general views on reporting corruption but also specific reasons that are outlined
6 in the three child nodes: 'Unlikely to report', 'Sceptical', and 'Where to report'.
7 As such, this node provides a comprehensive overview of what the participants
8 think about the levels of reporting corruption and to what extent they are aware
9 of the specifics of reporting- i.e. who and where to turn to with a particular
10 corruption query/problem. This node complements the category well, since it
11 discusses some of the same motivations for not reporting corruption that are
12 mentioned in above sections on reasons behind corruption: scepticism of the
13 populace, fear, or disengagement.

14 Out of the participants coded against the parent node 'Reporting Corruption', 15
15 state that they would definitely not report corruption, 3 would report with a
16 caveat attached to their response, such as 'if it did not directly involve me'. One
17 would report regardless of any negative effect on themselves and 5 were unsure.
18 Within the parent node, several participants mentioned the possibility of
19 anonymously reporting or reporting to the media, rather than law enforcement,
20 due to distrust in the law enforcement procedures. When looking at the numbers
21 of the calls made to law enforcement agencies, and directly to the government
22 phone line established for corruption reporting, vis a vis the number of cases
23 taken forward, I can understand where the distrust comes from (NAKA= National
24 Criminal Agency of the Slovak Republic):

Štatistika hovorov na antikorupčnú linku Úradu vlády SR

Statistics of calls to the anticorruption hotline of the Slovak government

Year	Total number of calls	Passed on to NAKA	Tabled
Rok	Počet hovorov	Postúpené NAKA	Odložené
2014	159	3	156
2015	59	3	56
2016	41	0	41
2017	96	3	93

Example 10.8 Screenshot of 'The statistics of calls to the anticorruption hotline of the Slovak government', as seen on the government website [opis.gov.sk](https://www.opis.gov.sk), translation by author. Source: <https://www.opis.gov.sk/chcete-nahlasit-korupciu-volajte-aj-na-antikorupcnu-linku-uradu-vlady-slovenskej-republiky/>

1 10.9.1 Sceptical

2 This node denotes the responses that displayed language of distrust and
3 scepticism, when participants were asked to provide their reasoning behind why
4 the populace may be unlikely to report corruption. 17 participants displayed
5 language of scepticism such as:

- 6 • We as a nation are not programmed to perceive the positives...my trust in the
7 functioning of the legal system and the police in Slovakia etc is relatively low. *My*
8 *ako národ nie sme nastavení na to vnímať pozitíva...moja dôvera vo fungovanie*
9 *právneho systému na Slovensku a polície atď je relatívne nízka. (ELITE1)*
10
- 11 • We are sceptical and terribly envious, we rely on the state, we are aggressive and
12 arrogant with one another... *Sme skeptickí a sme strašne závistliví, spoliehame*
13 *sa na štát, sme agresívni a arogantní k sebe... (ELITE2)*
14
- 15 • It's about how these cases often end and very often it's the whistle blower who
16 gets into trouble. *Ako často tieto prípady končia a veľmi často ten whistle blower*
17 *má z toho problémy. (ELITE3)*
18
- 19 • You just end up having more hassle with it...you will end up getting accused
20 yourself. *Zase s tým maš ty viac pot'ahovačiek...ešte nakoniec obvinia aj teba*
21 *(FG1.2)*
22
- 23 • That national pride really only established itself very late on with us as a nation.
24 I mean if the French are unhappy about something it's immediately visible. We
wake up only once we're neck deep in the shit. *Tá národná hrdosť u nás sa*

- 1 *etablovala až neskoro. Francúzi keď sú s niečím nespokojní je to vidno hneď. My*
 2 *až keď sme úplne v sračkách (INT1)*
 3
- 4 • And in most cases it turns against you. Maybe it's a bit of a head in the sand
 5 attitude. *A ešte vo väčšine prípadov sa to proti vám otočí. Možno je to taký postoj*
 6 *pštroša. (INT10)*
 7
 - 8 • And you keep hearing about it [corruption] and nothing is really getting done about
 9 it. So it's a bit of scepticism. *A stále to počujeme a nič sa s tým nedeje. Takže*
 10 *taká skepsa. (INT11)*
 11
 - 12 • I have the feeling that there's people in every institution who would just sweep it
 13 under the carpet. *Mám pocit, že v každej tej inštitúcii sú ľudia, ktorí by to stopili*
 14 *proste nejako. (INT15)*
 15
 - 16 • Today too many things get swept under the rug. Everyone knows everyone else
 17 and so it will certainly get tidied away. *Dneska sa veľmi veľa vecí ututlá. A každý*
 18 *každého pozná sa to určite stiahne. (INT3)*

19

20 From the language above, the general opinion presents distrust that the
 21 reported case gets dealt with properly in the first place, and secondly the fear
 22 of getting charged with wrongdoing as the reporting party. The participants
 23 express their view that under such conditions it is not worth reporting corruption
 24 in the first place and also allude to the fact that as a nation the Slovaks are
 25 sceptical by nature and are likely to doubt that their efforts would be met with
 26 effective action and appreciation. There is a level of astuteness displayed in the
 27 participant responses- as we know from the recent debate on corruption by the
 28 weekly newspaper tyzden.sk, 'Gift v Bribe', both parties are culpable in corrupt
 29 practices and so the fear of participants that they might get prosecuted
 30 themselves is not misplaced. There is no awareness, however, of the mitigating
 31 legal provisions such as 'active regret' in the participants' understanding. These
 32 responses were not only relating to reporting of corruption as one of the parties
 33 within the transaction, but also reporting on having knowledge of corrupt
 34 proceedings that one is not involved in directly. Recently the case of a high-
 35 profile young whistle blower Zuzana Hlávková, who reported on tampering with
 36 public procurement tenders in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was publicised and
 37 Miss Hlávková was fired from her position and started working for the Slovak

1 chapter of Transparency International⁶¹. The participants' perceptions,
 2 therefore, that involving oneself in reporting corruption causes inconvenience
 3 and hassle, are again not out of place with the public discourse on the topic.
 4 This fear of persecution as the whistle-blower is a common theme throughout my
 5 thesis, and will be explored in greater depth in subsequent chapters.

6

7 **10.9.2 Unlikely to report/ Where to report**

8 The 'Unlikely to report' node follows on directly from the expressed scepticism
 9 and fear in the above node. 24 out of 30 participants coded against this node
 10 express their belief that people are much more likely not to report corruption
 11 than to report it, and the primary reason stated for this is fear (be it fear for
 12 losing access to privilege or fear of their own safety). The most prominent
 13 examples of the expressions and language of fear are as follows:

- 14
- 15 • You mean whistle blowers? You'd have to be f***ing crazy to do that these days. I
 16 mean nothing happens anyway... (*Akože biele vrany? Na to treba byť jebnutý*
 17 *dneska. Lebo aj tak sa nič neudeje...*) (FG3.3)
 - 18 • No one wants to end up like Kuciak⁶². (*Nikto nechce dopadnúť ako Kuciak.*) (FG3.1)
 - 19
 - 20 • Definitely not, people are afraid I reckon. (*Určite nie. Ľudia sa boja podľa mňa*)
 21 (*INT11*)
 - 22
 - 23 • I would be considering the repercussions, I don't know if I could be a whistle
 24 blower. Zvažovala by som dôsledky, neviem, či by som vedela byť takou bielou
 25 vranou. (*INT15*)
 - 26
 - 27 • [about doctors not reporting] I mean the management is scared too, because the
 28 hospital director can replace anyone he wants...everyone is afraid, scared for their
 29 livelihoods. (*Aj ten manažment sa bojí, lebo riaditeľ nemocnice reálne môže*
 30 *vymeniť všetkých...všetci sa boja, aby mali z čoho vyžiť.*) (*ELITE2*)
 - 31

⁶¹ See more about the case here: <https://bielavrana.sk/oceneni/2017.html> [last accessed 12/12/2020]

⁶² The participant refers to the 2018 killing of the investigative journalist Jan Kuciak and his fiancée, who got killed by members of organised crime after Kuciak discovered a connection between high government officials and the organised group and ensuing corrupt activities; see more <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-52188266> [last accessed 12/12/2020]

- 1 • Yeah, a person is scared for their family getting attacked and so on... (*Človek má*
 2 *starch, aby ti nenapadli rodinu a tak...*) (INT7)
 3
- 4 • I would probably opt for something anonymous out of fear for my life.
 5 (*Pravdepodobne by som zvolila niečo anonymné z obavy o svoju bezpečnosť*)
 6 (INT9)
 7
- 8 • To ensure the safety of their families and health of their loved ones... (ELITE7)

9 It is apparent that the participants have an understanding of reporting
 10 corruption that stems from public discourse on the matter in the media, as well
 11 as their own unflattering views of the effectiveness of law enforcement- perhaps
 12 even the capacity of the law enforcement to stay impartial and their capacity to
 13 protect whistle blowers. The narrative and language of fear is one of deep
 14 concern and stands as tribute to the necessity of conducting greater levels of
 15 research into corruption, and ultimately provide more effective measures for its
 16 curbing.

17 The participants showed only mild awareness of the existence of the government
 18 corruption reporting hotline- only 7 out of 30 responded that not only would they
 19 know where to report corruption, but specifically singled out the hotline. 14
 20 participants stated that if they had to report it, they would turn to the police
 21 (but emphasised their distrust in the police). Two would turn to the media and
 22 one would report to Transparency International Slovakia. This is indicative of the
 23 participants' understanding of reporting corruption being quite varied and based
 24 on personally-conducted research into this, rather than a centralised and an
 25 effective message of the governmental institutions on this.

26 **10.11 Conclusions**

27

28 This chapter dealt with a number of important features when it comes to the
 29 understanding of corruption in real life terms. It outlined a wide variety of
 30 reasons that the participants consider to be pivotal in causing corrupt behaviour
 31 in Slovakia and in the healthcare sector, as per their understanding. The reasons
 32 with the highest number of responses correspond with the initial visualisation of

- 1 the category, as seen below in Figure 10.1, which shows the dominant position
2 of the deficiency of services, mentality of people, and Soviet legacies.

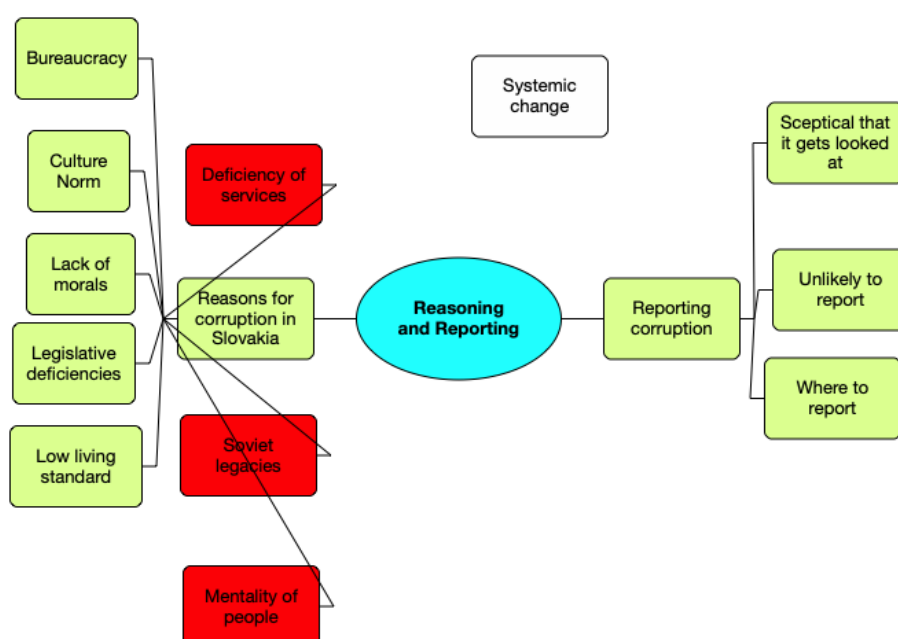


Figure 10.1
Visual presentation of the category Reasoning and Reporting. The bright blue bubble represents the category, the red boxes represent nodes with a high number of references, and green boxes represent nodes with a moderate to low number of references. Source: Author

3

4 The general message to take away from this category is that there is no single
5 reason that is more relevant to the participant understanding of corruption
6 development in Slovakia than another. There is significant overlap in the
7 participant responses, which suggests that they are displaying awareness of the
8 need for several factors to interact, in order to create the specific conditions for
9 corruption that Slovakia and its healthcare sector finds itself in today.

10 There is, however, strong opinion on corruption having become a part of the
11 cultural outlook of the country and the language and semantic congruence in the
12 node 'culture norm' indicates a strong agreement of participants on this front.
13 This idea is further explored and reinforced by the discussion within the nodes
14 'lack of morals' and 'mentality of people', where participants stress the role of
15 social pressures and their impact on collective decision-making. However, the
16 participants also show acute awareness of the importance of individual agency
17 and decision-making. This is also emphasised by several of the word clouds
18 included in this section, which tend to have the word for 'people' or 'person' in

1 prominent positions, suggesting that the participants' focus on the role of
2 people in the system is strong.

3 The nodes for 'Soviet legacies' and 'deficiency of services' again show an
4 overlap of linear thinking. Many participants think that not only do Soviet
5 legacies (or legacies of an even more distant past) play a role in the
6 development of corrupt practices as seen today, but they also draw a connection
7 between the previous regime's lack of goods and services and people's
8 perception of services still being insufficient to date. This is, of course, not just
9 the participant perception as stemming from the previous regime, but also their
10 observation based on real-life experience and the specific examples given as to
11 the lack of specialists, hospitals, equipment, and resources, as well as brain
12 drain. This level of insight shows an astute awareness of the state of health care
13 today. The idea of these particular practices relating to Soviet-specific contexts
14 is explored mainly in literature on *blat* and informal practices (Ledeneva, Lovell
15 et al. 2000, Varese 2000, Ledeneva 2009, Ledeneva 2009, Baez-Camargo and
16 Ledeneva 2017). The literature points to a correlation between deficiency,
17 inaccessibility, or unavailability of a service and the flourishing of informal
18 networks and *blat*. Within this context, my participants' views confirm that a
19 dimension of corruption in this region can be ascribed to a particular way of
20 practicing corruption- through networks, acquaintances, friendships, and
21 exchanges of services, just like *blat*.

22 The 'legislative deficiencies' node provides a discussion on the participants'
23 belief that the measures in place are insufficient and ineffective at dealing with
24 cases of corruption, and also the view that these are very vague and leave too
25 much room for interpretation. This view is supported by my own research into
26 the topic, whereby I tried to derive the relevant information from the same type
27 of source that would be available to the regular citizen to access, such as
28 governmental websites condensing the information for the populace. This
29 research laid bare the incomplete nature of the participants' understanding of
30 corruption measures in place and, most importantly, the deficiencies in
31 effective definition of what constitutes corruption and bribes for the citizens.
32 The participants did instinctively express fear in their general responses over
33 being implicated in corruption, should they want to report it, but did not know

1 for certain that both parties of corrupt exchanges are equally culpable.
2 Participants also seem to draw a distinction (as seen in Chapter 8) between
3 gratitude payments and bribes, whereas legally these two are synonymous and a
4 prosecutor is free to treat them equally, regardless of any mitigating
5 circumstances that the participants themselves attach to the transactions. As
6 such, it appears prudent for the regulatory bodies to make this information
7 clearer for the populace, if they expect their behaviour to change. There is,
8 however, evidence to suggest that this idea of acceptability of some gifts and
9 condemnation of others can be traced to popular culture, such as books and
10 cinematography for the participants. This would potentially provide yet another
11 dimension of corruption to be explored on top of the standard approach of
12 theory into Soviet practices and the translatability of *blat* or informal practices
13 into modern corruption.

14 The participants from a large majority believe that people are unlikely to report
15 corruption due to fear of their own safety, fear of being caused unnecessary
16 hassle, scepticism over the inefficient procedures in place, and distrust in the
17 law enforcement agencies. This apprehensive tendency is supported by
18 Transparency International research, which shows Slovakia to be among the
19 seven countries in the EU with the weakest whistle-blower protection in place
20 (Worth 2013). The language brings out the trend of fear and scepticism most
21 prominently, which is at best a concerning and at worst a socially debilitating
22 reality. The category also showed the varied understanding of participants as to
23 where corruption should be reported, which points to mixed messaging reaching
24 the participants from official bodies, leading to fragmentation of procedures and
25 inevitable clerical errors and red tape.

Chapter 11: Petty versus Grand corruption

11.1 Introduction

This chapter relates to the respondent views on not only recognising a difference between grand and petty corruption, but also the potential impact and interaction of the two levels. This section follows the simple structure of amalgamation of nodes that display similarity of content, as seen in Figure 11.1. The opinions of grand and petty corruption are connected with the concrete examples that the participants provided to illustrate their views. This was a useful tool for checking the consistency of the respondents' views. For example, if a respondent described grand corruption as taking place in the higher echelons of government and then gave an example of paying for knee surgery to illustrate grand corruption, it would be indicative of inconsistent thinking on their part. No such discrepancy occurred, however, and all respondents were congruent when describing both their real-life ideas of petty and grand corruption, and their understanding of the concepts.

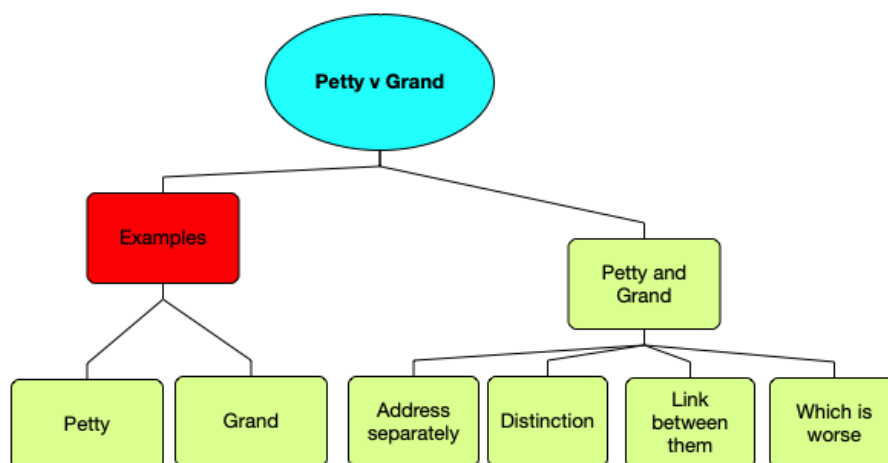


Figure 11.1
Visual presentation of the category structure: Petty v Grand. The bright blue bubble represents the category, the red box represents the node with a high number of references, and green boxes represent nodes with a moderate to low number of references.
Source: Author

The chapter therefore investigates the awareness and understanding of the terms 'grand' and 'petty' corruption, and answers to follow-up questions which

asked about how participants think about each level of corruption, whether they think there's a link between the two, and which is worse for society as whole. Due to the scope of questioning and content, the chapter is relevant for several of the research questions, namely the overarching RQ (*To what extent is the theoretical difference between grand and petty corruption reflected in the real-life understanding of corruption in Slovakia's health care?*), RQs 1& 2 (*How does awareness of grand corruption inform/justify individual engagement in petty corruption? And vice versa*) and also RQ3 (*What are the strategies utilised to carry out grand and petty corrupt practices?*).

11.2 Petty and Grand corruption as terms

Of the 24 participants under the generic parent node 'Petty v Grand', which served to collate expressions of recognition of the two levels of corruption, 17 participants have either heard of the distinction already, or were able to envisage corruption on two different levels when asked to describe what they thought the two terms meant. 7 participants did not make the distinction and/or were unable to describe what they would consider to be petty or grand corruption. This indicates that while for some, the terms petty and grand corruption (or potentially other corruption pairs on a theoretical level as described in Chapter 1, Section 1.2) are either familiar or at least self-explanatory, there is a third of the participants who were not able to link their understanding of corruption to different levels. This may be because the participants simply do not make a distinction between different types of corrupt practices and see corruption as one problem with no need to distinguish between grand and petty. It may also be because they only ever experienced or considered one type of corruption and are not aware of other types being at play. The language associated with petty corruption most often alluded to 'low levels', 'everyday type of corruption', 'small businesses', 'low places' and the language associated with grand corruption included 'great scale', 'high places', 'big firms/financial groups', 'politics', 'elite circles' and similar. Apparently, the distinction perceived and understood takes place not only in difference of locating the corrupt exchanges in different environments, but also in terms of

scale of the sum. The particular examples of sums in mind are discussed below in the section 11.6 (Examples).

While there is extensive literature on the different types of dichotomies of corruption (Rose-Ackerman 1999, Heywood 2014, Bussell 2015, Rose-Ackerman 2016), this distinction in the typology of corruption has been criticised for creating artificial boundaries and being misleading (Shehu 2005). There are few mentions in published literature evaluating the validity of this distinction in the questions posed to the general population, and this is a gap I sought to address in this project. I was unable to find any specific polls or questionnaires that asked respondents to verbalise their view and understanding of theoretical terms such as petty or grand corruption and it appears that these terms have not been used in legislation or official government guidelines, which would suggest they are not readily used in discourse. It is important to underline the contribution of the thesis to the testing of typological terms of corruption on those who should be able to navigate the system and their own behaviour in practice accordingly. It would be prudent to recommend that all labels associated with corruption (i.e. private v public, institutional v personal, petty v grand etc.) are subjected to similar questioning. It is important to collate views on what the respondents as members of society envisage under these terms if they are to follow any guidance with this terminology embedded.

11.3 Disaggregating petty and grand corruption

The nodes investigated in this section (Distinction between petty and grand corruption, Addressing the two types individually) take the general envisioning of different levels of corruption further. I was interested to see whether the participants are able to not only verbalise their idea of what petty and grand corruption could mean, but also whether they think this is a valid distinction to make, and whether, as a result, these two levels of corruption should also be addressed differently in practical terms. The responses here were often difficult to code due to their nuanced content, but overall, 8 out of 22 participants coded here made it very clear that they think there are ‘two problems’ at play, rather

than one overarching problem of corruption and 3 participants made it very clear that there is 'no difference' between the two on a practical level. The rest of the participants were providing more nuanced views that there is a difference, but there is also an underlying principle that is the same for both types of corruption. The majority of participants coded here believe that corruption is a problem that cannot be clearly split between the levels of petty and grand and is to be seen as more nuanced and with similarity of purpose and execution in practice. The node, therefore, directly informs overarching RQ and RQs 1 and 2, by suggesting that the two levels of corruption share fundamental commonalities that cannot be disaggregated, and the theoretical distinction drawn between them does not in fact reflect the real-life understanding of corruption by participants.

However, this is not the whole story. When asked whether the levels of corruption discussed should be addressed differently in practice, rather than just recognised as different problems theoretically, the participants overwhelmingly agreed. Out of ten participants coded against this answer, 8 thought that corruption on petty and grand levels should be addressed by different measures (such as tighter legislation enforcement for grand corruption and raising awareness of corruption in schools for petty), regardless of whether they initially thought the distinction mattered on a theoretical level. In other words, even participants who thought that there is no need or use in disaggregating corruption into petty and grand levels theoretically, thought that the measures addressing them should be tailored to the specific parameters of the levels of corrupt transactions, while functioning as a whole. This finding validates the literature's view on drawing a distinction between the levels of corruption in the first place, but not in theoretical conceptualisation, rather, in a practical implementation of anti-corruption measures. For example, some participants stated that the two types of corruption should be addressed individually, and this is due to the different causes of corruption on different levels, e.g., greed on grand level and necessity on lower level. They felt that it was unfair to compare a doctor being sent to jail immediately for taking a chicken from a patient, but at the same time for the authorities not to be held accountable for several months, for cases that involve hundreds of thousands of misappropriated funds for hospital equipment (INT16.1). They were aware that the 'systemic

failing' exists on both levels (FG4.4) and both types of corruption are principally the same, but that the measures taken should address the root causes of corruption which they felt were numerous. It is important to point out that 9 out of the ten participants were females and all ten were university-educated. Whether this points to a potentially greater level of perception held by females with higher education on this issue or is the result of sampling bias cannot be known for certain. There is, however, evidence in literature to suggest that women tend to be less involved in corrupt transactions than men and more prone to morally disapprove of corruption, with a lower tolerance for it (Dollar, Fishman et al. 2001, Swamy, Knack et al. 2001, Bauhr, Charron et al. 2018, Kubbe, Alexander et al. 2019). This is considered to be due to women being both more risk averse than men and also due to the processes of gender socialisation, whereby girls tend to exercise higher levels of self-control and are directed toward more caring and pro-social activities, which shapes their behaviour (Dollar, Fishman et al. 2001, Swamy, Knack et al. 2001). Participants were not forced to answer all questions and not everyone elected to share their views on all questions. However, such high concentrations of demographic groups in certain nodes present valuable findings in and of themselves by portraying such trends in responses and showing the willingness of the specific groups to expand on specific themes. A study by Bauhr et al. (2018) shows that such trends could develop into real-life successful anti-corruption measures. In Bauhr's study, women in elected office were shown to be strongly negatively correlated with both petty and grand corruption prevalence, and driven by improvement of public service delivery (particularly care-oriented services such as education and health care) and the breakup of male-dominated clientelist networks (Bauhr, Charron et al. 2018). It is therefore important to note that this trend is also visible in my study, where women on average tended to engage with more questions than men and had more clear-cut views regarding condemnation of corrupt practices and behaviour, including informal payments and gratitude payments.

Ultimately, the disaggregation of different levels or types of corruption, as presented in literature to date, has some validity in real-life understanding of corruption. The participants either made this distinction themselves without prompting or were able to instinctively imagine different types of corrupt

transactions under each of the terms. At the same time, when it came to questions on whether this distinction is present on a practical level, the majority of participants felt that this was not the case and that corruption operates on the same principle on all levels and that all levels either interact or lead to one another- either by setting the wrong example from the top to the bottom levels, or, inversely, by bringing bad habits from bottom levels to the top levels. Either way, these levels do not exist on their own and cannot be separated in terms of their understanding. As participant ELITE1 expressed: 'It is difficult to imagine a reality in which grand corruption would exist but petty would not'. It is therefore important to make sure that this fundamental understanding of corruption as holistically unacceptable is presented in the public discourse and in legislation. This is because there is strong indication by my participants that their understanding of corruption sees the two levels as intertwined and feeding off of one another- any measures applied to one will have a knock-on effect on the other and for effectivity's sake it is necessary to make sure these measures are fit for purpose on both levels.

However, it is worth encouraging the tailoring of measures for particular sectors and industries. This is relevant especially for the involvement of professional councils, unions, and other bodies that promote the reputation and professionalism codes of conduct and have the power to take away licences and impose other disciplinary measures for misconduct on petty levels. Such an organisation for health care in Slovakia is for example the Slovak Medical Chamber or the ÚDZS (The Slovak Bureau for Medical Care Oversight). The website of the Medical chamber does not contain a set of ethical guidelines readily accessible to the public and does not specify its remit of operating. Its search engine also came up with no results when queried for words such as 'corruption' or 'bribery' and the minutes of meetings of the disciplinary committee are not made public, nor is there any information provided on the activities of the disciplinary committee. For comparison, the British GMC directly

addresses these challenges in publicly available Code of Conduct⁶³, Tomorrow's doctors platform, or even MPTS tribunal hearings⁶⁴. The same is the case for the American Medical Association⁶⁵- both websites have very simple search engines which allow for searching for terms such as 'corruption' and 'bribery', and outline their ethical codes and stances on conflicts of interest. The Slovak Bureau for Medical Care Oversight, similarly to the Slovak Medical Chamber, does not contain any specific information on its activity regarding anti-corruption measures. It does, however, specify in its remit of operation, that it provides 'quality assurance' and as a result is able to suggest the levying of sanctions or can levy sanctions directly on persons and companies (hospitals) and is also concerned with investigating inadequacies in care delivery and suggests measures of remediation. As such, the Bureau appears to have a more specific role in potentially investigating corrupt behaviour and taking action, but also lacks the specific wording to address corrupt behaviour directly.

11.4 Link between petty and grand corruption

This node extends the previous notion that petty and grand levels of corruption are interconnected and actively looks for a link between petty and grand corruption in conceptual and practical terms. While the nodes in the chapter so far may seem similar in content, the reason questions relating to connecting or differentiating between the two levels were asked in the particular sequence outlined in Appendix 3, was to make sure the participants talked themselves through their own understanding of corruption sequentially. The purpose of

⁶³ For more details see <https://www.gmc-uk.org/search-results?searchText=corruption> [last accessed 12/01/2021]

⁶⁴ For more details see <https://www.mpts-uk.org/hearings-and-decisions> [last accessed 12/01/2021]

⁶⁵ For more details see <https://www.ama-assn.org/about/leadership/ama-conflict-interest-policy> [last accessed 12/01/2021]

multiple questions of similar nature was to ensure that they are able to reliably verbalise their own conceptualisation of corruption, as based on their real-life experiences that shaped their views, and clear up any ensuing discrepancies. 25 participants coded here thought that there was a clear link between petty and grand corruption practices and only two participants thought explicitly that there was no link and these two levels existed independently of each other. The language associated with the view that there is a direct link between them informs the overarching RQ (*To what extent is the theoretical difference between grand and petty corruption reflected in the real-life understanding of corruption in Slovakia's health care?*), as well as RQ 1& 2 (*How does awareness of grand corruption inform/justify individual engagement in petty corruption? And vice versa*), which relate directly to the idea of one level justifying or informing the other.

- “The **principle** is the same” *Ten princíp je rovnaký*
- “I think that they are connected for sure. It is difficult to imagine a reality in which grand corruption exists but petty does not” *Ja si myslím, že oni spolu **súvisia**. Ako ťažko si viem predstaviť, že tá vysoká by neexistovala a nízka by bola*
- “Yes, of course. They are **interconnected**” *Áno, samozrejme. **Súvisia** spolu.*
- “It is possible that there is some **connection** in society, where the petty corruption is ordinarily accepted” *Je možné, že je nejaký **súvis** asi v spoločnosti, kde je bežne akceptovaná aj tá malá korupcia*
- “It’s both there [grand level] and there [petty level]... There is definitely a **connection**. One has to **learn** it somewhere, start it somehow...All of corruption is **intertwined**...” *Je to aj tam, aj tam...Určite je **spojenie**. Lebo niekde sa to človek musí **naučiť**, niekde musí začať...Všetka korupcia je **previazaná***
- “It’s the same **principle**, yeah...The **principle** is the same and everyone will better their situation in a way that fits best...Because the **principle** and the values are the very same in both cases” *Akože **princíp** je rovnaký, áno...Ten **princíp** je ten istý a každý si svoju situáciu zlepši tak ako vie...Lebo ten **princíp** a nejaké zásady sú v oboch rovnaké*

- “It’s the **same form** it takes...It’s the same on different **levels**...just a different **form** of the same...I think it’s the same...It just happens on different **levels**...there’s only one corruption” *Je to taká istá forma...Áno, na iných úrovniach...iná forma...Len sa to deje na iných leveloch...Podľa mňa je to to isté...Korupcia je len jedna*
- “If a GP takes eggs from an old lady, then he will definitely be taking more when he gets into an official ‘function’ [i.e. a job with more oversight and influence]...Those people who have got themselves used to the tit for tat system then get to the higher positions and take that habit with them...It starts on the **bottom and goes to the top**- therefore they must have **learnt** it somewhere” *Obvodný lekár a berie od babičky vajcia, tak určite bude brať viac keď sa dostane do funkcie...Tí ľudia, ktorí si zvykli na systém niečo za niečo a potom sa dostali na tie vyššie pozície tak si zobrali ten zvyk so sebou...Začína **sa to dolu a ide to hore**- čiže niekde sa to **naučili**.*

The language highlighted in the responses above relates to several trends expressed by the participants. First, there is a high frequency of repeating the words ‘principle’, ‘connection’ or ‘interconnection’, suggesting the view of corruption levels that is dynamic and where these levels of grand and petty corruption share fundamental similarities and are connected. Secondly, the participants also allude to the levels of corruption being just different ‘forms’ of the same problem. The fact that the participants are able to recognise this underlying common denominator of the different shapes that corruption takes, is indicative of having developed a sophisticated view of corruption. Nearly all participants coded here are university-educated and five of them are elites, which could be adding to the levels of sophisticated thinking about corruption. Lastly, there are allusions to having ‘learnt’ this behaviour on petty levels and transferring it to grand levels, which would directly inform RQ1, which suggests that petty corruption affects behaviour in grand levels of corruption. This notion in reverse (i.e. informing RQ2) was developed more when participants were asked which type of corruption they consider to be worse for society. Here one participant specifically said “Grand corruption teaches petty corruption to people...A fish definitely rots from the head” *Vysoká korupcia učí nízku. Ryba smrdí od hlavy určite (INT8)*. It would therefore appear that there are views (in varying levels of significance) to support both RQ1 and 2 in their theoretical assumption that one type of corruption is able to justify or inform the actions

taken on the other level. It is important to point out that this is a unique observation of the thesis that has not been tested out in any type of questionnaire or poll about corruption in this region or elsewhere before. The awareness displayed by the participants in their answers of one level of corruption being able to condition and teach another, and their feeding off of one another in a perpetual cycle is one of the key findings of the thesis. This means that not only are petty and grand corruption inseparable and interacting, but they share a common fundamental architecture. While they may not be propelled by similar immediate causes, their fundamental behaviour is transferred from one to another and is fit for carrying out purposes on both levels.

11.5 Which type of corruption is worse for society?

The participants were finally asked in this set of questions on petty and grand corruption, which one they thought was more detrimental for society- if any. The question was designed to make the participants think on a deeper level, whether the impact of corruption is to be disaggregated and whether one type of corruption is generally worse than the other. On balance, 10 participants have expressed their view that grand corruption is worse for society. 4 participants thought both were equally detrimental for society and only one participant thought that petty was worse. The general reasoning for this was encompassed in language that suggested that grand corruption is more ‘dangerous’, ‘impactful’, ‘more important’, and also provides ‘greater incentives’, which makes the resulting effect worse than petty. The participants thought that grand corruption had greater reach due to often involving manipulation of public resources or state budgets and also enjoys little oversight if the top echelons of society [the overseers themselves] are carrying it out. The view that grand corruption is worse for society according to my participants is also supported by the visual presentation of the word frequency search overleaf, which repeats the word ‘grand’ in several forms and puts it in prominent positions.



Figure 11.2 Word frequency search cloud of node 'Which is worse', set for 30 words, translations embedded in red by author. Source; Author

The participants thought that the petty sums involved in petty, everyday corruption could not, in general, add up to the type of sum that would affect as large a portion of the population as something that takes place on ministerial levels and affects everyone by proxy. It is difficult to say whether this demonstrates certain levels of naivete by the participants or lack of information about how the collective economy works. Literature shows that informal payments, which my participants discount as less impactful, do in fact make up a large portion of all healthcare revenue and expenditure in some countries; in Russia this figure was recorded at 56% of total national health expenditure in the early 2000s (Lewis 2007). The same goes for theories of shadow economies that are prevalent in post-communist societies and are sometimes considered to be key to the general running of the official economy by injecting cash flow into official transactions from unofficial sources, artificially uplifting the collective GDP, and addressing problems such as unemployment and efficient use of public goods (Dreher and Schneider 2009, Zaman and Goschin 2015, Hoinaru, Buda et al. 2020). Therefore, it is apparent from research that petty corruption and informal payments, as well as shadow economy and engaging of general population in cash-in-hand work or black-market activities, has a significant

bearing on the economy. However, we can surmise from the opinions of the participants that this information has not sufficiently permeated their awareness and their understanding is unable to account for the vastness of impact that the amalgamation of several small sums on petty levels has on society.

11.6 Examples of petty and grand corruption

As outlined above, it was important to make sure that the participants' theoretical understanding of petty and grand corruption corresponded with their idea of what this meant in practice. The participants provided several anecdotal examples and also the size of sums or example gifts that they associated with either type.

11.6.1 Petty examples

The examples within petty corruption included specific sums such as 5, 10 or 20 EUR given to the health professional for anything from getting a specific prescription, blood tests, to a 'contribution' for a specific doctor surgery (as an establishment), but also to 500 EUR for a surgery (as a procedure). The participants also included examples such as home-grown strawberries or home-sourced goods, such as eggs, being offered mostly by the older generation. They associated these in-kind gifts with recent experiences or anecdotes which suggests that the barter of 'gifts' is still flourishing and not being replaced by just cash in envelopes. There were also mentions of bribes/gifts to schools and nurseries for accepting a child outside of the regular waiting list, paying a small sum for having an ID card/passport expedited, arranging an X-Ray examination or an ultrasound examination preferentially, or providing tickets to a show for a doctor when the participant worked in a culture-oriented organisation. One participant, a nursery teacher, described being 'shoved money at' from parents outside of nursery, asking how much more it would take for their child to be taken into the nursery immediately (FG1.7).

Chapter 8 presents items such as coffees, alcohol bottles or chocolates to belong in the category of a gift (see Chapter 8), i.e. not corruption, according to participants. However, in this chapter, the participants were labelling these same examples as petty corruption, when asked for an example of what they mean by the term. This conflation of terms for the participants was indicative of the fact that the difference between petty corruption instances and those of gifts and gratitude is blurred and defined by circumstances and justification applied to a specific situation. The instances in this node also included four mentions of gifts or sums for child births, which is consistent with the findings in Chapter 8 (Gratitude payments), where the obstetrics and gynaecology (OB&GYN) specialty was also highlighted by respondents to be particularly popular in receiving/requesting bribes or gifts. It is also one of the top three specialties that were described by Mužik and Szalayová in their 2013 report on informal payments in the healthcare sector, where gynaecologists ranked third with 24% of all informal payments recorded having been paid to this specialty (Mužik and Szalayová 2013). This is potentially due to the fact that birth rate has increased in Slovakia from 9.7 per 1000 in 2002 to 10.2 per 1000 in 2020⁶⁶, making the specialty more sought out and busier, and for most women, their interaction with their OB&GYN is the first serious interaction with healthcare professionals, so it has the potential to frame their view of healthcare. In Slovakia, it is also possible to select an OB&GYN doctor that will deliver your baby specifically- which means that even if there's another doctor on the rota in the hospital, you contractually bind a specific doctor to have to arrive on the day and deliver the baby. The standard contract for this in state-run hospitals is drawn up between the hospital, the doctor, and the parents. This luxury of choice costs the parents 300 EUR on average which is split evenly between the hospital and the doctor in question on top of the doctor's regular salary. In some cases, what happens is that this contract gets torn up at the end and the parents turn over 200 or 250 EUR to the doctor in question directly in cash, which means that the only party losing out is the hospital. The doctor and the parents then

⁶⁶ For more demographic statistics on Slovakia, visit: <https://knoema.com/atlas/Slovakia/Birth-rate>. [last accessed 16/03/2021]

simply claim that there was no agreement in the first place, and it was a lucky coincidence that the doctor happened to be there at the time of delivery. Such conduct is apparently ubiquitous when it comes to gynaecology and obstetrics and with the proliferation of internet discussions and fora where mothers share information, it is no wonder that this is a frequent occurrence of corrupt activity. The participant who intimated this information did so specifically after the interview was wrapped up and asked for this not to be a part of the official transcript.

Interestingly, however, one participant described their viewing of the difference between grand and petty corruption as juxtaposing ‘a million [for something] as opposed to just a grand’ *Akože vo vysokých kruhoch berie akože million a v nízkych...akože tisícku? (INT11)*. It is clear here that if we compare the majority of views, which include gifts of small financial value and bribes to the size of low double digits of EUR, the perception of this issue must vary based on the financial background of the respective participant. In other words, the label *petty corruption* of 20 EUR bears for others the same meaning as *petty corruption* for participant INT11, who quoted 1000 EUR. This type of difference observed in the participant responses further underlines the complexity of pinning down the precise definitions and understanding of corruption on different levels. It also further emphasises the need for conducting more qualitative research into different levels of corruption, to thoroughly understand where the perceptions of participants are rooted and how they can best be harnessed to create a set of comprehensive guidelines and anti-corruption measures on different levels.

It is also important to point out that this variety of sums as ascribed to petty corruption can also impact on the notion that grand corruption is considered to be worse for society. In other words, if we took the larger sum of 1000 EUR to be a representative example of petty corruption, accumulated across the board, the financial impact on the sector and the economy as a whole would be vast and comparable to that of a grand corruption scandal. However, research shows that the sum is not, in fact, entirely relevant, it is more so the amount of people who collectively have to pay it. For example, Transparency International’s (2017) Global Corruption Barometer Survey of Latin American citizens and those

of the Caribbean shows that one third of people who used a public resource paid a bribe for it⁶⁷. This would mean that a third of the 90 million people's access to public services in Latin America, including healthcare, was dependent on extra payments, which were most likely illegal. The knock-on effects of this may even lead to people postponing seeking medical help, causing delayed and more serious diagnoses (Mostert, Njuguna et al. 2015) in the healthcare sector, which my participants did not account for in their assessment of which corruption is more detrimental. Further effects of petty corruption, which are more insidious than those of grand corruption include: the increasing of economic inequality in a society, deepening levels of poverty when those who have less are forced to make informal payments and bribes, and also deepening the distrust in public institutions. Most importantly, however, as has been pointed out by the participants who believe that petty and grand corruption are connected, there is a cycle of dependency and learning of behaviour that leads from one level to another. Bohórquez and Devrim (2012) show that corruption operates within a system of networks and suggest that it is very likely that those requiring a bribe on a petty level are later required to provide a larger cut to those above them in the proverbial "food chain" and so on, which feeds the entire system of corrupt behaviour through the strata, all the way up to grand corruption levels (Bohórquez and Devrim 2012), thus eradicating any distinctions between them. It is therefore important to emphasise the isolated view of corruption impact that has been displayed by my participants, who perceive this impact only in terms of the superficial decision-making on grand levels and seemingly insignificant amounts paid on petty levels. The reach of petty corruption, however, is much more complex and its tentacles are much more likely to pervade all walks of life, from engagement with public institutions and trust, through the learning of corrupt behaviour, to affecting the economy and economic equality.

⁶⁷ See full article here: <https://www.transparency.org/en/news/corruption-on-the-rise-in-latin-america-and-the-caribbean#> [last accessed 02/01/2021]

11.6.2 Grand examples

Examples of grand corruption among the participant responses include primarily notions of financial tampering with public tenders or resources. The language included references to ‘large sums’, ‘millions’, ‘EU funds’, ‘state budgets’ and similar. The participants noted the activities of big financial groups like PENTA⁶⁸ building hospitals, for example, and overselling them to the state or turning them into private institutions that regular citizens cannot access (ELITE8). Financial groups such as PENTA have been notoriously involved in corruption scandals (such as Gorila of 2012, see Chapter 5) and discredited as a result⁶⁹. Furthermore, allusions were made to the overpaying of the state hospitals for CT machines (more details in Chapter 5, sections 5.4.1, 5.4.2), dubious relationships between hospitals and health insurance companies overcharging for procedures and pocketing the difference (this point was made by an elite participant ELITE 2 with unique insight into the inner workings of one of the largest hospitals in Bratislava), EU funds embezzlement, political corruption, and election manipulation. The participants were therefore able to show an awareness of the difference between grand and petty corruption and their examples could all be traced to publicised scandals of grand corruption, covered in the media. 3 participants mentioned CT machine fraud, for example, and 3 others EU fund fraud. There is evidence to suggest that this is a particularly astute observation made by the participants, as the impact of EU funds on institutionalised corruption is a recognised phenomenon in Central Europe (Fazekas, King et al. 2014). In particular, EU funds constitute a considerable part of the CEE countries’ GDP and about 50% of public investment per member state. In Slovakia, the problems with EU funds that cause the thriving of institutionalised grand corruption, relate specifically to not publishing public

⁶⁸ A financial, investment group, based offshore, but with head office in Slovakia, that has been implicated on multiple occasions in tampering with public funds, cronyism, and directly implicated in the 2012 Gorila files; see Chapter 5 for details. PENTA’s Executive Officer, Jaroslav Hascak, was arrested in December 2020 and charged with corrupt behaviour and bribery of state officials.

⁶⁹ For more details: <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/22546311/hascak-of-penta-detained-and-accused.html> [last accessed 05/01/2021].

procurement bids in the official bids journal, which then causes 9% higher probability of a single bidder contract award (Fazekas, King et al. 2014). For comparison, in Hungary this probability is 20% higher for single bidder contracts for EU funds due to leaving only 5 days for bid submission (Fazekas, King et al. 2014). Grand corruption in the EU fund sphere is shown to be a serious issue in Slovakia, where the lengthy decision periods are 17% more likely for EU funded procurement procedures than for nationally funded ones; moreover, there is evidence to suggest that in the CEE region as a whole, corruption in EU funds reaches up to high-level politicians, which could mean that EU funds not only facilitate, but actively fuel grand corruption (Fazekas, King et al. 2014).

Three other participants specifically pointed out political/state budgetary fraud. The ideas of ‘government contracts’ (*štátne zákazky*), ‘state budget’ and ‘tenders’ (*štátne peniaze, tendre*), and the perpetrators as ‘state officials’, or ‘oligarchs’ (*vládni činitelia, aktivity oligarchov, upper echelons of business elites*) were prevalent in the language displayed within this node. As the most extreme example, one of the participants went as far as to suggest that grand corruption examples can stretch to activities or profits that those in power are ‘willing to kill for’ (FG4.1), alluding to the recent murder of the investigative journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée that was abundantly covered by the media and has sparked a real increase of interest in corruption in the public forum⁷⁰.

There is no doubt, therefore, that the participants have greater capacity to observe and envisage the impacts of grand corruption on society, which is targeted by the media and presented as the corruption that is being battled by the government as well. It is also important not to discount the impact of grand corruption on society in favour of the impact of petty. The relatively new government of PM Matovič, elected in 2020, ran on an anti-corruption programme, and the most recently-elected president Zuzana Čaputová also ran on a campaign of anti-corruption and battling big money scams as a lawyer and

⁷⁰ For more details: <https://www.euronews.com/2020/09/03/jan-kuciak-murder-the-crime-and-trial-that-sparked-a-renaissance-of-civil-society-> [last accessed 05/01/2021]

an activist, quoting especially the Pezinská Skip affair⁷¹, for which she gained the prestigious Goldman Prize⁷². The recent activities of the National Criminal Agency (NAKA), which has been active in its prosecution and jailing of ex-government officials, judges or prosecutors, implicit in the corrupt scandals of the 90s, early 2000s, and further, has also been prominent in presenting the public with the impact of grand corruption on society. While there do exist theories of corrupt activities ‘greasing the wheels’ of the economy (Grodeland, Koshechkina et al. 1998), the conclusion most often drawn is that of corruption ultimately having a long-term detrimental and corrosive effect on the operations of companies and the state economy as a whole (TI, 2014). Furthermore, grand corruption has the potential to distort incentives, divert resources (including social capital and talent), misallocate resources, and promote rent-seeking activities, rather than productive activities (Mauro 1998, Tanzi 1998, Chêne 2014). Its detrimental impact on society is therefore well-documented, undeniable, and astutely picked up on by my participants.

11.7 Conclusions

The chapter sought to investigate the recognition of participants of a difference between grand and petty corruption, but also the potential impact and interaction of the two levels. The chapter shows that there is awareness of the terminology, or ability to envisage what the terminology of grand and petty corruption should evoke. However, the participants on the whole thought that disaggregating the terms was not helpful in terms of understanding, only in terms of tailoring specific anti-corruption measures to the relevant levels to increase their effectiveness. The majority of participants thought there was a

⁷¹ In this affair Ms Caputova headed the legal team responsible for opposing the construction of a large skip within the residential area of Pezinok, which would have led to an environmental disaster in the region and was getting pushed through the system by individuals with vested interest in the waste business, ignoring the petitions of the residents against it.

⁷² For more details, see <https://www.odpady-portal.sk/Dokument/102985/za-kauzu-pezinska-skladka-si-prevzala-goldmanovu-cenu-zuzana-caputova.aspx> [last accessed 05/01/2021]

distinct link between the two levels of corruption when it comes to their interaction and interdependency. They believe that in real-life terms, corruption levels operate on the same principles and feed off of one another. This is an important theoretical finding, as research into ascertaining whether corruption terminology used in literature is congruent with the real-life view of the phenomenon by participants has not yet been conducted. This unique type of questioning and analysis therefore directly informs the overarching RQ, as well as validates the theoretical assumptions associated with RQs 1 and 2, which investigate the impact of one level on the other. The participants thought, on average, that grand corruption is worse for society than petty. There appeared to be a degree of cognitive dissonance between their appreciation of the similarities of grand vs petty corruption and the tendency of corrupt practices escalating with seniority. It is possible to note, since the thesis deals with real-life understanding of corruption, that this level of depreciation is a result of certain conflicts of interest among the participants, who maybe seek to downplay their own real-life behaviour or experiences.

Engagement with existing literature, however, shows that this view is likely to be affected more by the general presentation of the phenomenon by the media, who tend to sensationalise the grand corruption scandals for greater viewer engagement, at the expense of an understanding of the reach of both types of corruption. The participants tended to understand 'impact' mostly under financial terms and the examples associated with both levels of corruption were also predominantly based on notions of monetary gain. This is to be expected, however, as a lay person would not possess the necessary level of insight for an evaluation of detrimental effects in healthcare, when observed from a medical, diagnostic or prognostic perspective. In real-life terms, the insidious impact of corruption on society in the shape of: distorting trust in public institutions, promoting detrimental learnt behaviour, misappropriating resources and social capital, and creating a culture of sustenance of corrupt behaviour, is not considered by the participants to be as impactful as collective finances lost as a result of grand corruption.

Chapter 12: Common Corrupt Practices

12.1 Introduction

This chapter on common corrupt practices deliberately follows chapters that have already addressed issues such as gratitude payments, or views on petty and grand corruption. This is because the participants' awareness and conceptualisation of corruption naturally feeds into their views and understanding of corruption practices in real-life terms. The chapter addresses the views that participants have on where corrupt practices are most likely to appear in real life, what types of mechanisms people use to take part in corrupt transactions, and what role personal contacts and trust play in these transactions. Last but not least, the chapter also looks at the participant views on whether there should be any systemic changes to address corrupt practices and what type of changes within the system these should be. The structure of the category is outlined below in Figure 12.1, where all the nodes analysed in this chapter can be seen. The reason 'systemic changes' were included in this category due to the language relating closely to the content within the nodes on mechanism and likely occurrences of corruption. This similarity of content ties it to what the manifestations of corruption are and the proposed coping mechanisms by the participants within the system to address these.

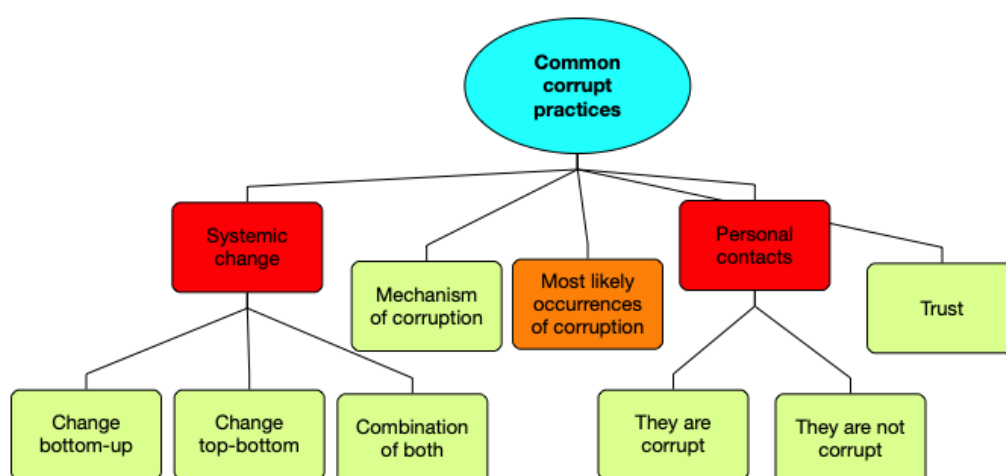


Figure 12.1 Visual presentation of the category Common corrupt practices. The bright blue bubble represents the category, the red boxes represent nodes with a high number of references, orange box represents the node with nearly as many references as the red nodes, and green boxes represent nodes with a moderate to low number of references.

Source: Author

Through investigating the mechanisms and most likely occurrences of corruption, the chapter addresses the RQ3 specifically (*What are the strategies utilised to carry out grand and petty corrupt practices?*). However, due to its specific focus on trust as well as the role and normalisation of using personal contacts for corrupt transaction, it addresses also RQ3a (*What is the significance of trust as a pre-requisite for corrupt interactions?*), RQ3b (*To what extent are social rules and customs important in the carrying out of corrupt practices?*). More generally, through its broader investigation of the role of the system and the holistic understanding of corrupt practices and their patterns of behaviour in real life, it is relevant for the overarching RQ (*To what extent is the theoretical difference between grand and petty corruption reflected in the real-life understanding of corruption in Slovakia's health care?*) as well.

12.2 Most likely occurrences of corruption

This node encompasses the participants' views on where they think occurrences of corrupt behaviour are most likely to manifest themselves in real life. This includes different types of service sectors, as well as potential life situations that they think might be particularly vulnerable to eliciting corrupt behaviour. Such a broad, open-ended question⁷³ allowed the participants to come up with any type of example they felt best represented their idea of this and the answers were richly varied. The most frequent localising of occurrences of corruption was centred on health care, even without being prompted to choose this sector to talk about- 13 out of 31 coded participants against this node selected health care. There were, however, also mentions of the entrepreneurial sector, politics, and also education (especially pre-schools⁷⁴).

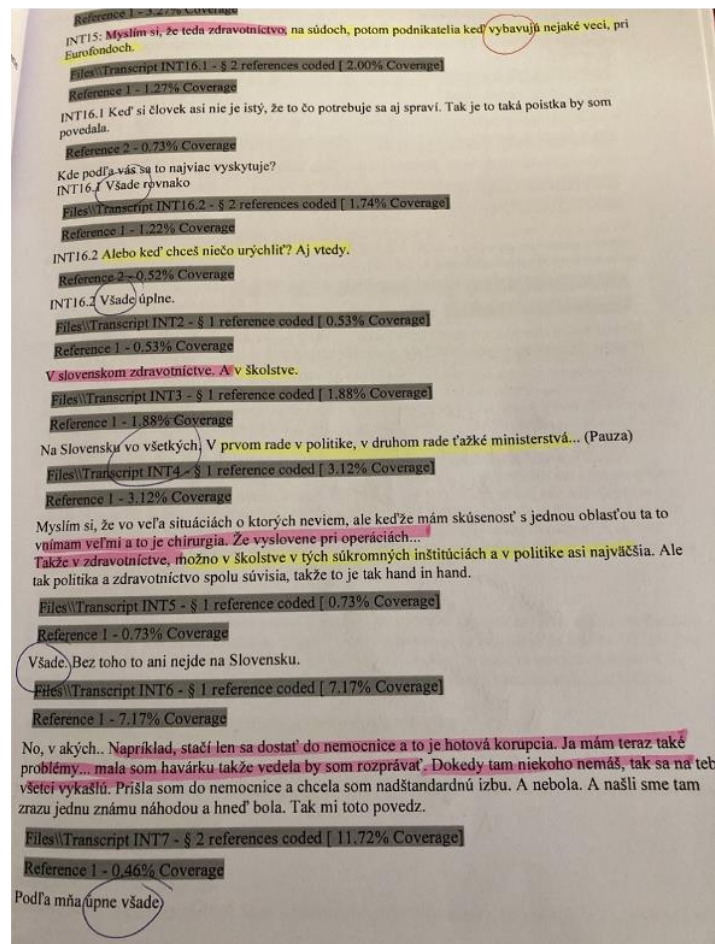
⁷³ The question read: 'Where do you think corrupt practices are most likely to occur? Under what sort of circumstances would this be?'

⁷⁴ This includes presents to teachers or also cash payments to teachers from parents of potential pre-schoolers who wish to have their child attend a particular pre-school that would be advantageous for location, specific language focus of teaching, or other factors.

This is congruent with the general findings on where corruption is officially most frequently recorded, as outlined in Chapter 2, Section 2.3. The participants in this research have however chosen health care as the most frequent sector of corrupt exchanges, as opposed to the entrepreneur/business sector, which is the official finding presented in Chapter 2.3 from 2017. This is most likely due to the fact that my sample, albeit inclusive of entrepreneurs, was unable to relate to a particular business experience of corruption, whereas health care is a much more accessible sector to describe and understand. The language used to answer the question: ‘Where or when do you think that most corrupt exchanges are most likely to occur?’ included phrases such as:

- ‘When entrepreneurs are trying to get things done, with like EU funds’ (*Potom podnikatelia vybavujú nejaké veci, pri Eurofondoch*) INT15
- ‘I think with surgeries or so’ (*Myslím si, že pri operáciách alebo čo... FG3.2*)
- ‘I think there is most amount of money in healthcare in Slovakia and that’s also where they are stealing the most’ (*Ja si myslím, že najviac peňazí na Slovensku je v zdravotníctve a tam sa aj najviac a najlepšie kradne ELITE2*)
- ‘I think with procuring hospital equipment and with buying health care equipment/tools that are not included in the list of categorised medicines’ (*Podľa môjho názoru najviac pri zaobstarávaní vybavenia nemocníc a pri nakupovaní zdravotníckych pomôcok, ktoré nie sú v zozname kategorizovaných liekov ELITE8*)

There was a mix of responses as illustrated above, which include varied sectors and ideas. In general, the language patterns in the responses showed a tendency to perceive corruption to be present in all walks of life; the participants often said that it can be found ‘everywhere’, or ‘totally everywhere’, as seen overleaf in circles in manual coding Example 12.1 and 12.2.



Example 12.1 Manual coding of node ‘Most likely occurrences of corruption’, yellow parts mark areas of corruption that are not healthcare, pink mark healthcare mentions, and circles mark expressions that corruption can be found ‘everywhere’, Source: Author

INT15

I think that it's in health care, courts, entrepreneurs who need stuff sorted, and also EU funds

INT16.1

When a person is not sure that what they need will also get done. So it's a sort of insurance policy I'd say.

KC: Where do you think this would be most frequent?

INT16.1 Everywhere really.

INT16.2

Or if you need to expedite something? Then too.

Basically everywhere.

INT2

In Slovak health care. And in education.

INT3

In Slovakia in all sectors. First of all in politics, second of all in ministries... (Pause)

INT4

I think that in a lot of situations that I don't know about but since I have experience with one sector specifically where I perceive it most and that is surgery. With surgeries basically. So in healthcare, then maybe education in the private institutions there and the biggest probably in politics. But politics and healthcare are intertwined so that's sort of hand in hand.

INT5

Everywhere. You can't get by without it in Slovakia.

INT6

Well, what ones... For example the minute you are in the hospital it is corruption immediately. I have some problems now... I was in a car crash so I could really talk about it. Until you have someone there, no one gives a damn about you. I came to the hospital and wanted a standard plus room. And there was none. And then we found that we knew someone there coincidentally and suddenly the room was available. So explain me that.

INT7

I think it's absolutely everywhere

Example 12.2 Manual coding of node ‘Most likely occurrences of corruption’ translated, orange corresponds to yellow in Example 12.1, pink to pink, and circles mark expressions that corruption can be found ‘everywhere’, Source: Author

From Figure 12.2 and 12.3 overleaf, it is apparent that this word is located in prominent positions along with the words for ‘healthcare’, ‘corruption’, and ‘everywhere’, but also with verbs such as ‘need’ and ‘want’. The participants are alluding to not just necessity, therefore, but also personal ambition to be the condition under which one is likely to see corrupt behaviour. I was interested to see what the word ‘to arrange’ or to ‘get something done’ would get most associated with in contextual discourse and the word tree overleaf demonstrates its key position when describing all types of ‘arranging’ required by the participants. This is not just healthcare provision (although this is the prevalent trend), but also mentions of ID cards or passports needing expedited, associations with verbs for payment, and also using contacts. It is apparent therefore that the word ‘vybavit’ (to arrange, to get something done) is key to the vernacular used to understand and conceptualise corrupt behaviour for the participants and its prominence and meaning directly informs the overarching RQ. There are also mentions of ‘necessity’, ‘expediting’, satisfying a person’s ‘need’, and also one mention of a person being ‘desperate’, in the health care context, which prompts corrupt behaviour in order to get to a needed resource. The language therefore relates to a speedier procedure or fulfilling a need or a desire by engaging in corrupt practices.

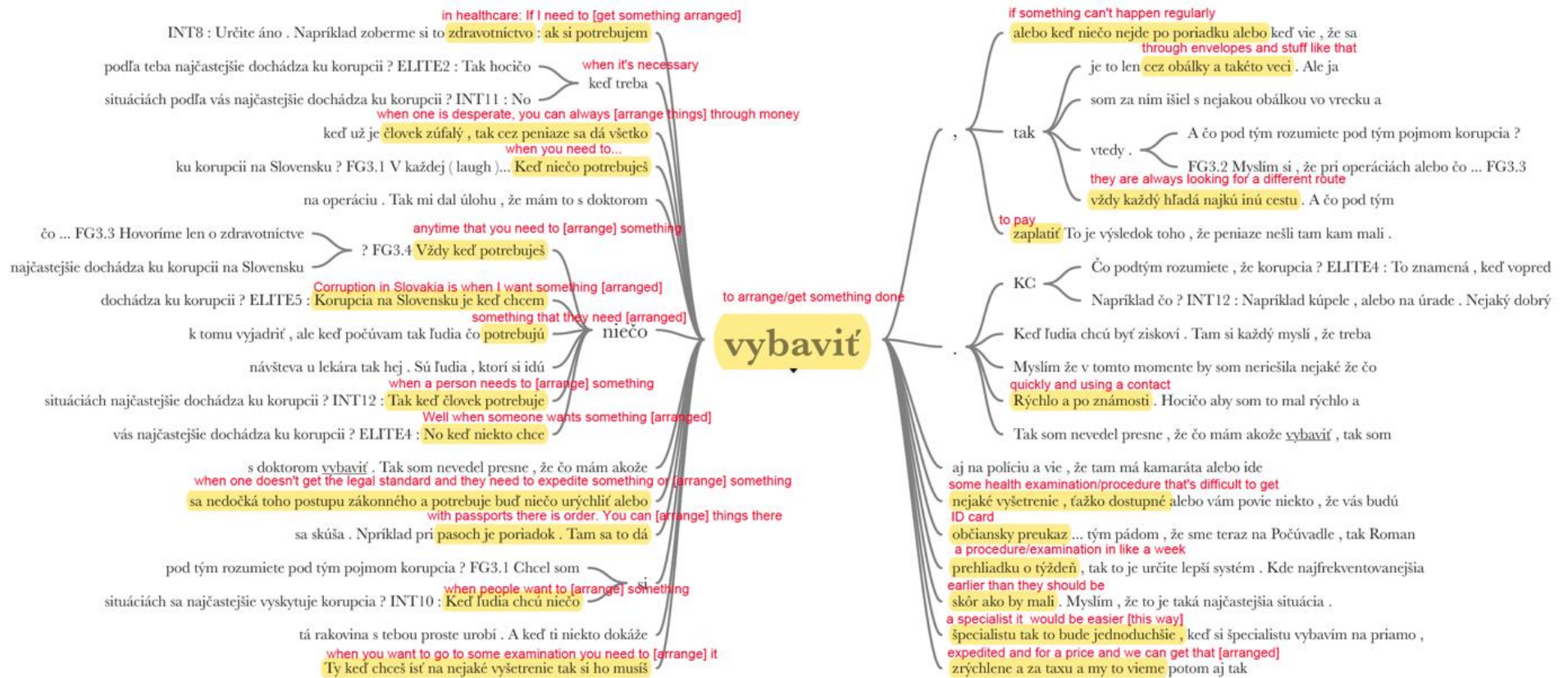
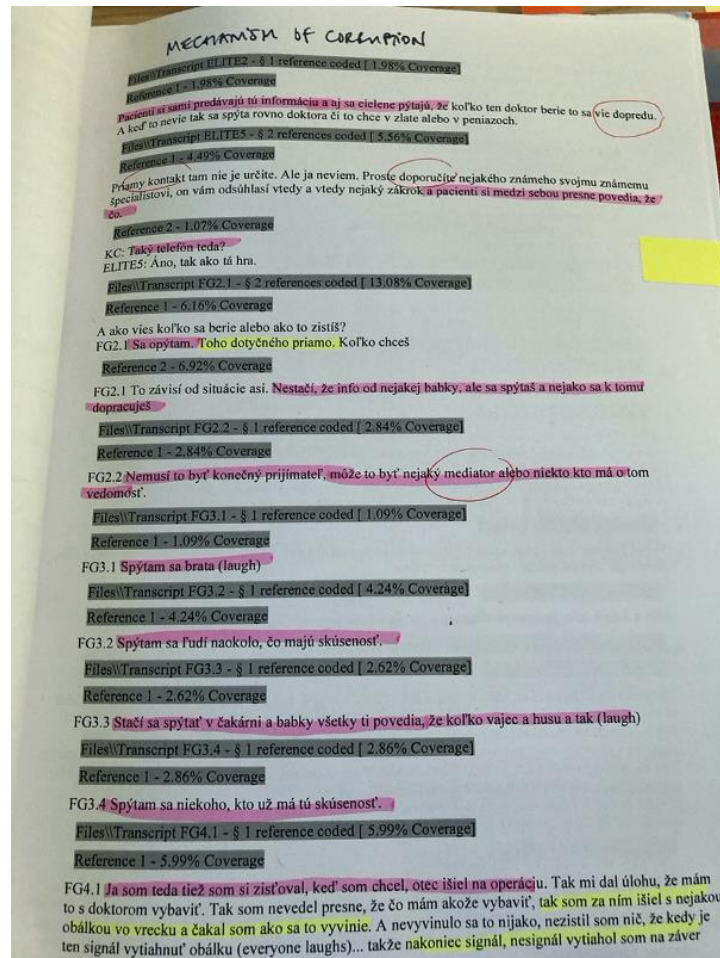


Figure 12.3 Word tree of the word 'vybaviť' set at 11 context words, highlighting by author, translations in red by author. Source: Author

12.3 Mechanisms of corruption

Having established that people are likely to seek out corrupt exchanges when they are in urgent need of a service or when they want to enrich themselves, it was important to ascertain in what way this behaviour is carried out in real life. The idea behind the question for this node⁷⁶ was to ascertain how people approach corrupt exchanges practically. In these practical terms this means whether people are more likely to directly enquire about a bribe, or whether they are more likely to elicit this information indirectly from someone with similar experiences, or to act through a middleman or a broker. Manual coding within this node was a helpful tool to be able to distinguish among the different approaches to mechanically carrying out corruption and accessing corrupt networks. Examples 12.3 and 12.4 overleaf show instances of participants passing on the information (patients in a healthcare setting) to one another indirectly in pink, and in yellow those who ask the doctor directly. One of the red circles also marks the only instance, where the participant directly alluded to using a middleman explicitly. In this case the participant understood the function of a middleman to be that of someone able to establish a desired connection. It is therefore not necessary for a middleman to be handling any money or gifts directly; they can serve as a gatekeeper to a desired resource. In this sense, the middleman may not even be consciously aware of their indispensability. This type of information provision is very common in corrupt exchanges. The wealth of discourse and dissent this theme generated among my participants, as well as the connection drawn between the function of a middleman and the label itself was significant in understanding the conceptualisation of corruption in real life. For some this was a clear-cut facet of corruption and for others it was a very sensitive issue to suggest that those they consider to be friends could be perceived as avenues to corruption.

⁷⁶ 'What kinds of strategies/mechanisms do you think are used to carry out corrupt practices?' 'Who and how would you approach about this/ who and how do you think people are likely to approach about this?'



Mechanism of Corruption

ELITE2

The patients themselves pass on the information and they ask direct questions about how much the specific doctor takes and it's known in advance. And if it is not then they ask the doctor directly if they'd like it in gold or in money.

ELITE5

A direct contact isn't there, for sure. But I don't know. You recommend some friend of yours to another friend of yours who is a specialist, and they will approve you a procedure when and where and then the patients will pass on information among themselves.

KC: So like a game of telephone?

ELITE5: Yes, just like that.

FG2.1

KC: And do you know how much is taken or how to find out?

FG2.1: I will ask. The person in question directly: How much do you want?

It depends on the situation, I guess. It's not enough that you get information from like some old lady, but you get to it one way or another.

FG2.2

It doesn't have to be the end recipient, it can be some middleman or someone who has some knowledge about it.

FG3.1

I ask my brother (laugh)

FG3.2

I ask the people around me who have the experience.

FG3.3

It's sufficient to ask an old lady in the waiting room, they'll all tell you how many eggs or a goose or so (laugh)

FG3.4

I just ask someone who has had that experience.

FG4.1

I mean I was finding this out when I needed to when my dad went for his surgery. So he gave me a task to go sort it out with the doctor. I didn't know exactly what that meant so I went there with an envelope in my pocket and I waited for the events to develop. And they didn't, I found nothing out, like no signal sent out as to when the envelope is to be taken out (everyone laughs)...so in the end, signal or not I pulled out the envelope...

Example 12.3 Manual coding of node 'Mechanism of corruption', yellow parts mark direct contact with doctor for bribery, pink mark asking other patients or friends. Source: Author

Example 12.4 Manual coding of node 'Mechanism of corruption' translated, orange corresponds to yellow in Example 12.3, pink to pink. Source: Author

1 It is clear from the Example 12.3 and 12.4 that there is a prevalence of
2 indirectly obtaining information that aids in carrying out corrupt practices. In
3 numerical terms, 17 out of 21 participants coded for this node thought that this
4 information is obtained indirectly among patients or friends/acquaintances, and
5 often over the phone. 2 participants only thought it was a direct conversation
6 between those directly party to corrupt exchanges and 2 participants thought it
7 was a mixture of both acquiring information on one's own (a research of sorts)
8 and confirming directly with the recipient of a bribe. There were also a few
9 instances of suggesting information being passed on over internet fora⁷⁷,
10 emphasised by FG4.4, and also an instance of using a 'mediátor', which is to be
11 translated into English as the middleman (suggested by FG2.2). The idea of a
12 third-party middleman or broker is widely explored in literature (Gould and
13 Fernandez 1989, Stovel and Shaw 2012, Jancsics 2015) (for details see Chapter
14 3.3), but with only one explicit mention by my participants in the whole
15 research project, it may be that the label 'broker' is more frequently used in
16 instances of financial, cyber⁷⁸, criminal, or grand corruption fraud to avoid paper
17 trail leading to the main perpetrators. The idea of broker or a middleman within
18 corrupt transactions is most frequently used to convey that corrupt transactions
19 are more complex than just a principal-agent model of two parties involved in
20 corrupt exchanges (Lambsdorff 2007, Drugov, Hamman et al. 2011)- instead, it
21 suggests that there may be more parties involved in real-life corrupt exchanges,
22 subject to circumstances. My general-public respondents may not be aware of
23 this type of behaviour explicitly labelled as 'middleman' or 'broker' in the
24 literature published on the subject. However, there are instances of this
25 behaviour to be seen in Slovak public life. For example, in recent corruption
26 scandals in Slovakia, several perpetrators have been jailed and accused as
27 brokers of corrupt or criminal activities, such as Alena Zsuzsová in the case of

⁷⁷ Specifically that of Modrý Koník that I myself use in Chapter 8

⁷⁸ Both financial fraud and cyber-attacks institutions have coined the term 'Man-in-the-middle' attack which aims to obtain sensitive information from a third party, transmitted between two parties online: for more information, visit <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/m/maninthemiddle-fraud.asp> and <https://us.norton.com/internetsecurity-wifi-what-is-a-man-in-the-middle-attack.html> [last accessed 14/01/2021]

1 the murder of Ján Kuciak. Zsuzsová was supposedly acting on behalf of the main
2 accused party, mob leader Marian Kočner, by setting the task of murder and
3 offering a sum for it under Kočner's instructions⁷⁹. In a manner closer to my
4 participants, however, their references to phoning for information on how much
5 a procedure costs, or contacting a friend of the respective healthcare
6 professional delivering the procedure, are akin to the essence of a middleman's
7 function. This passing on of information that leads to corruption would put the
8 friend or acquaintance in a position of outsourcing information on behalf of the
9 healthcare professional, unconsciously or consciously acting as a sort of
10 middleman for the transaction. In such terms, the idea of a middle stage in the
11 corrupt transaction goes to show that the principal-agent model of only two
12 parties involved is in fact not practical in real-life understanding of corruption,
13 which is more likely to involve more parties to elicit the information necessary
14 to perpetrate corrupt transactions. My participants were able to show, in real-
15 life terms, that the value of information being passed on through the middle
16 stage is principally akin to the value of any tangible bribe or a cut from a
17 transaction that is passed through the middleman. This is because the
18 middlemen themselves in these situations capitalise on the fact that they are
19 able to provide valuable information and are able to cash in a return favour of
20 their own in the future. The thesis therefore contributes to expanding the idea
21 of brokerage in corrupt practices to include the exchange and value of
22 information.

23 Figure 12.4 overleaf shows the word cloud frequency for the 'mechanisms of
24 corruption'. According to my participants, the information on bribes or gifts gets
25 exchanged in the 'waiting room' of the respective medical surgery, and it
26 contains language specifically putting 'people' at the centre of the
27 conceptualisation. 'People' or 'old ladies', 'patients', or 'person', and
28 grammatical variations thereof are frequently repeated, which implies a pattern
29 of human exchange of the information necessary for carrying out corrupt

⁷⁹ For more information on the case, visit <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/europe/wealthy-slovak-businessman-cleared-of-plotting-journalist-s-murder-1.4345939> [last accessed 19/01/2021]

1 practices. The frequent reference to ‘old ladies’ by the participants as those
2 most likely to be found in waiting rooms of doctor surgeries is a phenomenon
3 primarily caused by the inefficiency of booking appointments and long waiting
4 times. As a result, waiting rooms tend to be filled with the retired who can
5 afford to sit and wait for hours- the younger generations are more likely to give
6 up sooner, most frequently due to being unable to take any more time off work
7 or schooling for their check-ups. This, alongside words such as ‘telephone’ and
8 verbs of ‘I’ll ask’ or ‘I’ll tell’ shows that the participants believe that the most
9 frequent way of finding out about how to access corruption or how to carry it
10 out happens on the level of people networks and contacts. These networks were
11 not described as anything embedded in the system, on the contrary, they were
12 referred to in subjective terms, suggesting that their origins are organic to the
13 particular social circle of any one person. In other words, they are created and
14 accessed on an ad-hoc basis and extended in a spider-diagram fashion between
15 social circles which can also get connected on a group-to-group basis. This
16 happens when there is a relationship between two individuals from two different
17 groups: the network resources of one group are thus transferred to another
18 group and so on, by nature of vouching for, and embracing, the connecting
19 person from another group. This finding is directly addressing the RQ3 and its
20 query about the specific mechanisms and strategies utilised by people to carry
21 out corrupt practices.



Figure 12.4 Word frequency cloud of node 'Mechanism of corruption', set at 30 words, translations of selected words in red. Source: Author

1 12.4 Personal contacts as corruption

2

3 The role of personal contacts, connections, and networks in corrupt practices
 4 has long been a subject of interest for scholars (Ledeneva, Lovell et al. 2000,
 5 Fan 2002, Michailova and Worm 2003). It was important when addressing RQs3
 6 and overarching RQ to show how, in real life terms, the role of personal
 7 connections facilitates corrupt practices and to what extent the participants
 8 understand this to be true. At first glance, using a word frequency search, it
 9 would appear from Figure 12.5 overleaf that within this node the words and
 10 language most frequently utilised associate personal contacts with corruption,
 11 including phrases such as 'a kind of' or 'a form of' [corruption], as well as more
 12 definite words such as 'exactly' and 'definitely'. I then returned to the original
 13 data to verify that these phrases are indeed syntactically and semantically used
 14 to describe contacts being 'definitely' equivalent to, or at least 'a form of'
 15 corruption. All associations included in the word cloud with these expressions

1 doctor surgery, is a form of corruption. Demographically, it is interesting to note
2 that most of the 19 participants (13 of them) were females and 10 of these
3 females were university-educated. This points to a fairly equal divide in levels of
4 education of all those who thought personal contacts use for private gain is
5 corrupt; but shows a greater tendency by females to condemn this behaviour.
6 This is a trend observed across all the empirical chapters and is congruent with
7 literature suggesting that women are less tolerant of corrupt practices and tend
8 to be more vocal about their condemnation as well (Swamy, Knack et al. 2001,
9 Bauhr, Charron et al. 2018). Out of the 16 participants who thought using
10 personal contacts to gain an advantage was acceptable, there was an equal split
11 of 8 males and 8 females who held this opinion and roughly a half of each gender
12 group were university-educated, which points to an even divide on both
13 demographic fronts. Across the nodes, females were generally more likely to
14 think that, in real-life terms, using personal contacts for one's own advantage is
15 corrupt, and males were more likely to think the opposite. This confirms the
16 trend already described in previous chapters of females being less likely to
17 condone corrupt behaviour and being less tolerant of it by extension (Bauhr,
18 Charron et al. 2018). For an education split, overall, 14/10 university-educated
19 to high-school and primary-school-educated participants were more likely to
20 think that using personal contacts for personal gain is corrupt. While the split
21 may not seem very large at first glance, considering the sample size of over 40
22 participants, the difference is circa 10% of participants on the side of the
23 majority.

24 Beyond the demographic data collected on the node, the language used by
25 participants in each instance (contacts as corrupt and as not corrupt) showed
26 some trends and patterns of expression explored in detail in sections below.

27 **12.4.1 Personal contacts not considered as corruption**

28 The participants who believed that using personal connections was acceptable
29 and not corrupt used several expressions to this effect:

- 30
- No, I think corruption is just when I physically give something to someone (*Nie, podľa mňa korupcia je len, keď ja za to niečo niekomu dám fyzicky FG3.2*)
- 31

1 • I don't think this is some type of corruption (*Toto si nemyslím, že je nejaká*
2 *korupcia INT10)*

3 • Personal contacts are not corruption to me (*Osobné kontakty nie sú pre mňa*
4 *korupcia INT8)*

5 Furthermore, they used specific phrases in order to justify the behaviour. These
6 were centred around ideas of contacts just offering 'help', offering simple
7 'recommendations', showing their 'good will' or 'putting in a good word'; even a
8 lasting relationship being built with the other party as a result:

9 • No, I don't think it is corruption, I think that's my good will and I wouldn't have
10 to do it (*Podľa mňa nie, je to moja dobrá vôľa, nemusela by som to absolútne*
11 *spraviť INT5)*

12 • Well, the personal contact I reckon that's just like a recommendation, not
13 directly corruption (*No ten osobný kontakt podľa mňa akože len odporúčenie nie*
14 *je rovno korupcia INT4)*

15 • That's nor corruption, that's normal helping out (*To nie je korupcia, to je*
16 *normálna pomoc FG1.5)*

17 • No, because it doesn't have to be about money, it can just be about putting in a
18 good word for me (*Nie, pretože to nemusí ísť s peniazmi, to môže byť*
19 *o prihovorení sa ELITE4)*

20 • A sort of relationship is born out of this where you don't have to keep paying,
21 like once the relationship is established, you take different routes (*Vzniká nejaký*
22 *vzťah proste, že netreba to stále platiť, ale už keď je ten vzťah tak sa to rieši*
23 *inak FG1.3)*

24 It is obvious from these responses that the participants go to great lengths to
25 justify the use of personal contacts to get an advantage over others and some
26 even trivialised the behaviour to say that 'among friends this is okay' (FG1.2).
27 One participant even expressed direct knowledge that 'before the law this is
28 also considered corruption, yes, but I wouldn't necessarily see this as corruption
29 myself' (FG4.2).

1 This level of justification of using personal contacts for private gain is not
2 unheard of on a global level. Besides the theories of *blat* and informal practices
3 and networking in post-communist countries (Ledeneva, Lovell et al. 2000,
4 Michailova and Worm 2003), the Asian countries (predominantly China) and their
5 equivalent of *blat* called *guanxi* are also permeated with the socially acceptable
6 use of personal contacts for gain (Fan 2002, So and Walker 2005). Research
7 shows that these networks are often synonymised outside of their region with
8 cronyism and simple bribery, but they are deemed acceptable in China, and the
9 specific emphasis on establishing connections and building social networks (as
10 suggested by my participant FG1.3 above) is key (So and Walker 2005). The idea
11 of exchanging services or gifts for having good relationships is also explored and
12 it has been pointed out that one way of countering this type of behaviour is to
13 legalise such fees in the form of import licences or having fees embedded in
14 construction contracts (Schramm and Taube 2003). It is important to emphasise
15 that the economic impact of these connections and the costs associated with
16 building advantageous relationships are not insignificant. It has been shown that
17 households will spend around 10-20% of disposable income to strengthen their
18 *guanxi* networks and businessmen in mainland China spend around 5% of
19 investments solely on gifts to maintain their *guanxi* networks (Schramm and
20 Taube 2003). TI (2020) reports that this trend is increasing in Asian countries,
21 where 22% of those who accessed public services used personal connections to
22 receive the service they needed. This ranking has India leading with 46% of
23 public service users who used personal connections in the past 12 months,
24 Indonesia second with 36% and China third with 32%⁸⁰. The sectors that were
25 most prevalent in these countries for this trend, as seen in Figure 12.6, are
26 comparable to the sectors that my participants have identified in the above
27 section 12.2 as prevalent for occurrences of corruption, even if there are
28 differences in dominance of individual sectors. For the Central European
29 countries, the areas for corruption prevalence are similar to those outlined in
30 Figure 12.6 overleaf and are explored in detail in Chapter 2. Research shows
31 that informal payments in CEE healthcare specifically accounted for between 1-

⁸⁰ For more details, see <https://www.transparency.org/en/news/bribery-or-personal-connections#>
[last accessed 15/01/2021]

1 4.6% of total healthcare expenditure in early 2000s (Williams, Horodnic et al.
 2 2016). Furthermore, the region itself was shown to reflect the trends outlined
 3 already for household expenditure to corrupt practices, and, more disturbingly,
 4 it has been shown that families of patients with lower income proportionately
 5 pay more than others in informal payments (Szende and Culyer 2006). Similar
 6 notions of connections are explored in other contexts as well, for example the
 7 Bulgarian *blizki*, the UK *old boy networks*, Israeli *protetzia*, or Chilean *confianza*
 8 (*Aliyev 2015*). All of these theories point towards a more complex structure of
 9 corruption dependent on networks and the collective.

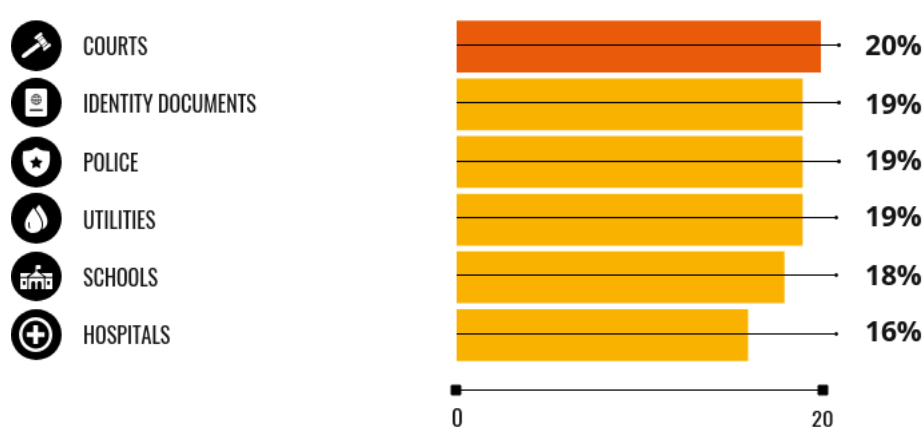


Figure 12.6 Percentage of people who used the respective services thanks to personal connections in Asian countries in the past 12 months Source: TI, 2020

10 12.4.2 Personal contacts usage as corrupt

11 The language used by the participants to convey their disapproval of using
 12 personal contacts for personal gain was very straightforward to analyse. The
 13 participants made it clear that this approach to accessing services provided the
 14 person in question with ‘an unfair advantage’ and that it was a form of
 15 ‘nepotism’. They displayed awareness that a regular person would not be able to
 16 access such a service and it is therefore clearly to be considered a form of
 17 corruption.

- 18 • Yeah, what you see is someone getting an advantage without an evident reason
 19 for it (*Dochádza k zvýhodneniu niekoho bez evidentného dôvodu ELITE1*)
- 20 • The favouritism is there a 100% and...it’s not like it is for free (*Tá protekcia je*
 21 *o sto percent...a tiež to nie je zadarmo ELITE2*)

- 1 • Yes, there's definitely the gaining of something that a regular person wouldn't
2 be able to get to or doesn't have access to (*Ale áno je tam proste získanie*
3 *niečoho, k čomu by sa normálny človek nedostal, alebo nemá prístup ELITE3*)
- 4 • This [contacts] would be the most frequent form that corruption takes these
5 days (*To je asi tá najčastejšia forma tej korupcie dnes FG4.4*)
- 6 • Well, there's always some tit for tat, so, yeah, it's definitely a form of
7 corruption (*Tak vždy je niečo za niečo, takže určite áno je to forma korupcie*
8 *INT2*).

9 It is evident from these responses that the rationale behind considering personal
10 contacts use to be corrupt is centred on its transactional nature. The
11 participants under this node do not believe that any advantage gain could come
12 at no price and are astute enough to consider a favour or a service exchange to
13 be the price one pays, even if this is not monetary or tangible. This is the main
14 distinction that I observed when analysing these two opposing nodes, where the
15 other participants who are condoning the use of personal contacts seem to
16 display a certain level of naivete or wilful ignorance on the matter. Participant
17 ELITE8, for example, thought that there was no 'obvious financial benefit' to the
18 other party, which means that using the personal contact to gain an advantage
19 was not corrupt. INT8 noted that using a personal contact means that the other
20 party 'is not expecting anything of me, doesn't want anything in return', but
21 failed to account for the fact that this return favour may not be cashed in
22 immediately, but possibly over time- at which point it may not appear to be a
23 cashing in but a whole new friendly request. There appeared to be lack of
24 awareness that the immediacy of the return value does not have a conceptual
25 bearing on the fact that this is not a unilateral favour, but could be a bilateral
26 transaction in most cases. This type of thinking was displayed by the participants
27 when considering the acceptability of gratitude payments, too (see Chapter 8),
28 where they thought that the timing of the giving of the gift (i.e., unacceptable
29 bribe before procedure and acceptable thank-you gift after procedure) had any
30 bearing on the reality of the act itself. In terms of legislation however, both
31 actions are an act of corruption and bribery.

1 **12.5 The role of trust in corrupt practices**

2

3 The role of trust in the conceptualisation of corruption has already been
4 addressed in Chapter 1, section 1.7, which focuses on trust and ethics. There is
5 no doubt that corruption, or ‘being’ corrupt, are morally loaded concepts and
6 intrinsically bring along a discussion of ethics and values. There are indications
7 in literature of trust and corruption being strongly correlated (2018 BTI report on
8 Slovakia shows that 85.6% of its respondents believe corruption contributed most
9 to mistrust in society)⁸¹. Batory (2012) also shows that lack of trust and belief in
10 integrity as a social norm creates conditions for corrupt behaviour to become a
11 ‘self-fulfilling prophecy’ (Batory 2012). There is also evidence of corrupt
12 behaviour lowering the trust of the public in the quality of services received, as
13 well as evidence of low interpersonal trust nurturing corrupt practices, which in
14 turn undermine trust in government and public institutions (Morris and Klesner
15 2010, Boardman and Klum 2013). On the other hand, high levels of trust in
16 individuals have been shown to correlate with stronger democratic institutions
17 and lower corruption levels in the respective countries and societies (Kubbe
18 2013). Trust therefore appeared to me as an essential feature of corrupt
19 behaviour to investigate, elusive a concept as it is, and I was keen on discovering
20 what the participants thought about the role of trust in real-life conditions of
21 corrupt behaviour. Not everyone engaged with the question and several
22 participants found it difficult to understand what is meant by the term, which
23 led to my reflexively amending the first drafts of the question on trust and often
24 providing more qualifiers- e.g. ‘Do you think that a certain level of trust is
25 required between the two parties for a successful corrupt transaction to take

⁸¹ For full report, see BTI 2018- Bertelsmann Stiftung’s Transformation Index Report of 2018; Slovakia-specific section

1 place? In what way do you think such trust manifests, or do you think it is there
2 at all? Do you think that trust is important in this/that way?’ and similar⁸².

3 Ten out of the 11 participants coded against this node believed that trust did
4 indeed play a role in corrupt transactions and one participant disagreed with the
5 notion of trust being important at all. This is to say that nearly a quarter of all
6 participants believed that trust is significant and necessary for the success of a
7 corrupt transaction. However, the conceptualisation displayed by the
8 participants re-defined the idea of trust into the idea more akin to fulfilling
9 expectations. In other words, the participants understood the need for trust
10 between the two corrupt parties on the level of securing an expected
11 behavioural outcome. This is why the language utilised by the participants
12 reflected ideas of fear, guilt, sharing the blame, “grassing” the other party out,
13 acting in a calculated way, or reciprocity of action:

- 14 • ‘I think it plays a role...it may be the fear that still exists here from past regime
15 too’ (Ja si myslím, že áno...možno je to strach, ktorý tu ešte pretrváva z bývalej
16 doby ELITE1)
- 17 • ‘Yeah, it’s the system of ‘you do this for me and I’ll be quiet’ (Áno, že ty mi dáš
18 a ja budem ticho FG2.1)
- 19 • ‘Yeah, the risk is always there, there’s an equal share of the blame on both
20 sides’ (Ale to riziko ideš vždy, na obidvoch stranách je rovnaký diel viny FG3.1)
- 21 • ‘...yeah, I am not afraid because I could grass them out as much as the other way
22 around’ (Nebojím sa, lebo aj ja by som ho mohol natriet’ FG3.5)

⁸² I clarified ‘trust’ with the participants as trust between the agents of corruption, rather than trust in any public institutions or regulations. Beyond that, however, I let the participants interpret ‘trust’ themselves and they unanimously understood this as a feeling of security from liability between those involved in the corrupt transaction.

- 1 • ‘Yes, I think it goes beyond whether I get grassed out because both parties are
2 automatically in illegality’ (Tam už to nie je o tom, že niekto ma natrie, pretože
3 v podstate obe strany sú už automaticky v ilegalite INT16.1)
- 4 • ‘I think it’s more the calculating nature of it’ (Skôr je to tá vypočítavosť
5 INT16.2)
- 6 • ‘It’s about that reciprocity. Whether the trust is sincere or not, it’s always
7 conditioned by the other party’ (Tak je to o reciprocite. Tá dôvera, či je
8 úprimná alebo nie, musí byť vždy podmienená druhou stranou INT4)

9 Therefore, when we speak about trust in real-life understanding and
10 conceptualisation of corrupt practices, the participants speak of it in terms of
11 securing a successful result by the two parties involved, without compromising
12 themselves or the result. Understanding trust within corruption in terms of
13 expectation is established in literature as well and my participants’ practical
14 conceptualisation validates the theory on the subject. Warburton (2013),
15 Luhmann (1979) and Kubbe (2013) all conceptualise trust within corruption as a
16 certainty of expectation, laying a basis for cooperation with other people that
17 will lead to a result that does not incriminate either party. In such terms, the
18 securing of mutually beneficial behaviour based on a threat of legal action, a
19 quarter of participants do believe that trust plays a role in corrupt transactions
20 in real-life understanding of corruption. This idea of securing expected
21 behaviour due to all parties being liable is also astutely understood by this
22 quarter of the participants with relation to the Slovak Criminal Code, which
23 classifies all parties in a corrupt transaction as culpable. In a sense, the Criminal
24 Code itself adds incentive for the lack of reporting of corruption, due to both
25 parties being held equally accountable.

26

1 12.6 Systemic change

2

3 The node entitled ‘Systemic change’ serves as a label to cover the participants’
 4 views on whether the system set up in Slovak health care works or whether it
 5 needs to change with relation to corrupt practices. This was a broad and open-
 6 ended question on purpose, to be able to let the participants have the freedom
 7 to express their views on the functioning of healthcare, but also give room to
 8 express any suggestions they may have about the kind of change they would like
 9 to see from their consumer point of view. The participants, as a result,
 10 expressed their views on whether they thought that corrupt practices in general
 11 were a result of systemic failings and provided details as to the rationale behind
 12 their thoughts on this, as well as their suggestions on possible remediation of the
 13 situation. They were also given the choice of whether they believe that systemic
 14 change (in case they thought this was needed) should come from bottom-up, or
 15 should be streamlined from top to bottom, or a combination of both.

16 Overall, 27 participants answered this question and 15 of these participants
 17 thought that corruption in Slovakia is predominantly a systemic problem and the
 18 system does need to change fundamentally to respond to this trend. The
 19 language to support this view included phrases such as:

- 20
- 21 • ‘If we compare ourselves with those countries with low levels of corruption, like
 22 the Scandinavian countries, it is evident that there need to be some systemic
 23 measures put in place’ (*Ked’ ja porovnávam aj s krajinami s tou najnižšou*
 24 *formou korupcie, teda tie Škandinávске krajiny, tak evidentne treba urobiť*
nejaké systémové riešenia ELITE3)
 - 25 • ‘The system is rotten through and through. We need a complete swap’ over
 26 (*Systém je prežratý. Proste kompletná výmena ELITE5)*
 - 27 • ‘Well, the system is not set up well at all, if it was set up to provide standard
 28 pay for standard work and the work is regulated so that people aren’t burnt out
 29 and they work standard hours not like 12 hour-shifts back-to-back. The system is
 30 the problem’ (*No systém je zle nastavený, ak by bol systém tak, že normálna*

1 *práca za normálnu plácu a aj tá práca je regulovaná tak, že nie sú vyčerpaní,*
2 *normálny čas, nerobia dvanástky za sebou. Problém je systém INT8).*

3 The patterns elicited from the language in the transcripts related to
4 recommendations made by the participants on several specific categories of
5 improvement. These were recommendations for politicians to get replaced, a
6 complete swap over of personnel in vulnerable sectors and in parliament, the
7 increasing of the living wage to counter salary shortages, establishing respect for
8 people in their jobs and instilling pride in their profession, and also tweaking of
9 the insurance system to be more helpful to the consumer. Upon conducting
10 research into the changes already implemented over the years into healthcare,
11 it turned out that the participant observations and recommendations, based on
12 their real-life understanding of corruption, were in congruence with a lot of
13 previous findings.

14 Systemic changes in the realm of healthcare and beyond have been suggested as
15 a possible remediation for corrupt practices on several fronts already (Mužik and
16 Szalayová 2013, 25 2014, Szalay 2014). Szalay (2014) shows the reforms
17 undertaken by several governments in detail in his Health Policy Institute report
18 that mostly related to legislation novellas and reforms on insurance policies,
19 additional payments for medications and curbing informal payments for waiting
20 times. However, it is emphasised that these novellas are subject to the
21 government in place and their own political agenda and are therefore subject to
22 continuous alteration. As a result, some bedrock principles that would have
23 impacted on corrupt practices in healthcare, are constantly in flux and subject
24 to change every election cycle. These include the independence of the Bureau
25 for Medical Care Oversight from the state (crucially currently the only body with
26 the power to regulate corrupt behaviour outside of the law, as specified in
27 Chapter 11), the fees for services associated with medical care, as well as the
28 business model transformation of hospitals into limited companies and more
29 (2014:7). The official recommendations are connected to lowering the hold that
30 one of the main insurance companies (VSZP) has on regulating the prices for
31 procedures and medicines- the state is the sole shareholder of this insurance
32 company and the state also owns over 50% of the capacity of hospital beds
33 overall in the country (Szalay 2014). The report recommends splitting up the
34 insurance company and privatising parts of it to allow for the competitiveness of

1 the market to drive the price of care, as opposed to the other private companies
2 having to follow the lead of the state-owned VSZP. The report also recommends
3 greater transparency in providing flat rates of insurance, different insurance
4 packages, a nominal insurance rate, access to a comprehensive consumer rating
5 of quality of service, and transparency of fee imposition (Szalay 2014). One of
6 my participants in particular, ELITE6, specifically suggested that reforming the
7 insurance business in the country would increase quality assurance of service and
8 curb corrupt practices by providing the consumer with more choice of product:

9 *'We should mirror the healthcare models of Switzerland where the health care*
10 *costs are high but the care itself is more effective. Therefore, up to 5 thousand*
11 *for care we should be covering ourselves and if we need more, then from there*
12 *upwards let's be social and have insurance cover...same with the excessive*
13 *number of years of maternity leave allowed here- this cripples the*
14 *economy...same with antibiotics prescription and resulting overly frequent*
15 *doctor visits. Some drugs like antibiotic creams and paracetamol should be*
16 *freely available over the counter like it is in the UK- this would reduce the*
17 *wasting of time of doctors' (ELITE6).*

18 It is important to point out that this particular participant has great insight into
19 health care practices over the world due to their unique work experience abroad
20 and one cannot expect this level of insight from all participants, or the general
21 population more broadly. It is therefore important to stress that many of the
22 opinions held by my participants, while providing evidence of certain possible
23 trends and views, may not be fully representative of the general population.
24 However, this view is supported by evidence, when in 2003 fees were put in
25 place by the government, which applied to: visiting doctors in surgeries (20
26 Slovak crowns per visit), hospital stay (50 Slovak crowns per day), first aid
27 provision (60 Slovak crowns), ambulance transport (2 Slovak crowns per km)⁸³.
28 The doctor visits lowered by 10% and first aid provision (i.e. visits of A&E) by 13%
29 (Mužik and Szalayová 2013). However, it is not made clear by the report whether

⁸³ For reference to current currency, the rate of EUR to SK crown was set at 1EUR=cca 30 crowns upon receiving the Euro in 2008 in Slovakia

1 the fees addressed superfluous visits which were time wasting and pointless by
2 the patients, or if this approach caused the poorer citizens to receive
3 substandard or no care at all.

4 However, the idea of standardising care and expectations of healthcare
5 consumers is something that comes up in discourse on a frequent basis. Both the
6 Health Policy Institute reports (2013, 2014) and also a healthcare data analyst on
7 a panel of a recent discussion on bribery in healthcare 'Gift v Bribe', remarked
8 on the problems of lack of standard that is presented to the consumer. This lack
9 of awareness of what is standard care and what is included in insurance then
10 leads to greater impulse for informal payments and corrupt practices, to
11 presumably secure a good level of care. The participants were therefore astute
12 with their picking up on the need to review insurance policy. With measures
13 changing with every election cycle, the Health Policy Institute (HPI) report in
14 2013 suggested a 'basic package' of insurance that should be available to all
15 consumers which, more than anything, clearly states:

- 16 • Which services one is entitled to
- 17 • What waiting times are acceptable for the relevant procedure
- 18 • What the financial impact is outside of the insured levels (Mužik and Szalayová
19 2013).

20 Most of all, this information should be transparent and easy to understand for
21 people to be able to make informed decisions. Additionally, there should also be
22 clear and comprehensive price lists outside of private or semi-private surgeries
23 for the consumer to be able to understand before they arrive as to what, if any,
24 additional charge they are facing. The reports highlight the lack of standard of
25 care, primarily visible on the difference between waiting times within each
26 insurance company for the same procedure of a hip replacement (Figure 12.7).

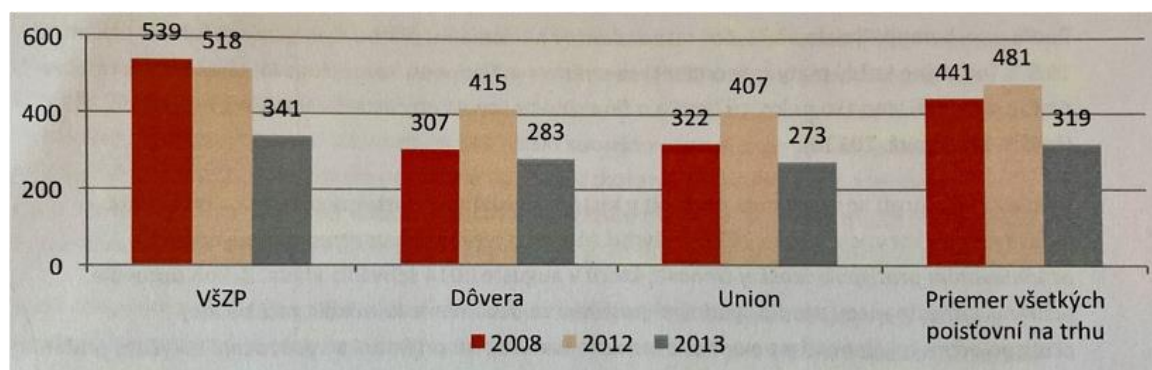


Figure 12.7 Comparison of waiting times for hip replacement surgery for the three major insurance companies (VšZP, Dôvera, Union) in days, last column is an average of all insurance companies on the market, Source: Szalay (HPI), 2014

1

2 It is apparent that the patients face a wide variation of waiting times and the
 3 2013 HPI report calls for standardising these waiting times, with the option of
 4 providing a legal and a transparent way for expediting a procedure based on a
 5 standardised fee (Mužik and Szalayová 2013). The authors suggest that rather
 6 than face informal payments and reshuffling the order of waiting lists without
 7 patient knowledge, these expedited procedures should be transparently
 8 performed on weekends or outside of regular hours for the added fee, to
 9 accommodate for the demand, but not to affect the waiting lists of those
 10 receiving standard care. The selection of concrete physicians for certain
 11 procedures should also be done in a transparent manner for a transparent fee
 12 and this, along with other specific healthcare features of change is discussed in
 13 greater detail in the following chapter.

14 However, among the more general systemic, anti-corruption changes that have
 15 been recommended but not yet implemented by the government, is the simple
 16 recommendation of making the doctor credentials and assessment public. The
 17 2014 HPI report shows that corrupt behaviour is discussed in the complaints by
 18 patients about doctors that regularly make their way to the Bureau for Medical
 19 Oversight. This is reported along with lack of willingness to treat, lack of
 20 expertise, low quality of service, and unprofessional behaviour (2014:33). The
 21 number of complaints has been steadily increasing from 2005 to 2013 (2014:33)
 22 and making the doctor CVs, their credentials, and work experience a matter of

1 public record on hospital websites, or in their surgeries, could provide the
2 patients with the information they need to make an informed decision. Similarly
3 to the GMC practice in the UK, where the tribunal records over patient
4 complaints are made public, the records of the Bureau for Medical Oversight in
5 Slovakia should be made equally public to increase transparency and quality
6 assurance. The participants only showcase very general and instinctive ideas of
7 addressing insurance policy and transparency systemically, but there is clearly
8 evidence of such suggestions having been made in very specific terms by official
9 bodies. It could be concluded therefore that all that remains is for an effective
10 implementation of these recommendations that are called for by official
11 regulatory bodies, but also instinctively picked up on as problematic by my
12 participants in their real-life understanding of corruption in healthcare.

13 **12.6.1 Systemic change: bottom-up, top-down, or both?**

14 While the section above primarily discusses the change that has been
15 recommended but not yet implemented from a sectoral point of view, this
16 section presents the participant views on where such a change should come
17 from. There was some overlap in the participant responses and thoughts based
18 on their real-life understanding of corruption, with 19 unique responses coded
19 against the three options presented to them. 10 participants thought that
20 bottom-up change was likely to be more lasting and effective, 7 of whom were
21 females. However, there were also 10 participants who thought top-down
22 systemic change was necessary and 6 of these were female participants too.
23 Bearing in mind that there were only 12 female participants of the 19 coded
24 against all three options, there is bound to be overlap in their thinking. 6
25 participants thought that a combination of the two approaches was necessary,
26 and again, 5 of these participants were females. It is therefore impossible to
27 draw out a definitive trend of demographic preference of any of the three
28 options or to show what the prevalent opinion was, as the participants seem to
29 be accepting that all three approaches have their merits and are needed.

30 Instead, I wanted to focus on the reasoning behind advocating the approaches,
31 which show how the real-life experience has shaped their understanding.

32 The reasons behind a bottom-up approach included:

- 1 • Starting from oneself to implement change
- 2 • Realising that the behaviour shown on top levels is learnt 'somewhere' on the
3 bottom levels and it needs addressed there
- 4 • Real change would come from enlightening the populace through education,
5 starting on bottom levels
- 6 • The real problem is not valuing people's work and so learning to respect people
7 and their work must start early on
- 8 • The change will be possible if we start from small surgeries and ambulatory care
9 and then move up the ranks to implement on higher levels, including then
10 swapping those in charge.

11 The reasons behind a top-down approach included:

- 12 • Realising that the mob-like effects descend from top levels to all other strata
13 and need to be dealt with at the top
- 14 • Exemplary actions taken at top levels are more likely to resonate with the
15 bottom levels as well
- 16 • Investment into the problems from the top levels is required for bottom levels to
17 feel the effect of change
- 18 • Top level leadership affecting the problem positively would work best but only if
19 there are competent people in these positions, preferably having gained their
20 competence and experience on bottom levels.

21 For the combination of both approaches, the most frequent reasoning was that
22 change from the top is important but will not work without the introspective
23 element of starting from oneself to set an example for others and the next
24 generation.

25 It is evident that as much as there is overlap of participants against these
26 individual approaches to systemic change, there is even more overlap in their
27 reasoning behind these approaches. They display a very sophisticated view of

1 what is needed to implement change effectively, and the overlap in responses is
2 indicative of their awareness that one level of change cannot work without the
3 other. Any exemplary measures implemented at the top levels will not work
4 without the engaged and willing populace and civil society. An example in
5 practice of a failed, solely top-down approach policy is the ‘trickle down
6 economics’, which was supposed to effectively reduce income inequality and has
7 now been shown to have the exact opposite effect of increasing income
8 inequality (Hope and Limberg 2020). Moreover, income inequality has been
9 positively correlated with increase of corrupt practices, unemployment, and
10 decrease of economic growth (Gupta, Davoodi et al. 2002, Gyimah-Brempong
11 2002). Top-down policies such as ‘trickle down economics’ have therefore been
12 shown not only to fail at curbing inequality and, by extension, corrupt practices,
13 but actively cause an increase in corrupt practices (You and Khagram 2004).

14 The value of education on this subject is also recognised by the participants and
15 it is therefore evident that their real-life understanding of how much corruption
16 has permeated society and how difficult it is to address its individual facets is
17 astute and realistic. The importance of an engaged civil society when
18 implementing change successfully not just in corruption, but also in
19 environmental engagement, business engagement and social change, is well-
20 documented in literature and proved to be effective (Brinkerhoff 1999, Fowler
21 2000, Hamann and Acutt 2003, Cooper 2018). For healthcare in Slovakia
22 specifically, it is shown that an engaged civil society can bring about real change
23 in healthcare provision and set up. As mentioned earlier, the 2014 HPI report
24 shows that in 2010-2012 this civil society engaged in healthcare reform and
25 provision has been very passive and only 14 patient organisations out of the total
26 300 submitted their notes on only 7 out of 110 legislative acts (Balík and
27 Starečková 2012). However, 77% of their notes were recognised as crucial and
28 implemented in the legislative acts themselves, which points to a high level of
29 success when these organisations got involved (Szalay 2014). Therefore, it would
30 appear that while top-down change leaves a lot to be desired, bottom-up change
31 can also use some improvement and if the potential of the two was harnessed
32 into effective cooperation, the systemic change that the participants realise is
33 necessary, could take place.

1 **12.7 Conclusions**

2

3 The chapter addressed the participant views on of how corruption is practically
4 carried out in real-life terms. It sought to show how the participants'
5 conceptualisations of corruption as an abstract phenomenon from previous
6 chapters feed into their awareness of what networks are utilised to commit
7 corrupt acts. The participants talked about their views on where corruption is
8 most likely to appear, what sort of mechanisms they thought are utilised to take
9 part in corruption, and what role trust and personal contacts play in real life
10 corruption. Finally, the participants tied these views to whether corruption
11 should be addressed systemically and in what way.

12 The participants on the whole located healthcare as the most prevalent sector
13 where corruption can be found and also included other sectors such as
14 education, entrepreneurship or politics. This identification of sectors is
15 congruent with published reports on where corruption is detected most, but the
16 participants' view is that healthcare is most prevalent, as opposed to the cited
17 report which marks entrepreneurship as the most vulnerable sector. In real life
18 terms, therefore, healthcare is seen as most affected by corruption, as the
19 sector that everyone is likely to have some experience of (be it first-hand or
20 not). The participants on the whole thought that corruption was widespread and
21 could be found 'everywhere' in public life and the most prevalent expression
22 associated with most likely occurrences was 'getting things done'. This indicates
23 that the sector itself is not as relevant as the circumstances the respondents
24 believe create an opportunity for getting ahead and producing results of a
25 quality that is faster, better, and outside of the norm.

26 With regards to practical mechanisms of carrying out corruption, the
27 participants were more likely to believe that information on the 'know-how' was
28 more likely to be obtained indirectly through others with a similar experience. In
29 other words, accessing information on how much something would cost or who to
30 approach is, in real life terms, more likely to come from personal networks of
31 acquaintances, family or friends. The participants clearly were not thinking of
32 these indirect contacts as anything other than those performing a role of a

1 source or a favour, but these networks could be conceptualised in theoretical
2 terms as unwittingly performing the function of a middleman in the corrupt
3 exchange. The participant discourse was also centred around the idea of
4 'people' asking or telephoning for information, which points to their awareness
5 of the role that these networks play in carrying out corruption.

6 Use of personal contacts being equated to corruption was a sensitive subject for
7 the participants and it elicited some heated debate in the data collection
8 process. On the whole the majority of participants thought that personal
9 contacts were equal/synonymous to corruption or at least a form of it. The
10 majority of these participants were female, which further buttresses the
11 findings of previous empirical chapters and literature on the subject of women
12 being less tolerant of corrupt practices than men.

13 The role of trust in corrupt transactions proved to be seen as significant by a
14 quarter of all participants. However, the definition of trust for the purposes of
15 corrupt practices centred around the idea of fulfilling expectations, rather than
16 trust for its own sake. In other words, the participants believed that it was
17 necessary for the parties involved in corruption to trust that all parties would
18 behave in a way that does not incriminate or harm themselves. For these
19 purposes and for the corrupt context, however, the verbs 'trust' and 'expect'
20 are interchangeable.

21

22 Over a half of the participants who responded to the question on systemic
23 change believed that the system and its procedural shortcomings and loopholes
24 was one of the predominant culprits in the spread of corruption and believed
25 that systemic change was needed to remediate this situation. The participants
26 astutely picked up on the changes that should be implemented, including
27 swapping over personnel in vulnerable sectors, raising the living wage and
28 salaries of healthcare staff, greater transparency in processes and also a change
29 of the insurance policy for healthcare. These and other changes have also been
30 put forward by official bodies such as the Health Policy Institute in Slovakia and
31 are therefore congruent with the trends picked up on independently. The
32 participants show acute awareness of the insufficiencies of the insurance

1 companies in providing clarity of message on what is standard care and how best
2 to receive it.

3 Last but not least, the participants showed a remarkable level of sophistication
4 when explaining their views on where systemic change should come from. The
5 participants did not shake their personal responsibility by suggesting all change
6 should be merely implemented and enforced from the top positions. Instead,
7 they showed awareness of the importance of interaction of all levels involved in
8 change implementation. It was heartening to see that the participants were able
9 to grasp in their real-life understanding of corruption that as much as the system
10 needs to adapt to the situation at hand, their own responsibility of starting from
11 one's own decisions and setting an example was of significant importance in
12 their discourse.

13

1 Chapter 13: Health Care Corrupt Practices

2 13.1 Introduction

3

4 The final results chapter of the thesis addresses the corrupt practices observed
 5 and perceived specifically in healthcare in Slovakia. This chapter addresses the
 6 final nodes examining whether participants believe it is doctors or patients who
 7 in fact initiate the corrupt exchange (and in which branch of healthcare the
 8 participants believe corrupt practices are most prevalent). This is completely
 9 novel information elicited within corruption research in the healthcare sector; I
 10 was unable to find such level of detail asked by any previous works on the
 11 subject. However, as can be seen from the figure below (Fig 13.1), the category
 12 in its essence encompasses several nodes already addressed in previous chapters
 13 (white and red clouds). In other words, it is necessary for the specific final nodes
 14 in green to be addressed here separately, with previous chapters providing the
 15 necessary insight into these complex ideas.

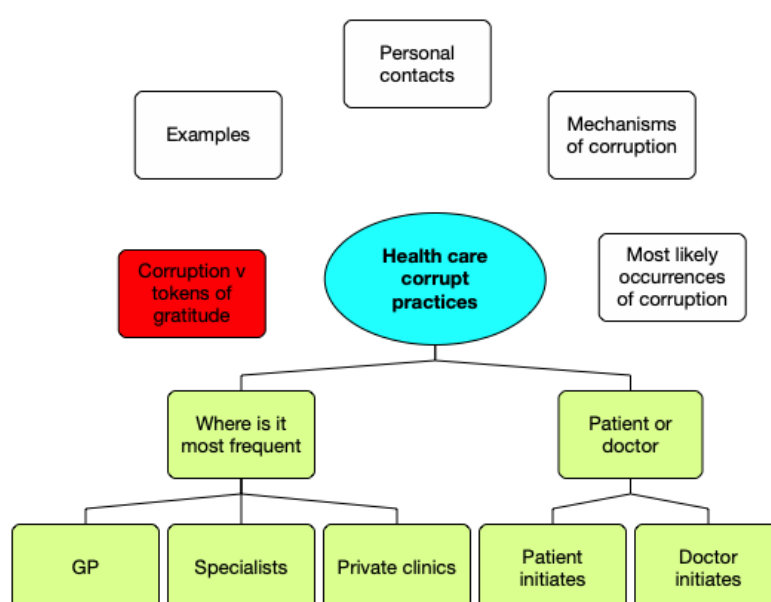


Figure 13.1 Visual presentation of the category Health care corrupt practices. The bright blue bubble represents the category, white boxes represent floating ideas, red box represents a dominant content node, and green boxes represent nodes with a moderate to low number of references. Source: Author

16 The analysis within this chapter is primarily focused on textual elements and
 17 language of participants, but also includes some graphic visualisations of data
 18 trends. By expressing their views on which party is more likely to initiate corrupt

1 transactions in real life, the participants are tapping into ideas of social customs
2 and behavioural trends and therefore directly address RQ3 (*What are the*
3 *strategies utilised to carry out grand and petty corrupt practices?*) and RQ3b (*To*
4 *what extent are social rules and customs important in the carrying out of*
5 *corrupt practices?*). However, by sharing their views and real-life understanding
6 of corruption within branches of healthcare, such as corruption in GP surgeries,
7 specialist surgeries, or private clinics, the chapter also informs more broadly the
8 overarching RQ (*To what extent is the theoretical difference between grand and*
9 *petty corruption reflected in the real-life understanding of corruption in*
10 *Slovakia's health care?*) by juxtaposing these views with existing literature.

11 **13.2 Patients or doctors?**

12

13 The participants coded against this node were answering the question on
14 whether they thought it was patients or the healthcare staff who were more
15 likely to initiate a corrupt transaction. In other words, are the patients more
16 likely to offer a bribe/ coerce or shame the doctor into taking a bribe, or are the
17 doctors more likely to request one/ threaten lower quality of service by not
18 receiving one? These types of questions are key to developing an understanding
19 about the interactions between healthcare providers and patients, and about
20 corruption in general, and the power balances that exist within the transactions
21 in real life. Establishing greater understanding about the trends of initiating
22 corrupt acts could potentially lead to more targeted anti-corruption measures
23 which would be able to address corruption at its source. Figure 13.2 overleaf
24 creates the impression of vagueness within the participant responses, and there
25 is an equal amount of mentions about both doctors and patients in this context.
26 The participant discourse, therefore, was likely to be speculative unless based
27 on real experience, but direct experiences were not explored by my questions to
28 avoid non-participation for fear of self-incrimination. In the general parent node
29 'Patient or Doctor', 6 participants expressed a view that both approaches are
30 equally plausible and that a combination of both parties offering and requesting
31 bribes in similar measure is probably the closest to reality. The literature to
32 date does not address the specific origin of corrupt exchange in the doctor-

1

2 The participants display awareness that this may not be a clear-cut deal of one
3 side necessarily offering or receiving and the other side being forced to comply,
4 and it is likely that a combination of both doctor and patient-led corrupt
5 practices are present. The idea of both sides exhibiting corrupt behaviour also
6 further reinforces the notion explored in the previous chapter on how important
7 it is to make sure that systemic change in corruption is addressed from both top
8 and bottom levels simultaneously to be effective. The participants showcase
9 throughout their discourse a consistency of awareness that no part of corruption
10 is isolated from the other. The intertwined nature of several levels of corruption
11 in real life further informs the overarching RQ.

12 Participant views on each party initiating corrupt exchanges are discussed in
13 depth below.

14 ***13.2.1 Doctors initiating exchange***

15 The participants' views on the doctor being more likely to take initiative on
16 corrupt exchanges were smaller in number than the belief that the patients
17 were more likely to initiate, with an overall 18/11 split of opinions for
18 patients/doctors. Some of these were, however, part of a discourse that was
19 likely to encompass a view that both options are possible and therefore cannot
20 be considered mutually exclusive. However, the language that is associated with
21 the two options presents interesting patterns.

22 The participants were likely to refer to the doctors 'expecting' a bribe even if
23 this was not prompted, for the exchange to be almost 'automatic', the doctors
24 to have a known 'rate' for the respective procedure. However, in a more passive
25 way, the participants stated that even if the doctors do not directly request a
26 bribe (which some thought they were likely to do anyway), they 'wouldn't refuse
27 it', which they argue then encourages the behaviour of patients by proxy.
28 Whether this constitutes a doctor-initiated corrupt practice is questionable;
29 however, it can certainly be thought of as a doctor-enabled practice.

30

1 The phrases utilised included the following:

- 2 • The doctors are so calculating...frustrated that they earn too little in the state
3 healthcare so they've no shame to ask (*Lekári sú už tak vychcaní, že si vypýtajú.*
4 *Jednak sú frustrovaní, že málo zarábajú v tej štátnej sfére, takže nehanbia sa*
5 *zobrať ELITE2)*
- 6 • I mean there are situations where you know that the doctor has a specific 'rate'
7 or so (*Sú situácie známe, že pán doctor má nejakú taxu alebo podobne ELITE3)*
- 8 • I don't necessarily think that they ask for it...but then again, they won't refuse it
9 either (*Ja neberiem, že ten lekár si to pýta...Ale zase to neodmietne INT13)*
- 10 • ...may be a case where the doctor may hint that there might be something
11 additional needed (*...prípád toho lekára, že naznačil, že niečo treba, bude treba*
12 *niečo priložiť INT16.1)*

13 These patterns of discourse alluding to implicit or explicit information on bribes,
14 or asking for bribes directly, is congruent with the scholarly research on defining
15 the practical facets of corruption in healthcare. Garcia (2019) outlines the six
16 most common types of corruption in health service delivery. Among these are
17 absenteeism (doctors not showing up for work), embezzlement, informal
18 payments from patients, corruption in service provision not driven by medical
19 need alone, favouritism and manipulation of data (Garcia 2019). From these six
20 types of corruption, the patient would realistically only have a way of
21 influencing informal payments and service provision/favouritism by extension,
22 but this is still entirely dependent on the response or willingness of the
23 healthcare professional, who, in this context, is a gatekeeper to the crucial
24 resource of healthcare for this patient. Chattopadhyay (2013) shows that corrupt
25 behaviour in medicine by healthcare professionals is rampant, undermines the
26 trust in healthcare and the reputation of the medical profession itself, prolongs
27 ill health, and potentially also kills (Chattopadhyay 2013). Such a situation is
28 amplified when the service sought after is of a niche nature and there is only a
29 limited number of specialists in that field available to the patient, which
30 reduces their options of choice and increases their position of vulnerability and
31 dependence on the behaviour of the healthcare professional. A 2014 Slovak
32 Health Policy Institute report notes that while the data of the biggest,

1 government-owned healthcare insurer VSZP in Slovakia shows that the capacity
2 for ambulatory care specialists is supposedly filled to 205%, there is still
3 reported lack of access to specialists in certain fields. These are namely
4 cardiology, immunology, diabetology, rheumatology, endocrinology, and others.
5 The reason for this, according to Szalay (2014) is the reduced working hours of
6 these specialists and their multiple contracted places of work, often collated
7 with private practices, which take them away from state ambulatory care
8 (Szalay 2014).

9 The idea of absenteeism due to secondary, private sector employment, explored
10 by Garcia (2019) in a Latin American context, is therefore a relevant trend
11 picked up on by the literature in Slovakia and also perceived as a problem for
12 real-life understanding of corruption by my Slovak participants. The lack of
13 access to these professionals and the demand for them are undoubtedly factors
14 that affect the access of patients to healthcare as a whole, and also create an
15 opportunity for extra, informal payments to be dictated or expected. Efforts
16 aimed specifically at the curbing of corrupt practices of healthcare professionals
17 have been feeble so far (Szalay 2014). The Slovak Doctors Union (LOZ) has put
18 forward some proposals on curbing corruption among professionals, but these
19 were never officially implemented due to their unfinished nature (2014:36).
20 Similarly, the badge campaign of the LOZ for doctors to wear badges or stickers
21 'I don't take bribes' has had a very low uptake among professionals, with fewer
22 than a 1,000 doctors having taken part in the initiative and producing no
23 significant results in the curbing of corrupt practices (2014:36). It is worth
24 mentioning that these methods of encouraging better behaviour are reminiscent
25 of the "stick" methods here, rather than "carrots" in the shape of financial or
26 other incentives for transparent behaviour of doctors. My research has not shown
27 any such "carrots" incentives or methods put in place in Slovak healthcare to
28 encourage better doctor behaviour. No concrete methods save the threat of
29 legal action over criminal behaviour are currently in place that would apply to
30 doctors in particular.

1 **13.2.2 Patients initiating exchange**

2 The option of patients being more likely to initiate the corrupt exchange was
 3 mentioned by 18 participants, making it more popular than doctor-initiated
 4 corruption. However, as I indicated above, there is some overlap in responses of
 5 the participants within this node and several were likely to include both options
 6 operating in a symbiotic relationship as most likely to reflect real-life behaviour.
 7 The literature on informal payments and participant responses to gratitude
 8 payment/bribing behaviour has been discussed in detail in Chapter 1 and
 9 Chapter 8 and these trends are reinforced by findings such as those presented in
 10 Figure 13.3, which outlines the experiences of the public on bribery in
 11 healthcare from 2012 to 2021 in three-year gaps. It is obvious from Figure 13.3
 12 that most respondents report notions of bribery across several specialties.
 13 However, such statistics only provide the information without closer
 14 investigation on the practicality of the corrupt exchange- i.e., who is most likely
 15 to instigate it and what are the reasons behind it? It was therefore important to
 16 collect the participants' views on the reasoning behind the patients' impulse to
 17 offer a bribe or a gift to the healthcare professional.

	2012	2015	2018	2021
GP for adults	10,0	7,0	5,5	4.9
Internal medicine	6,4	4,2	3,1	3.9
Surgery	5,6	5,4	2,7	2.8
Dentistry	4,7	2,8	2,6	1.5
Gynaecology	4,2	2,3	1,9	2.4
Orthopaedics	3,6	2,3	1,7	3.3
GP for children and adolescents	3,0	1,7	1,3	1.1
Neurology	2,7	2,2	1,5	3.1
Cardiology	1,6	1,6	0,7	1.2
Trauma	1,1	0,8	0,7	1.4
Other (Oncology, ophthalmology, plastic surgery, rehabilitations, medical spa, allergy clinic, respiratory, urology etc.)	2,4	1,3	0,7	0.7
Don't know, can't remember	1,3	1,2	1,0	0.9
N/A – gave no bribe; wasn't at the doctor; doesn't know/ didn't answer	73,5	78,2	80,2	78

Figure 13.3 The bribery trends within different parts of healthcare in response to the question "In which department did you pay something on the side?" Source: TI 2021, translations author

18 The language used by participants to answer these questions centred around:
 19 patients needing something sorted faster and thus feeling the need to pay extra,

1 the psychological effect of pressure to appease the professional since health is
 2 at stake, people specifically ‘shoving’ money at healthcare professionals, and
 3 also bribing being a learnt behaviour and a social norm.

- 4 • I think that people have now learnt to behave that way, that without bringing
 5 something they won't even go at all (*Podľa mňa ľudia sú tak naučení, že bez*
 6 *toho aby niečo ponúkli ani nejdú FG2.1)*
- 7 • I think it's more about the fact that the person wants to give it [bribe] or they
 8 heard from someone that it is necessary to give it (*Čiže skôr ide o to, že ten*
 9 *človek chce dať alebo od niekoho počul, že treba dať ELITE4)*
- 10 • The patients want to be done quickly and be off the hook and circumvent the
 11 system to that end (*Pacienti chcú byť rýchlo hotoví a at' to z krku a obísť ten*
 12 *system INT8)*
- 13 • I agree that the patient probably is more likely to go first into that exchange
 14 than the healthcare professional (*Súhlasím asi, že je to možno ten pacient,*
 15 *ktorý skôr ide do toho ako ten zdravotník INT16.1)*
- 16 • It's more likely the patient because they come with the problem and they want
 17 it sorted and they'll do anything for that to happen (*Skôr si myslím, že ten*
 18 *pacient. Lebo on pride s tým problémom a on ho chce vyriešiť ten problém a*
 19 *spraví všetko preto. INT16.2)*
- 20 • People behave in such a way that they are shoving stuff at the doctor and he's
 21 not even done anything yet (*Ale ľudia sú takí, že strkajú tomu doktorovi a ešte*
 22 *ani nič neurobil INT11)*
- 23 • A lot of the time the doctors may not even be aware that they were given
 24 something. Like the patients chase them around the hospitals and shove things
 25 at them (*Aj doktori sa im tiež stáva, že častokrát nevedia, že im niekto niečo*
 26 *dal. Akože tí pacienti ich naháňajú po nemocniciach, strkajú im veci INT4)*
- 27 • I think it's the psychological effect of being scared for one's health and for their
 28 life, so they feel it is instrumental to give that attention payment (*Ide o ten*
 29 *psychologický efekt, že keď sa tí ľudia obávajú o svoje zdravie a život tak pre*
 30 *nich je podstatné dať to všimné INT9)*
- 31 • Yeah, I think corruption is human-based in healthcare because one values health
 32 above all things (*Je teda ľudová. Pretože zdravie si človek viacej cení INT12)*

33

34 From the sample of responses above, the reasons provided by my participants on
 35 the real-life motivations that lead patients to drive corrupt exchanges, are as

1 varied as the patients themselves. They range from learnt behaviour, through
2 being scared for one's health, to wishing to expedite procedures. In other words,
3 the participants show awareness that there may not be a single root cause
4 behind the patient behaviour. Rather, there are likely to be several problems at
5 play, some more deeply rooted in behavioural and societal constructs that are
6 difficult to unlearn, and some conditioned by circumstances of the particular
7 healthcare sector. Such learnt behaviour as is referenced by my participants in
8 real-life understanding of corruption has been shown to have an effect on
9 corruption levels. For example, it has been shown that societal peer pressure
10 has an effect on corruption- in other words, the sentiment of 'if others are doing
11 it I ought to as well' is evidenced to be subject to learning and have a real
12 effect on corruption levels (Momotenko 2015).

13 There was a distinct sense among the participants of fear of not getting cared
14 for unless a gift is provided. INT6 noted that '*people are afraid that the care*
15 *will not be what it is supposed to be*' and INT14 gave an example of '*the elderly*
16 *often having their wallets visibly out on their bedside tables in the hospital to*
17 *make it obvious that they are ready to pay extra*'. It is worth noting that such
18 fear and uncertainty, among other factors influencing cognitive psychology of
19 corrupt behaviour, has been shown to increase the likelihood of acting corruptly
20 (Dupuy and Naset 2018). In their seminal report, Dupuy and Naset (2018) also
21 found that rationalisation narratives seem to make corruption more acceptable
22 among participants and that unethical behaviour is more likely to be prevalent in
23 organisations that do not punish such behaviour. Both of these phenomena have
24 been explored in this thesis as well- rationalisation narratives can be seen most
25 prominently in Chapter 8 on Gratitude payments and the idea of professionalism
26 being a greater part of the agenda of medical overseeing bodies has also been
27 explored in Chapter 11, as one of the potential ways to counter unprofessional
28 behaviour.

29 The report by Dupuy and Naset (2018) is therefore aligned in several ways with
30 the real-life understanding of corruption displayed here by my participants and
31 calls for the improvement of information flows about costs of corruption,
32 rewarding ethical behaviour, and setting basic, organisational integrity
33 standards. Such increase in information flows about costs of corruption is

1 congruent with the recommendation of the Slovak Health Institute report of
2 2014, which also calls for greater transparency of costs associated with
3 healthcare and greater transparency of insurance companies as to what
4 constitutes standardised care (see Chapter 12). It is important to emphasise how
5 the patterns of language showcased by my participants' responses fit in with the
6 general findings and recommendations provided by official bodies, in order to
7 confirm to what extent real-life understanding of corruption is congruent with
8 the general findings. The overarching RQ is directly informed by the alignment
9 of the participant responses with official findings. Such alignment of real-life
10 understanding with published reports places even greater urgency on taking
11 action in accordance with the recommendations outlined in reports cited, as
12 well as confirmed by the findings of this thesis.

1 This suggests that the participants were most likely to speak about them in
2 answering this question, but closer analysis of the original data also confirmed
3 that these mentions related to affirmative responses to the question- i.e. yes, it
4 is specialists where this is most likely to happen, as opposed to the other
5 branches of healthcare delivery. The largest demographic group from these 33
6 participants were, as is the case in several nodes covered in the thesis, women,
7 and specifically women over 50 years old. This indicates that women of a certain
8 age may have greater experience with healthcare when compared to other
9 groups. Such a trend has been indicated in literature already. For example, a
10 study of Australian adults (a sample of over 1,400 adults) showed that more
11 women and participants over the age of 50 sought out information on health
12 prevention in the health service, compared to other groups, which secured
13 greater exposure of this group of women to healthcare practice (Deeks, Lombard
14 et al. 2009). However, a further nuance to be pinpointed here is that, with
15 regards to specialists, it has been evidenced by the thesis that OB&GYN doctors
16 tend to be mentioned a lot for informal payment reception and are also shown
17 to be one of the three most frequent specialties to be taking bribes for mainly
18 childbirths (Mužik and Szalayová 2013). It is therefore logical that women of this
19 age are likely to have had this experience already, as opposed to younger
20 generations of women respondents or male respondents, and this could be
21 affecting their views.

22 The language associated with specialist care as most likely to see corrupt
23 exchanges included specialists being scarce, irreplaceable, in demand, and
24 references to their jobs being more important and 'life-saving' in comparison
25 with primary care doctors. The idea of disease severity being proportional to
26 increasing scope for blackmail from the professional, knowing that they are
27 holding a particular perceived or effective monopoly over the patient's health, is
28 a grave and a disturbing finding. This is also reinforced by the language used in
29 relation to GPs, where the participants specifically associate them with 'less
30 serious' problems and thus see less of a need to "ensure" the outcome of the
31 consultation through bribery. For private practices, the participants unanimously
32 thought that there is no reason for corrupt exchanges to take place because: a)
33 the rate for consultations and potential procedures is set, so there is no reason
34 to pay extra, and b) because the private practices, in order to compete with the

1 cheaper, state-run practices, must be able to rely on their reputation and
2 cannot afford the negative publicity. There would, therefore, appear to be a
3 real-life founded rationale for the standardisation of fees in the state-run
4 healthcare sector, to achieve a similar effect of transparency that puts the
5 consumer at ease. On the other hand, standardised fees would not address the
6 negative impact on individuals who take bribes in the state healthcare sector, as
7 it is not associated with the same negative effect on their reputation as it
8 appears to be for private clinics. The fees would also not be able to look exactly
9 the same or reach the same pricing, as the clientele of the private clinics
10 logically consists of those who are able to afford such fees, as opposed to the
11 parts of population who are confined to the state-run healthcare provision for
12 economic reasons. It is therefore uncertain whether lower fees, albeit
13 standardised, would be able to cater for the expectations of the healthcare
14 professionals and satisfy them to the point of no further need to engage in
15 corruption.

16 The particular language associated with all three avenues of healthcare
17 provision is presented in Table 13.1 overleaf for the chance to compare the
18 discourse associated with the three branches on the basis of real-life
19 understanding. It is obvious from the participants that their real-life
20 understanding revolves around the belief that specialists hold greater power
21 over their health in serious situations than GPs. They don't appear to take into
22 account that a GP referral is still needed for a visit of a specialist, unless one
23 selects specialists that allow for direct appointments to be made, for a fee. In
24 contrast to this, there is no direct self-referral service available for most
25 specialists in the UK- patients can only be referred to by other doctors or
26 specialist nurse services (there are private practice exceptions to this, for
27 example dermatology or psychiatry, but, crucially, these are not deemed life-
28 threatening at first contact). The participants seem to think that Slovak GPs do
29 not perform as crucial a function in the healthcare service, as the specialists do:
30 *'The GP is of a smaller calibre, a bit of a pawn, so to say'* INT12. This is in
31 direct contrast to the discourse that is propagated in the National Health Service
32 in the UK, for example, where the GPs are continuously uplifted as the backbone
33 of the health service and are becoming one of the best-funded branches of

1 healthcare⁸⁴. It is almost as if the ambulatory care provided by the GPs, due to
2 the giving up of the medically more interesting clinical care, was compensated
3 for by providing better work-life balance and better pay in Britain- a sort of
4 “carrot” policy employed by the British General Medical Council. The opposite
5 seems to be the trend in Slovakia. It is obvious from the participant responses
6 that it is the specialists who, despite being more likely to engage in corrupt
7 practices, are held in higher regard as to their expertise, than the GPs. This
8 disparity of perception, in my opinion, calls for a comparative study into the
9 perceptions of GPs and their corruption involvement between healthcare
10 systems such as the one in Slovakia and in the UK. It is also obvious that the
11 participants seem to think that private clinics are held in higher regard and
12 respected more for their transparency, even accepting of the associated cost. It
13 is therefore a combination of the ease of access, the sparsity of specialist
14 resources, and their vital and unique role in treating life-limiting disease, which
15 leads to greater possibility for corruption.

⁸⁴ For more information, see <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/2017/09/21/gps-backbone-health-service-crisis-deeply-worrying/> or [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(16\)00743-1/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(16)00743-1/fulltext) [last accessed 24/01/2021]

GPs	Private Clinics	Specialists
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The GP I think takes you just like everybody else and it's fairly equal there (<i>Obvodný si myslím, že t'a berie ako každého a je to tam rovnaké FG2.2</i>) • The GP is of a smaller calibre, a bit of a pawn, so to say (<i>Obvodný lekár je na menšej úrovni ako pešiak dá sa povedať INT12</i>) • Yeah, I agree, you go to the GP with like a flu or something, it's not NOT serious, but also not time sensitive (<i>Tiež súhlasím, že k obvodnému idem s nejakou chrípkou alebo niečo, a je to síce vážne ale netreba to súrne riešiť INT16.2</i>) • Yeah, the GP won't realistically do anything for you so why would you be giving him money you know. It used to be that it's your family doctor and the old ladies think of it that way still (<i>Ale zober si to tak, ten obvodák pre teba nič neurobí, prečo by si mu dávala money vies. Lebo kedysi to bol tvoj rodinný lekár vies, a tie babkz to doteraz tak berú INT4</i>) • No, you can get to a GP without any issues (<i>Nie, tam sa dostaneš úplne bez problémov INT8</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well, the private one, I mean, it's set, you have a price list (<i>No súkromnú tam máš nastavené a máš cenník FG1.3</i>) • They really watch their corruption involvement because they don't want to be hurting their good name (<i>Dávajú si pozor na tú korupciu aj z toho pohľadu, že nechcú škodiť svojmu dobrému menu ELITE3</i>) • The doctors are in a completely different position there, it's no longer necessary there. Or they can't afford to do it there anymore (<i>Tam sú úplne inak postavení tí lekári, že tam to už nie je nutné. Alebo si to tam už nemôžu dovoliť INT1</i>) • It's already coming with a fee; it wouldn't even occur to me to pay again (<i>Tam si to človek platí a tam mi to nikdy ani nenapadlo INT11</i>) • Well, they set that price normally and so I don't have to be thinking whether I was "too grateful" or "not grateful enough" (<i>Mi to vyrúbia normálne tú cenu a ja nemusím rozmýšľať, či som bola veľa alebo málo vďačná ELITE4</i>) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The more niche the specialisation of the doctor, the greater the probability that the lack is more pressing (<i>Čím vyššia je špecializácia lekára, tým väčšia pravdepodobnosť, lebo ten nedostatok je tam akútnejší ELITE1</i>) • It's that demand problem there (<i>Tam je ten dopytový problém ELITE3</i>) • They simply become irreplaceable (<i>Stanú sa nenahraditeľnými ELITE8</i>) • When it's about saving a life, a person doesn't look at the price tag anymore (<i>Tam keď ide o záchranu života, tam už človek nepozera, že koľko a čo INT13</i>) • I mean you go to a specialist when it's literally life and death and that's different and the corruption there is more clearly cut (<i>Zatiaľ čo k špecialistovi ide človek keď ide reálne o život, tak to už je iné a tam tá korupcia je asi jasnejšia INT16.2</i>) • Yeah, it's definitely specialists, surgeons, surgeries, definitely childbirths (<i>Tí špecialisti, chirurgovia, zákroky, určite pôrody INT9</i>)

Table 13.1 Examples of language coded against nodes 'GPs', 'Specialists', and 'Private Clinics', translations by author, Source: Author

The idea of specialist care being the most frequent environment for corrupt transactions, as understood by my participants, goes directly against the trends observed by literature to date (Mužik and Szalayová 2013), which place the GP group as the most frequent by a significant margin, as seen in Figure 13.5 overleaf. The ranking displayed here is in direct contradiction to the views expressed by my participants in their real-life understanding of corruption. I am not certain to what extent this discrepancy can be accounted for by sample selection as my sampling was voluntary, but the snowballing element of recruiting later participants may account for a similarity of opinion with those participants who acted as gatekeepers.

However, it is important to note, that not only did my participants show a leaning towards specialised doctors for informal payments and corrupt practices; they completely discounted GPs as unnecessary for these payments in the first place. The idea of GPs being those to take informal payments most frequently compared with other branches of healthcare, however, is not unheard of in Slovakia's geographic neighbours. As explored in Chapter 2, Poland shares this trend described in the 2013 HPI report, seen in Figure 13.5 overleaf, with the greatest portion of informal payments or corrupt practices occurring in the GP sector. Incidentally, this figure is consistent with the more recent TI research conducted in 2021, visible in Figure 13.3 above, which also found GPs to have been the recipients of bribes most frequently. It is therefore clear that more research, with a greater and a more regionally representative sample, needs to be conducted into this question in Slovakia, to account for the discrepancy presented here. It is possible, that since my research only focused on two regions of Slovakia, the more rural parts of Slovakia may find that GPs have a more prominent standing in their societies and thus greater opportunity to elicit bribes and corrupt practices. Pohontsch et al. (2018) found that rural GPs in Germany tend to see themselves as more of a medical "companion" than just medical professional and enjoy a closer relationship with their patients, with allusions to the role of a 'family physician' (Pohontsch, Hansen et al. 2018).

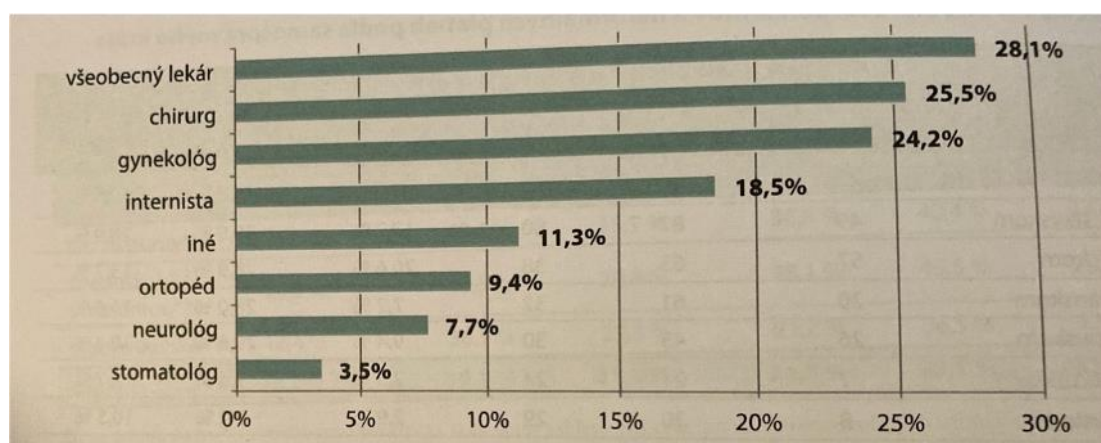


Figure 13.5 The spread of informal payments by specialty, top-down: GP, surgeon, gynaecologist, internal medicine, other, orthopaedic surgeon, neurologist, dentist, Source: (Mužik and Szalayová 2013)

In contrast to urban GPs, this role was considered as beneficial for the treatment plans proposed to patients. It is therefore possible that different relationships between GPs and patients in different environments can account for differences in perception and behaviour, including corrupt behaviour, by both patients and doctors. It is worth mentioning that the view of GPs displayed here by my participants is not one with a long tradition, as the concept of the highly esteemed family doctors in the past existed in Slovakia as well. This can be readily observed in realist literature of the 1800s where lawyers, mayors, and doctors are always esteemed characters. Two of my participants (INT4 and INT13) also emphasise the importance and convenience of these figures in the past, both in terms of reputation and respect which put the profession on a pedestal in its community and ensured high quality of accessible care. In modern terms, however, this tradition does not apply to the occupation of a GP. Furthermore, the Slovak HPI report (2013) states clearly that its makeup of respondents (nearly 1,200) was not demographically representative of Slovakia's population (and was therefore not statistically significant) but provides no further information on the regional placement of respondents. It is therefore also possible that the differences between mine and their results stem from regional, socioeconomic, or educational variations. Additionally, it may also be due to participants being insufficiently informed about the job descriptions and functions performed by GPs and/or specialists, which leads to a skewed

perspective of the importance of their jobs. The research report from 2013 equally does not share the types of questions asked by the researchers. The wording of research and field questions, as shown by literature (Klopper 2008, Agee 2009), is important in the construction of responses by the participants as well, which is why all my questions were piloted first. My question for this node tried to be as free in its wording as possible: 'In which of the three branches of healthcare do you think corruption is most likely and most frequently taking place?' This question came as one of the last questions in the field purposely, to make sure that the participants at this point have considered various facets to corruption (such as gifts, service exchange, use of contacts), but have also polemicised on informal payments, to be able to really situate all corrupt behaviour in healthcare. It may be possible that if the researchers from the HPI report asked about informal payments only, forms of payment such as gift giving and service exchange were not considered by their participants, leading to skewed results, with less accounting for other variables.

13.4 Conclusions

The chapter looked closely at two particular strands of answers from the participants. The first related to whether the participants believed that the corrupt practices, which they have described and conceptualised in preceding chapters, are more likely to be initiated by the doctors (healthcare staff) or by the patients. Secondly, the participants shared their views on which branch of healthcare (GPs, Specialists, or Private clinics) was most frequently exhibiting these corrupt practices.

The participants expressed a sophisticated view in the first category of responses, which included thoughts that both parties (patients and doctors) are complicit in the corrupt exchange and are both likely to initiate the transaction based on the circumstances involved. However, when broken down, the majority of respondents were more likely to believe that the patients are the main

initiators of corrupt practices, however, doctors are often seen as enablers by virtue of them being known to not refuse bribes when presented to them. The idea of vulnerability of patients when put in a specific situation of need was touched upon only circumstantially. The literature shows that patients do indeed perceive corruption, and bribery specifically, to be rampant in healthcare. The participant responses revolved around the idea of bribery being a part of a custom (which directly informs sub question RQ3b). Furthermore, the participants also referred to bribery as a tool to expedite a procedure, holding health as the most precious resource, therefore resorting to extreme ways of ensuring successful results. As for doctors, efforts that have been started by professional bodies in Slovakia to try and curb corrupt practices among professionals that involved a campaign to wear 'I don't take bribes' badges, are shown not to be successful. This points to the further need to implement systemic changes that dictate, regulate, and oversee professional behaviour, rather than rely on the initiative of the professionals themselves to be transparent.

The respondents thought, unanimously and by a great margin (75% of all participants of the study), that the most frequent environment for corrupt practices is that of state-run specialist clinics. The language associated with the GPs and private clinics as the other two options, was dismissive and indicated lack of respect for the competence or need of GP services, as well as a comfort of pricing transparency of private clinics. In this manner, the GPs were thought of as providing lower levels of care, rather than primary care, and their necessity for referrals to specialists has been eradicated in many respects by specialist surgeries providing the possibility for direct booking by patients, for a fee. The participants saw the GPs as dealing with a lower level of seriousness of illnesses, which does not require the need for expediting and thus, by extension, a bribe. Private clinics were upheld by the participants as places with rates already set, which means that there is no need to pay any more and, interestingly, gave the impression that private clinics need to look after their reputation more to stay in business, which is also why corruption is perhaps not perceived to be taking place.

Specialists, on the other hand, were seen as those who hold significant power over illnesses that are serious and where treatment is time-sensitive, which created the impression that bribes and corruption have greater room to grow and greater opportunity to sprout. The participants often made references to 'life and death' situations and to child births, which once again confirms the previous findings of the thesis, that the obstetrics and gynaecology specialty is particularly vulnerable to corruption flourishing. It was clear from the participant responses that they believed that the seriousness of the environment joint with the lack of resources (i.e., specialists) in several fields created the 'perfect storm' of conditions for corruption to thrive. However, completely contrary to my participants' views, the official report by the Health Policy Institute (HPI), commissioned in 2013, shows that the views collected by the research team of the HPI point to the opposite direction entirely. According to this report, it is the GPs as points of primary contact, that receive the greatest number of informal payments, according to the sample of 1,200 respondents. It is imperative that more research is conducted into this dissonance between the real-life understanding of corruption as presented by my participants, and views collected by the HPI report merely five years prior to my research. These five years did not contain any marked healthcare reforms or systemic changes to change the landscape of healthcare delivery so dramatically, as to account for this discrepancy. The HPI disclose, however, that their sample is not demographically representative of Slovakia (neither is my sample), and there is no information as to the regional distribution of answers (my research is focused primarily on two regions of the country). These differences could account for some of the differing results. However, it is also important to note that while the HPI conducted their research through a quantitative survey route, my research is focused on the qualitative understanding of the phenomenon of corruption.

As a result, it was important for this particular question and chapter to come after the questions which conceptualised to the participants what corruption entails- this included debates on not just bribes and informal payments, but also gifts, use of contacts, and exchange of services. It is possible that the responses given by my participants are more nuanced, better-informed, and more reflective of reality than those collected by the HPI.

Chapter 14: Discussion

14.1 Introduction

The final section of data analysis will discuss the findings outlined in previous chapters in the context of the theoretical framework of the project. As set out in Chapters 6 and 7, data analysis was carried out in the following four stages: data collection, data immersion and coding, creation of categories, and distilling themes. The last part of this analysis process, distilling themes from analysed categories, is presented in this chapter. The three major themes distilled from the six analysed categories are: **Mechanisms of corruption**, **Justification of corruption in Slovak discourse**, and **Causes of corruption**. All three themes relate to the single case study of Slovakia's healthcare sector, but the findings presented have potential to be relevant for other public sectors, such as law enforcement, both in Slovakia, and potentially across the CEE region as well. This is due to the sector-specific approach allowing one to see the problem of corruption holistically and to tailor appropriate solutions, rather than applying binary distinctions of corruption as described in Chapter 1 (e.g. political/bureaucratic, institutional/individual, grand/petty), which can present in any sector at the same time (Kunicova 2020). A recent World Bank (2020) report shows that developing correct diagnostics of corruption within one public sector can provide suggestions as to the development of diagnostics and solutions in other public sectors, by identifying the overlaps in local leadership and potential for stakeholder cooperation (Kunicova 2020).

The flow chart overleaf (Figure 14.1) outlines the grouping of categories into themes and their addressing of the research questions. This is a visualisation of the thesis structure, showing connections between individual categories and their position within the themes which address the research questions. The chart shows the overarching research question at the top being separated into individual sub-questions, addressed by three major themes. The relevant categories of analysis are visible at the bottom.

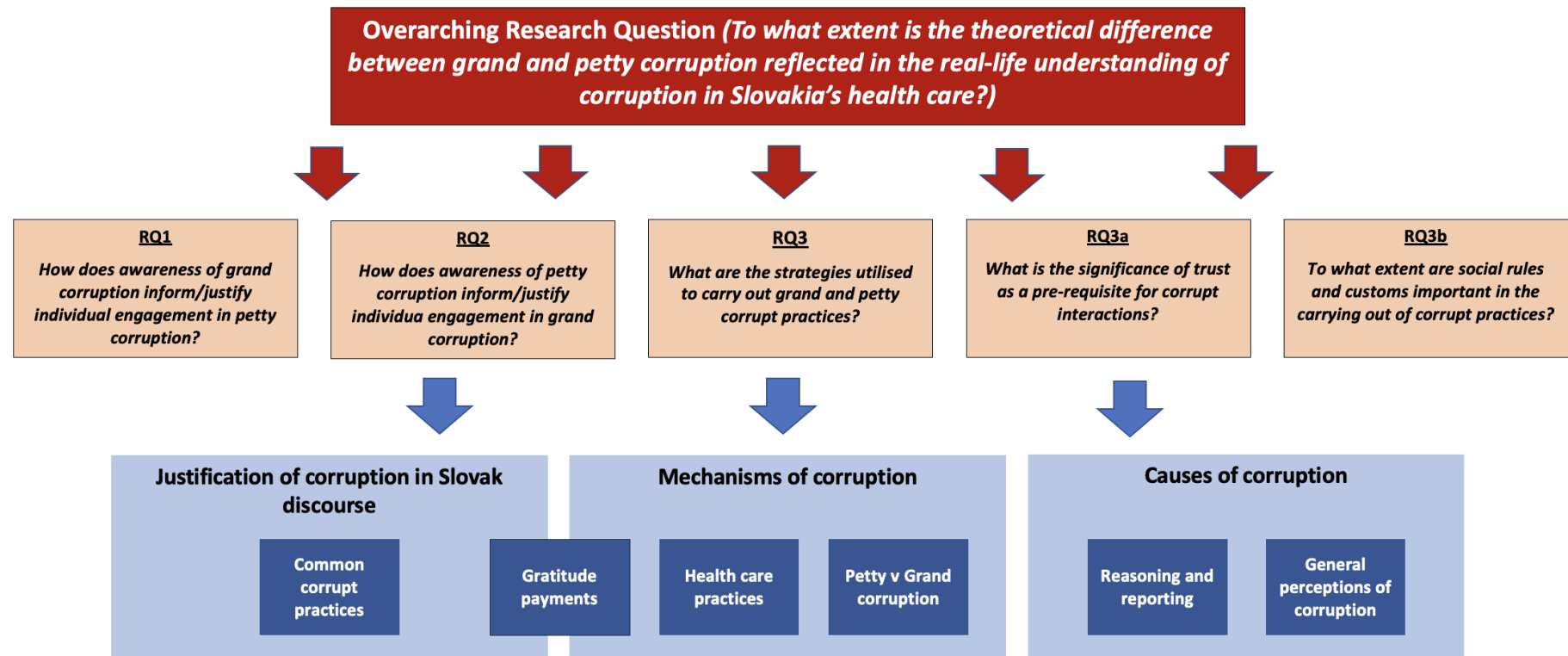


Figure 14.1 Flowchart of research questions addressed by themes, comprised of the categories explored in the empirical section of the thesis.

1

2 The Research Questions in orange and the theoretical expectations deriving from
3 these, as seen in Figure 14.1 above, are as follows:

4

5 RQ1: How does awareness of grand corruption inform/justify individual engagement in
6 petty corruption?

7 RQ2: How does awareness of petty corruption inform/justify individual engagement in
8 grand corruption?

9 *H_{0a}: Awareness of grand corruption will have no impact on the engagement of*
10 *individuals in petty corruption and vice versa.*

11 *H_{1a}: Awareness of grand corruption will inform/justify individual engagement in petty*
12 *corruption.*

13 *H_{1b}: Awareness of petty corruption will inform/justify individual engagement in grand*
14 *corruption.*

15 RQ3: What are the strategies utilised to carry out grand and petty corrupt practices?

16 *Theoretical assumption: There will be similarities in the strategies utilised to carry out*
17 *grand and petty corrupt practices.*

18 RQ3a- subquestion: What is the significance of trust as a pre-requisite for corrupt
19 interactions?

20 *Theoretical assumption: Trust is understood as one of the processes of corruption that*
21 *links the corrupt practices on grand and petty levels; as such it is seen as a condition*
22 *more often than it is understood as a result of corrupt practice.*

23 RQ3b- subquestion: To what extent are social rules and customs important in the
24 carrying out of corrupt practices?

1 *Theoretical assumption: Social rules and customs are understood as one of the*
2 *processes of corruption that links corrupt practices on grand and petty levels; as such*
3 *they will prove as important determinants in carrying out corrupt practices.*

4 The discussion section will first present the starting points of the thesis derived
5 from the theoretical part and then tie these in with the individual themes,
6 findings, relevance to the above research questions, and ensuing
7 recommendations.

8 **14.2 Theoretical concepts**

9

10 The literature review prepared the groundwork for designing the investigation of
11 corruption in a way that was outlined by the thesis in Chapter 4. The review
12 presents how corruption has been outlined and addressed by macro-level
13 research conducted to date by supranational and transnational bodies, such as
14 the EU, the EC, the OECD, the World Bank, Transparency International, and
15 others. The review and the conceptualisation chapter (Chapters 1-3) show the
16 shortcomings of solely quantitative measurement of corruption (Ko and Samajdar
17 2010) and highlight the need for micro-level, region (and country) specific, local
18 research to be conducted into corruption (Bernd and McKee 2009), based on the
19 cultural and regional variations of corrupt behaviour worldwide. There are
20 significant problems with accurate definitions of corruption and an overt focus
21 on economic and financial understanding of corruption (Bussell 2015, Rose-
22 Ackerman 2016). Slovakia was pinpointed as a feasible and a valuable case
23 study, due to:

- 24 • its continued high levels of corruption, specifically in the healthcare sector
25 (Alexa 2007, Eurobarometer 2013, 25 2014, EC 2017, Eurobarometer 2017),
- 26 • its potential to unveil recommendations that could apply cross-country due to
27 corruption investigation and prosecution in the CEE region bearing similarities
28 (Batory 2012),
- 29 • and the unique opportunity for accessing in-depth data on corruption in the
30 original language.

1 I address the literature gap of research into corruption in Slovakia, by taking
2 Slovakia to be its point of focus, rather than a point of comparison for other CEE
3 countries, as is usually the case (Gallina 2013). There is little research
4 conducted into the dichotomy between grand and petty corruption (Habibov
5 2016) and none that I have been able to identify that verifies the feasibility of
6 the two terms in real-life understanding and conceptualisation of corruption.
7 The thesis therefore provided a unique insight into corruption not just in the CEE
8 region, but in a wider context, informing RQ1 and 2 set out above.

9 Health care is specifically shown to be a sector of primary concern for corruption
10 in Slovakia, continuously leading in the rankings for highest levels of corruption
11 (Ensor 2004, Eurobarometer 2013, EC 2017, Eurobarometer 2017), and a sector
12 with the unique potential to be accessed by the general population ubiquitously.
13 For comparison with other public sectors, not everyone may have a
14 comprehensive experience of sectors such as education or law enforcement.
15 Individual experience of sectors such as education may vary, for example,
16 depending on levels of education achieved and regional differences from one
17 school/institution to another. However, the system of healthcare is sought out
18 of necessity and standardised across the board, with the same procedure to
19 follow: i.e. primary care, referral to specialist, hospitalisation.

20 Conceptually, the theoretical part of the thesis addresses specific areas of
21 interest and focus, such as the **role of a broker or a middleman** in corrupt
22 exchanges (Jancsics 2015), as well as the **role of trust** in corrupt behaviour. The
23 ideas of informal practices, **networks and gift-giving** are also at the centre of
24 the analysis. There is evidence in other post-communist societies of informal
25 networks and practices at work (Ledeneva 2009, Baez-Camargo and Ledeneva
26 2017), and of gift-giving as a specific problem in the region (Batory 2012, Straka
27 2016). The specific types of gifts usually given in the Central European context
28 (Grodeland, Koshechkina et al. 1998) as examples of coffee, wine or chocolates
29 were shown to remain as prominent common practices in the case study of
30 Slovakia in the current day.

31 There may have been research of a rigorous qualitative nature conducted in the
32 region into corruption before (Grodeland, Koshechkina et al. 1998, Miller 2001),

1 however, the thesis has sought to go beyond existing research through a more in-
2 depth thematic and textual analysis, with specific observations made about
3 linguistic variations and nuances that are used by the participants to describe
4 their **real-life understanding of corruption**. It is very difficult to capture real-
5 life understandings of corruption in field work, due to the implications of self-
6 incrimination by the participants. This is why I was unable to locate a research
7 of comparable depth into real-life understanding, which makes the contribution
8 of my findings uniquely relevant for further research into corruption. Previous
9 studies have looked into opinions and views of corruption in a questionnaire or a
10 structured interview (Miller, Grodeland et al. 1998), as well as secondary data
11 analysis of corruption perceptions of Slovaks (Dzambazovic 2011), but the ethical
12 implications of asking direct questions with regards to lived experiences are
13 serious. This is also why ethnography or field experimentation are extremely
14 difficult models to adapt to the study of corruption, which could pose serious
15 danger for both participant and researcher, as well as potentially involve
16 observing or taking part in illegal activity. My research tackled the ethical
17 question of self-incrimination by phrasing questions to include ‘awareness’ of
18 corruption as shaped by the circumstances and environment of participants,
19 based on what the participants may have ‘heard or observed’ with regards to
20 displays of corruption. I specifically asked the participants to make sure they do
21 not incriminate themselves in the phrasing of their answers. Despite these
22 measures, the participants were often wary to discuss direct and personal
23 examples of corruption, and creating good rapport was crucial to extract the
24 depth of narrative and responses I was able to acquire. This shows that research
25 into corruption and its real-life understanding is challenging for preparation and
26 execution, is very time-consuming, and dependent on the willingness of
27 participants to share, indicating a strong selection bias. However, equally, more
28 research of this nature is vital for expanding this field of study. The 2019 paper
29 into corruption perceptions in ‘daily life’ of Ukraine by Markovska and Serdyuk is
30 the only similarly-targeted primary data analysis into real-life understanding of
31 corruption in the region that I was able to find (Markovska and Serdyuk 2019),
32 but its focus was centred exclusively on petty levels of corruption. It has been
33 shown that an over-reliance on perceptions of corruption, rather than reality,
34 can have a more devastating effect than corruption itself, increasing levels of
35 distrust in a society (Melgar, Rossi et al. 2010). It has also been found that the

1 need for culturally specific understandings of corruption on the ground is vital in
2 successful implementation of anti-corruption measures (Mungiu-Pippidi 2015).
3 Therefore, the relevance of studying corruption from a real-life perspective,
4 which for this research is defined by Schwandt (2001) as the ‘*life-world* as it is
5 lived, felt, undergone, made sense of, and accomplished by human beings’
6 (Schwandt 2001), cannot be overstated. The research, in its pursuit of the real-
7 life context, is also true to carrying out a rigorous single case study
8 investigation, as per Yin’s definition which relies on the context of real-life: ‘an
9 empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and
10 within its real-life context (Yin, 2015).

11 Within this real-life context, I have managed to juxtapose the understanding of
12 corruption as it is ‘made sense of’ in the real world of my participants with the
13 theoretical underpinnings of corruption and the existing anti-corruption efforts
14 in Slovakia. I have noted several reforms and anti-corruption measures
15 implemented in the country to date, but these have so far failed to curb
16 corruption, especially in the healthcare sector (Sičáková-Beblavá, Šípoš et al.
17 2011, Nemeč 2018, Skolkay 2018). There is room for improvement with regards
18 to proposed systemic changes, transparency of information for citizens and
19 consumers, and engagement of civil society (Buncak, Dzambazovic et al. 2009,
20 Mungiu-Pippidi 2010).

21 **14.3 Justification of corruption in Slovak discourse**

22

23 The theme of justification is distilled from the content within categories
24 Common corrupt practices and Gratitude payments. The most potent finding
25 within this theme is the intricacies of **timing** facilitating narratives of justifying
26 corrupt practices. This applies to both the gift-giving phenomenon and the
27 middleman/broker concept.

28 **Main findings and RQs addressed:**

- 29
- Use of a broker/middleman, role of trust and networks (RQ3, RQ3a)
 - 30 • Timing of gift-giving (RQ3b)

1 **14.3.1 The middleman/ broker and the role of trust and corruption** 2 **networks**

3 The concept of the middleman arose when asking the participants their opinion
4 on whether using personal contacts for private gain is to be considered corrupt
5 or not. This was clarified to the participants as, for example, phoning their
6 friends or acquaintances to refer these to their friends who are doctors for an
7 expedited appointment, or similar situations. This is a widespread practice in
8 Slovakia which utilises personal networks of any one citizen and provides an
9 advantage over someone without this knowledge or opportunity for
10 acquaintance. The concept of a broker or a middleman in corrupt practice is
11 conceptualised in literature (Gould and Fernandez 1989, Stovel and Shaw 2012,
12 Jancsics 2015) and is usually used to convey that corrupt transactions are more
13 complex than just the popular model of a principal-agent basis for corrupt
14 exchanges, involving just two parties with separate interests (Lambsdorff 2007,
15 Drugov, Hamman et al. 2011). It is suggested in literature that, on the contrary,
16 rather than just a pursuit of the principal-agent economic goals, corrupt
17 transactions are, in reality, dependent on human motives such as approval,
18 status, power, or sociability (Granovetter 1992). This is partially addressed in
19 other theories relating to corruption beyond the principal-agent model, such as
20 corruption as a collective action problem which highlights the importance of
21 group dynamics, including trust in others (Marquette and Peiffer 2015). The
22 middleman or broker is usually mentioned in corruption of a grand scale,
23 involving cybercrime or financial crime, in order to confuse the paper trail
24 leading to the perpetrators. However, the concept of middleman in the capacity
25 explored in this thesis, on a much less formal scale, is only explored in-depth in
26 Jancsics's 2015 paper, which outlines several types of brokers on smaller scales
27 than grand corruption. The author himself actually points out that the broker
28 phenomenon is rarely examined on this smaller scale and that the reason why
29 brokers are of specific interest in the CEE and post-communist societies is
30 because these are network-oriented cultures, which are much more likely to
31 have a multiplayer transaction form of corruption going on (Sik and Wellman
32 1999). The prevalence of informal social networks in the CEE countries, and
33 specifically the phenomenon of the middleman, comes from the historical roots
34 of these societies which tended to be small-town societies before taken over by

1 communism, which would survive economically on the low-risk infrastructure of
2 illicit informal practices (Sik and Wellman 1999). The thesis fills a specific gap in
3 the literature which, according to Jancsics, only focuses on the explanation of
4 such practices, but does not study the micro-dynamics of actual exchanges
5 (2015:2).

6 My findings show that in a real-life understanding of corruption, the **middleman**
7 **as a disseminator of information and a facilitator** plays a crucial part in the
8 corrupt transaction. The reason that the middleman is not labelled as such by
9 the participants is simple- the connotation of profit is negative, and they do not
10 perceive there to be any gain by the middleman; they perceive the middleman
11 to be a friend or an acquaintance performing a favour. Previous research
12 confirms, however, that there does not need to be any 'commission' from the
13 transaction for the label of the middleman to apply- to the contrary, the return
14 resources do not need to be cash at all (Marsden 1982). The return value or
15 commission for the broker in this particular concept of *generalised reciprocity*
16 (Jancsics 2015) is not stipulated by time, quantity, or quality (Sahlins 1965). The
17 participants completely fail to conceptualise that the middleman is very likely to
18 'cash in' the favour performed at a later date by requesting a favour themselves
19 in return. It appears that by the absence of any immediate tangible (or
20 monetary) gain, the middleman function gets dismissed and is not seen as
21 facilitating a corrupt exchange. Therefore, the idea of **timing** played an
22 important role again- without immediate gain, the middleman is not seen in the
23 corrupt context at all. The delay in the gain is rather naively then perceived as a
24 fresh, unrelated favour by the participants. This type of brokerage has been
25 labelled by Jancsics's findings (2015) in the case study of Hungary as
26 'representative brokerage', which shows the brokers as members of groups such
27 as family members, friends, acquaintances, 'just helping' these groups by
28 establishing contact with outsiders. This is different from the other types of
29 brokerage that Jancsics also conceptualises, such as the gatekeeper broker
30 where the broker and the agent are members of the same organisation and the

1 client is the outsider⁸⁵. The main difference between the brokerage model
2 suggested here as a novel concept in the CEE concept and other theories such as
3 the social network theory (see Chapter 1.4), social exchange theory, and
4 collective action theory (see Chapter 3.3) is that these theories rely on a general
5 networking among all members of the group or the collective to achieve the
6 corrupt outcome. Instead, I am suggesting based on the results obtained, that
7 the broker is a single person holding power in one or several social groups,
8 accumulating more potency the greater their circle of dependents. The broker in
9 my understanding is unlikely to share their reservoir of knowledge among other
10 members of the group but rather grow in their position of prominence by
11 accumulating more knowledge, important connections, and favours to be
12 returned. The representative broker is therefore defined by accumulation of not
13 material but symbolic or political capital in return for their services, examples
14 of which are increased recognition, honour, prestige, or status (Bourdieu 1997).
15 This is congruent with the status of the broker as evidenced by my research. The
16 reciprocation of favours, expanding the web of influence, and creating a position
17 of power for future exchanges, is the case for brokers in Slovak health care
18 corruption.

19 This topic of conversation among the participants sparked a significant amount
20 of discussion and dissent on the subject. As was the case with several parts of
21 similar discourse, the **females tended to be much more realistic and critical** in
22 their view of such a practice and as a demographic they have confirmed the
23 findings of existing literature that females are less tolerant of corrupt practices,
24 more risk averse, and more attuned to the reality of corruption. Existing
25 literature suggests that women tend to be less involved in corrupt transactions
26 than men and more prone to morally disapprove of corruption with a lower
27 tolerance for it (Dollar, Fishman et al. 2001, Swamy, Knack et al. 2001, Bauhr,
28 Charron et al. 2018, Kubbe, Alexander et al. 2019). This is considered to be due

⁸⁵ For all types of brokers described by Jancsics, please see Jancsics, D. (2015). "A friend gave me a phone number"- Brokerage in low-level corruption." International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice **43**: 68-87.

1 to women being both more risk averse than men and also due to the processes of
2 gender socialisation, whereby girls tend to exercise higher levels of self-control
3 and are directed toward more caring and pro-social activities, which shapes
4 their behaviour (Dollar, Fishman et al. 2001, Swamy, Knack et al. 2001). On the
5 whole, there was a 19/16 split of affirmative opinions on whether using contacts
6 and networks to gain an advantage is corrupt and most of these assenting
7 opinions were those of women, and also those of the higher educated
8 demographic. This was another trend picked up throughout, where those with
9 **higher education showed less tolerance** for grey areas of understanding which
10 practices fall under corruption and are less acceptable than others. The trend of
11 higher education being correlated with lower levels of acceptability of
12 corruption is confirmed by my research and was congruent with previous findings
13 (Lee and Guven 2013).

14 In practice, the importance of the middleman finding in my research points to
15 the need to recognise the role of middlemen in corrupt transactions. My findings
16 show that not only are the middlemen present in most cases of real-life access
17 to corruption, but they are also instrumental to the success of the outcome. In
18 practical terms, the client (the one who needs a procedure) will call the
19 middleman/broker (a friend, family member, or acquaintance) and enquire
20 about someone that they may be referred to (the agent) for an expedited
21 procedure/improved quality of care. The middleman/broker will then get in
22 touch with their contact (the agent) and broker an appointment time, for
23 example, vouching for either party's trustworthiness and /or quality.

24 The invested trust is of crucial importance here and directly confirms the
25 theoretical assumption conveyed by RQ3a- **trust is crucially needed as a pre-**
26 **requisite** for the success of the transaction. The *representative* brokerage sees
27 the broker acting as a guarantor of the transaction, reducing the risk of
28 reciprocal mistrust between corrupt actors (Jancsics 2015). My participants'
29 understanding of trust more generally is aligned in this manner, with a quarter
30 of the participants recognising that trust plays a crucial role in the corrupt
31 transaction. However, they conceptualised trust between the corrupt parties as
32 *expectation of behaviour* being met, fuelled by the fear of consequences. Fric
33 and Kabele (1999) in their Czech-centric study on corruption show that this type

1 of trust in corrupt transactions can ultimately result in the further corrupting of
2 others. This is done by accumulating a ‘corruption capital’ of information about
3 the corrupt behaviour of others, securing their future cooperation under an
4 unspoken threat (Fric and Kabele 1999). This conceptualisation of trust along the
5 lines of expectations being met, or unspoken threats being made, is mentioned
6 but not explored in sufficient depth in earlier literature on corruption elsewhere
7 (Luhmann 1979, Kubbe 2013, Warburton 2013); however, in my research, it is
8 intertwined inseparably with the function performed by the middleman, who
9 acts as a guarantor of the expected behaviour to take place. The middleman is
10 the necessary link between the other two parties and holds all the power in the
11 transaction- only if they want to, do they make the agent provide the service for
12 the principal, who is otherwise unknown to the agent. In this way the middleman
13 is perceived as almost “trustworthily corrupt” - i.e. they need to have a
14 reputation of being corrupt to be approached, but to also uphold their end of
15 the bargain. Furthermore, by convincing the agent with their own credibility on
16 the line, the middleman vouches for the trustworthiness of the principal,
17 protecting both parties from legal ramifications. The personal investment of the
18 middleman ensures that the provider of the corrupt service will come through,
19 in order to maintain the goodwill of the middleman. Without the middleman’s
20 assurance, there would be no reason for the agent to provide any service to the
21 principal.

22 The middleman/broker is therefore a much more opaque, but much more
23 ubiquitous and key figure than previously thought; they do not have to be
24 handling any money or reward for their involvement, and there is no need for
25 them to be conducting any negotiations. Rather, they simply act as a
26 disseminator of crucial information, and as a connection between the two
27 parties involved in corruption, investing their own credibility and reputation in
28 order to facilitate the transaction and provide a guarantee. In this description,
29 many would recognise the regular workings of business networking, which is
30 shown to be a practice of legitimate standing in the dynamic and
31 hypercompetitive environment of entrepreneurship (Kariv, Menzies et al. 2009,
32 Gay 2014). However, entrepreneurship, by definition, is inherent to the open
33 market model of capitalism, which depends on competition that drives both
34 price and quality of service. While the healthcare service can arguably be said to

1 benefit from this type of competition (for example procurement of better
2 equipment); in its essence, it should be a public service delivering a certain
3 standard of care to all- under the Slovak model of healthcare. By providing an
4 opportunity to gain priority access to a limited service (eg. a specialist who is in
5 high demand) independent of clinical need which also benefits the service
6 provider, it is no longer a matter of entrepreneurial networking, but corruption
7 proper. There should be more research conducted into the role of the
8 middleman in this context and more study of these ad-hoc personal networks
9 created by every person in their life journey, likely to be filled with middlemen
10 with access to unique information and services. Such networks of personal
11 contacts for private gain are conceptualised in literature already, in the form of
12 *blat* or *guanxi* (Fan 2002, So and Walker 2005, Ledeneva 2008, Ledeneva 2009),
13 but the particular language used by my participants to conceal the corrupt
14 meaning, such as ‘merely a recommendation’, ‘a show of good will’, ‘a favour’,
15 ‘putting in a good word’, has long acted as a cover for the true function and
16 meaning of these networks, justifying their role in real life corruption in
17 healthcare. The public’s understanding that this type of behaviour, perceived
18 and justified by themselves as mere favours, is in fact directly facilitating
19 corruption with a delayed profit for middlemen involved, should be increased by
20 information campaigns. This finding directly informs RQ3 and shows the real-life
21 access to corruption and the practical way it is carried out- most often by
22 picking up the phone and asking a friend to refer one to the necessary service,
23 promising a return in the future ‘if there’s ever anything I can do for you’. Often
24 they also make sure that the necessary price is brought along as a token of
25 ‘gratitude’ or appreciation. This type of behaviour needs to be tackled for what
26 it really is - manipulating vulnerable people for personal gain in the future.

27 Mine, joined with Jancsics’s study, are the two studies I could locate conducting
28 in-depth research into the concept of the middleman/broker in the CEE context.
29 The results of qualitative studies notoriously bear problems of generalisability in
30 terms of statistical value. However, a rigorously conducted qualitative study can
31 form a strong basis for understanding and explaining other social situations,
32 similar to those investigated in a particular study- this phenomenon is also
33 known as analytic generalization (Falk and Guenther 2007). In such a manner,

1 case studies like mine can illuminate the corrupt practices in societies with
2 similar historical backgrounds and societal environments.

3 **14.3.2 Gift-giving**

4 Gift-giving is considered more acceptable than bribe-giving (Grodeland,
5 Koshechkina et al. 1998, Straka 2016) and there are indications that the **timing**
6 of the specific gift (i.e. after a service is provided) is deemed more acceptable
7 than providing a gift beforehand, which would constitute bribery of an expected
8 result. The participants failed to draw a connection between the gift, albeit
9 given after the procedure, to be expected by the healthcare staff anyway, and
10 thus conditioning their behaviour. There was a strong cognitive dissonance,
11 therefore, between the participants' views on timing constituting a moral
12 justification of gift giving, and the legal understanding of gift giving, which
13 draws no distinction between the before or after of the timing of the gift (See
14 Chapter 10). This type of dichotomy of thinking, where, on the one hand,
15 corruption is perceived to be a widespread problem, but on the other, some
16 forms of it are deemed socially acceptable (as shown in a 2006 Slovak Statistical
17 Institute Report)⁸⁶, is indicative of what Dzambazovic (2011) labels as 'societal
18 schizophrenia'. The claim is that two types of morale are at play at any one time
19 for the individuals in Slovak society (and other post-communist societies). One is
20 the 'public' morals to be displayed by individuals as anti-corruption
21 declarations, and the 'private' morals to be largely pro-corruption. This
22 'schizophrenia' is explored in more depth by my project and breaks down the
23 'private', pro-corruption morals into practical uses of corruption and specific
24 language associated with them- gifts, gratitude, attention.

25 The association of gifts with gratitude was strong in my research and there was
26 also evidence of the types of gifts previously shown by literature to be frequent
27 (ie coffee, wine, chocolates as shown by Grodeland et al. 1998) to still remain as
28 gifts of choice today. This type of gift in post-communist societies dates back to

⁸⁶ For the full report, search for *Skrytá ekonomika v neformálnom sektore vo svetle verejnej mienky v roku 2006*. Bratislava: Štatistický úrad SR 2006.

1 Soviet times, which saw scarcity of certain then-luxury goods, such as chocolates
2 or coffee. The fact that these have managed to remain in prominent positions in
3 my participants' real-life understanding of corruption in healthcare is evidence
4 of strong impact of tradition and custom in the Slovak case study. This is
5 indication of customs and traditions being determinants in the particularities of
6 corrupt behaviour, as stipulated by RQ3b's theoretical assumption.

7 However, the thesis was able to uncover further detail to this gift-giving
8 phenomenon, which related to a gendered approach to giving, resulting in nurses
9 being gifted with flowers and coffee or chocolates (both of lower monetary
10 value than other examples), and doctors being gifted with alcohol, home
11 produce, or tickets to shows. There is clearly a difference in gifts that are given
12 according to stature in the health care food chain, but also gender variations-
13 female doctors are more likely to also receive flowers, as are females in any
14 profession in general (See Chapter 10). The custom of gifting flowers to women
15 is very strong and can be observed most markedly in the traditional International
16 Women's Day celebrations on the 8th March, which were historically also very
17 prominent in the communist regime. The survival of culture and values in post-
18 communist societies, reminiscent of the examples given here, has been shown
19 with statistical significance before (Sandholtz and Taagpera 2005) and is
20 confirmed by my findings. This is further evidence of tradition and custom
21 dictating particularities of corrupt behaviour in real life.

22 While the participants showed strong belief that gifting such items after the
23 healthcare service has been provided is more acceptable morally and practically,
24 there was little awareness in their narrative that in legal terms the timing of an
25 unsolicited gift makes no difference and is still considered a bribe. The
26 participants used very specific linguistic buzzwords to make it obvious that they
27 were not identifying bribes and gifts as the same practice, involving words such
28 as '**gratitude payments**' or '**attention payments**'. These terms present with two
29 possible interpretations: a token of one's gratitude, attention, or appreciation of
30 the work undertaken, or, a token ensuring that extra attention be paid to their
31 family member in hospital. The participants made a very clear distinction in
32 their understanding that gifts and tokens are cases of gratitude, as opposed to
33 envelopes with cash, which were associated with, and recognised as, corrupt

1 bribes. The participants failed to recognise, as is written in the Slovak Criminal
2 Code (See Chapter 10), that all items given in the circumstances of receiving a
3 service, or trying to receive higher standard of a service, are legally considered
4 bribes under Slovak Law. I have not been able to locate any surveys in Slovakia
5 about individuals' understanding of what corruption is (and is not). The only
6 surveys available relate to the work conducted by NGOs such as Transparency
7 International (TI), which relate to gauging opinions on specific, already-
8 generated terminology that the participants are expected to understand, such
9 as: 'corruption', 'bribery', 'whistle-blower', and others
10 (<https://transparency.sk/sk/prieskumy/>). These include questions such as: Do
11 you think that there is corruption present in the public procurement processes in
12 Slovakia? The terms 'corruption' or 'public procurement' are not defined for the
13 participants by TI. Similarly, the results on the awareness of the whistle-blower
14 law in Slovakia show that over 40% believe there is no such law present in
15 Slovakia, while only 30% think that there is
16 (<https://transparency.sk/sk/prieskumy/>). Since the law is in fact legally in
17 action as of 2015, it is obvious that the participants' perceptions are not
18 congruent with reality. A better way of approaching this type of research would
19 be for in-depth interviews to be conducted with the respondents, aiming to show
20 where their understanding of who a whistle-blower is, and information on
21 legislation, comes from. Subsequently, it would be prudent to ask the
22 participants, whether they are aware of this law offering protections and if so,
23 of what kind. This type of research, however, would be much more time-
24 consuming than a series of quick questions favoured by bodies such as
25 Transparency International, which may not show actual understanding of the
26 public. It is possible that many participants who answer 'no' to such surveys
27 simply do not understand the terminology as presented to them. However, if the
28 research takes time to allow them to conceptualise terms such as 'corruption',
29 'gift-giving', or 'bribe' in their own language and narrative, their answers
30 become informed and produce better quality of results, as evidenced by the
31 depth of my own results and findings.

32 The terminology, therefore, is extremely important in my participants' real-life
33 understanding of gift giving vis a vis corruption or bribes, and is a new finding in
34 this context. As is evidenced in literature, the corruption phenomenon displays a

1 view of its severity specific to society (Lampert 1984). It is shown clearly by my
2 findings that this is very specific to the Slovak general public, who avail
3 themselves of terms such as 'gratitude payment' or 'attention payment', or
4 make specific references to giving 'after' or 'afterwards', in order to justify gift
5 giving and corrupt practices to themselves and their surroundings. Such detail of
6 understanding that is constructed by the society and perpetuated by the social
7 networks created around them shows that any systemic measures taken at an
8 executive level must be clearly communicated to the public, including
9 addressing the terminology that the public are using to justify the practices in
10 their own understanding.

11

1 **14.4 Mechanisms of corruption**

2

3 This theme encompasses the categories, which relate in greater depth than
4 others to the practical approach to corrupt transactions in a real-life setting-
5 i.e. what do people realistically do, step by step, to engage in corruption. These
6 are namely the categories: Gratitude payments, Health care practices, and Petty
7 v Grand corruption. While the results of individual findings are described in the
8 previous chapters in greater detail, this section ties together the bigger picture
9 of resulting findings in their relation to the individual and the overarching
10 research question. The relevance to the overarching research question will be
11 addressed at the very last.

12 **Main findings and RQs addressed:**

- 13 • **Concept of ‘arrangement’ and systemic change (RQ3)**
- 14 • **Petty v Grand corruption distinction not significant (RQ 1 &2)**
- 15 • **Specialists as the most frequent corrupt environment (RQ3)**

16 ***14.4.1 Arrangement and systemic change***

17 The participants associated several linguistic features with corruption in real-life
18 understanding. These related to ideas of giving, exchanging, wanting,
19 expediting; as well as to the ideas of contacts, services, or advantages. The
20 participants found corruption to be deeply embedded within the society, mostly
21 in the sense of it being ‘normal’, ‘standard’, or a ‘part of everyday life’. They
22 thought that the CEE region as a whole had similar levels of corruption and
23 similar sectors affected, which is confirmed by literature on the subject
24 (Grodeland, Koshechkina et al. 1998, Puček 2014, Koudelková, Strielkowski et al.
25 2015), and further buttresses the idea that recommendations and observations
26 within this thesis could potentially be transferred to a broader context.

27 However, the most common term when asked to conceptualise and define
28 corruption for the participants was the term ‘vybavit’, i.e. when one needs

1 something 'arranged' / 'done' / 'taken care of'. This term was independently
2 stated by over a quarter of the participants and it points to the participants
3 characterising corruption as a way to circumvent the system and the standard in
4 place. This idea is in congruence with the 1993 findings of the Slovak
5 Sociological Institute, which show views on the stratification of Slovak society.
6 The respondents show their belief that the most important ingredient in success
7 in life in Slovak society is that of having 'the right connections' and, in second
8 place, a certain amount of 'political capital' - both of these beat ingredients
9 such as education, hard work, or ambition (Dzambazovic 2011). These views
10 were only reinforced in a similar 2009 survey, which showed a 23.1 percentage
11 point increase in the same leading beliefs, which reinforces the view that the
12 idea of 'arranging' something or 'getting something done' through contacts is at
13 the core of corruption understanding for my participants over a decade later
14 (Dzambazovic 2011). This was also why my field question addressing the role of
15 contacts and acquaintances was particularly prudent to include and why its
16 extrapolation into the roles of middlemen/brokers, as described above, is of
17 particular relevance to the landscape of corruption in Slovakia.

18 If this is the main characterisation of corruption in my participants' view,
19 applicable to grand and petty corruption alike, then systemic factors and
20 measures are directly linked to the definitions of corruption and should be
21 inspired by this real-life understanding. The systemic measures in place, as well
22 as reforms and legal measures are detailed in Chapter 5 and 12. However, the
23 participants' views presented (believing that effective systemic change needs to
24 come from both top-down and bottom-up in equal measure), show a level of
25 sophistication and awareness of personal responsibility, as well as the role of the
26 system in curbing corruption. The crux of the problem lies not only in a generally
27 passive civil society, overreliance on importing anti-corruption practices from
28 abroad, and lack of effective enforcement of regulations (Buncak, Dzambazovic
29 et al. 2009, Mungiu-Pippidi 2010), but in the lack of consistency and awareness
30 of what is standard care for the consumer.

31 The recommendations on how to standardise care are outlined in the 2013
32 Health Policy Institute Report, which calls for more conversion of hospitals into
33 limited companies, in order to achieve higher standard of equipment and wages,

1 but also for a revamping of the health insurance system (Mužik and Szalayová
2 2013). The report outlines the need for different insurance packages with
3 varying levels of coverage, greater communication of what is included in the
4 relevant package to the consumer in plain language, and also transparency of
5 information across the board. According to my findings, the reason such
6 suggestions have not been successfully implemented stems from addressing the
7 buy-in from doctors and hospitals separately from the buy-in from insurance
8 companies. Traditional views of merely raising the salaries of professionals in
9 order to combat not only corruption, but also brain drain from this region, have
10 been shown not to work as effectively as predicted (Lindner 2013, Foltz and
11 Opoku-Agyemang 2015).

12 In order for systemic change to take root, there has to be simultaneously:

- 13 • **input from the top**, instigating changes such as insurance packages of varying
14 price and quality and improving the working conditions of professionals, and also
- 15 • **investment by the healthcare professionals** into the proposed changes, such as
16 providing out-of-hours or weekend surgery for legalised but affordable fees, as
17 opposed to bribes.

18 A third, crucial ingredient in a successful implementation of healthcare reform,
19 shown in participant responses, is **increased oversight of professional medical**
20 **bodies**. Greater transparency of information for patients, as well as revamping
21 of the insurance packages are measures already suggested by the Slovak Health
22 Policy Institute, but have not yet been effectively implemented (Mužik 2014).
23 The thesis shows the shortcomings of professional medical overseeing bodies in
24 holding doctors accountable in terms of disciplinary measures that hold different
25 leverage (stripping off of a licence to practise for example) to ‘mere’ criminal
26 action. Greater involvement of official bodies such as The Slovak Bureau of
27 Medical Oversight, raising the profile of the profession transparently, as well as
28 showing zero tolerance of corrupt behaviour, essentially working in a capacity to
29 protect the patient by proxy (much like the British GMC which acts to regulate
30 doctors and protect patient interests), is crucial in combating the real-life
31 instances of corruption in healthcare. This type of recommendation is broached
32 by Jancsics (2015), who suggests that instilling institution-specific measures such

1 as limiting predictability of staff rotations, construction of strict monitoring and
2 well-designed contracts, or effective punishment measures can only work within
3 a general organisational culture intolerant of corruption. The need for a
4 combined approach to successful change implementation is the recommendation
5 of this thesis, based on the real-life understanding of corruption by my
6 participants. It emphasises the general understanding of corrupt behaviour to be
7 the result of several factors at play: values and morality, legal and service
8 deficiencies and loopholes, custom and tradition, as well as personal choice and
9 responsibility. All of these are synthesised into a complex set of conditions for
10 my participants, under which corruption has been able to thrive in society and
11 which, as a result, need to be addressed at the same time to produce real
12 change. If some parts are addressed in a vacuum (as has been the case to date),
13 then all other contributing factors will still be present to create a type of
14 asymmetry that will enable corruption to trickle in through unplugged holes.

15 ***14.4.2 Petty v Grand corruption distinction not significant***

16 This part of analysis sought to build on the ideas of combined approach to
17 tackling corruption, and to address the theoretical distinction made between
18 grand and petty corruption levels. Its goal was to show whether this distinction
19 is applicable in the real-life practise and understanding of corruption. The
20 Research Questions 1 and 2 are directly addressed here and the findings are of a
21 two-fold nature.

22 First, the participants are able to recognise that there are levels of corruption
23 based on its monetary value (ie grand and petty) and they also believe that the
24 different levels of corruption are caused by different reasons: **ie petty level by**
25 **lack of resources available, grand level by personal enrichment ambitions.**
26 Nearly half of all participants were able to conceptualise a distinction along
27 these lines. So far, there has not been any research project that I could locate
28 testing the validity of theoretical labels and terminology of this nature, which
29 marks another unique contribution of the thesis to the theory on corruption. My
30 recommendation is for all paired terms such as grand v petty, personal v public,
31 institutional v private and similar types of corruption to be verified in similar
32 terms among the general population, to ascertain their validity in a real-life

1 understanding of corruption. It is not effective to use abstract terms to describe
2 concrete circumstances that feed into policy development, if such terms have no
3 bearing on the reality of the phenomenon. Such policies result in a disassociation
4 of the term from its real-life version and create confusion and lack of adherence
5 to regulations that are based on a language that the general population does not
6 find representative of the phenomenon itself. The language in regulations should
7 be similar to the language used by the general population to describe and
8 conceptualise the phenomenon, not the other way around- in other words, the
9 phenomenon-specific policy should 'do what it says on the tin' in its description.

10 The participants support this view, since it arose from their narrative that while
11 there may be several levels to corruption, in practice, the distinction is not
12 made. Corruption is a phenomenon that operates on the same principle on all
13 levels and there is in fact a direct connection between corruption carried out on
14 a petty and a grand level, which confirms the theoretical assumptions associated
15 with RQ1 and 2. The two levels, much like I conceptualised in Chapter 1, feed
16 off of one another and share a connection of being two forms of the same.
17 According to my findings, one level is able to teach and/or condition the other-
18 the participants believe that either the perpetrators learn corrupt behaviour on
19 petty levels that they then transfer to grand level corruption, or those on petty
20 levels emulate the behaviour displayed as acceptable on grand levels. It is
21 therefore confirmed that petty and grand corruption share a principal
22 connection that makes one cause, condition, or enable the other and any
23 measures undertaken to address the individual levels of corruption need to be
24 tailored to both types and implemented at the same time, rather than in
25 isolation. As one participant stated, it is 'difficult to imagine a reality in which
26 petty corruption would exist and grand would not' (ELITE1).

27 That being said, the participants displayed a remarkable lack of awareness when
28 it came to impact of both grand and petty corruption, believing that grand
29 corruption has greater impact on society than petty; failing to take into
30 consideration the impact of petty corruption that is not measured by financial
31 loss. This is, for example, instilling bad behaviour into new generations, higher
32 unemployment, rise of inequality, or lower engagement with the healthcare
33 service, leading to worsening of conditions. The participants therefore showed a

1 great level of sophistication with their understanding of corruption as it takes
2 place in real-life, but little ability to critically evaluate its impact. Research
3 shows that cognitive sophistication is a key pre-requisite for being able to
4 discern credibility of information that participants encounter, which increases
5 their levels of scepticism when encountered by corrupt practices and
6 information (Weitz-Shapiro and Winters 2017). It is important to note that such
7 sophistication, however, is subject to regional differences. What Weitz-Shapiro
8 and Winters (2017) consider to be sophisticated participants in Brazil, where, by
9 their own admission, the education system is notoriously under-funded and of
10 low quality, will be a different metric to that of the CEE countries. Further
11 research into corruption in countries like Slovakia, should therefore mandatorily
12 include a mapping of education levels of participants if possible. Raising
13 awareness about the impact of corruption that goes beyond the financial scope
14 is sorely needed and recommended as a measure to be applied to the younger
15 generations in schooling and education. Government subsidies for NGOs such as
16 Transparency International or Stop Corruption (Zastavme Korupciu) to produce
17 materials/workshops for school curricula that would fall under the Slovak
18 equivalent of social studies subjects should be made available. Additionally,
19 subsidies for university departments of Social Sciences and/or Criminology to
20 expand syllabi to include college-wide elective courses on corruption should be
21 made available to boost corruption awareness on all levels of education across
22 the country.⁸⁷ Currently, the handful of departments inclusive of Criminology
23 and Forensic Sciences⁸⁸ are tied with the study of the law, which leads to the

⁸⁷ The Ministry of Education publishes specific learning outcomes from all school subjects, including that of the Ethical Education (the closest thing to social studies in Slovakia), which is itself aimed at the moulding of the 'moral attitudes and regulation of behaviour of students'. The students are supposed to be able to 'develop their moral stances and values, as well as their sense of responsibility towards society'. The syllabus itself offers room for including an explicit section on corruption within nebulous labels to cover, such as 'pro-social behaviour', 'professional ethics', 'the rules of fair play' 'legal and moral values', even 'conscience, honour, and truth', or 'culture as an ethical value'. For a detailed methodical overview of this subject, visit <https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/7941.pdf> [last accessed 6/3/2021].

⁸⁸ Three universities in Slovakia contain a Department of Law, but only two (Mateja Bela in Banska Bystrica and Komenskeho in Bratislava) have an integrated criminology component. The third, Paneuropska univerzita, contains criminology only within the module of criminal law. No specific course is provided for corruption as a concept- it is explored only within legal and criminal terms.

1 investigation of corruption only in legal terms; whereas a cross-departmental
2 initiative to include lectures from an anthropological, sociological, historical,
3 political, and cultural/linguistic perspective would be the best way to approach
4 topics such as corruption, which span the remit of all the outlined departments.
5 Vocational and professional programmes, such as medicine, dentistry, or nursing
6 should also include a specific module on corrupt practices and corrupt
7 behaviour, as opposed to just a generic ethics component⁸⁹. This is especially
8 important since no medical bodies in Slovakia offer any explicit information for
9 graduates on their websites, with regards to corruption (see Chapter 12 and 13).
10 Equally, for the wider public, greater media exposure of less grand-level-focused
11 corruption coverage, but more focus on the understandings of innocuous impact
12 of corruption, such as rise of unemployment and inequality, should be promoted.

13 ***14.4.3 Specialists as the most frequent corrupt environment***

14 Another significant finding of the thesis relates to where corrupt behaviour,
15 specifically in healthcare, is most prevalent. The reason why this perspective is
16 important for any future research or regulation implementation, is the need to
17 target measures precisely and in the areas that are battling the most frequent
18 instances of corruption. Independent research into this showed that the GP
19 sector is the most affected sector (Mužik and Szalayová 2013) for informal
20 payments and bribes, closely followed by several specialties such as obstetrics
21 and gynaecology, neurology, cardiovascular and so on, as outlined in detail in
22 Chapter 13.

23 The thesis, however, presents a **radically different finding**, where all
24 participants discounted the GP sector as not likely to be laden with bribes or
25 informal payments in real-life understanding of corruption. Instead, **75% of my**

⁸⁹ Such modules (inclusive of professionalism, vocational and communication skills modules) are present in medical schools across the UK, as per the GMC guidelines, which also publishes guidelines with a full section on ethical behaviours and dilemmas in a document called Outcomes for Graduates/Tomorrow's Doctors. For full document, visit: https://www.gmc-uk.org/-/media/documents/outcomes-for-graduates-2020_pdf-84622587.pdf?la=en&hash=35E569DEB208E71D666BA91CE58E5337CD569945 [last accessed 12/3/2021].

1 participants clearly marked specialist doctors as the area with most frequent
2 corrupt practices; this included both elites and general population. Females
3 were again the highest percentage, which is congruent with literature on
4 females being a dominant demographic when it comes to seeking out
5 information within the health service, indicating that females have more
6 experience overall with the health service (Deeks, Lombard et al. 2009).
7 Obstetrics and gynaecology was identified by the participants as the one area
8 where there is most potential to bribe healthcare providers, and this is not
9 surprising considering that females were the biggest demographic answering this
10 question (presumably having increased experience in the field compared with
11 men). It is also important to point out that this specialty is for many their first or
12 only serious encounter with the health service due to childbirth; many of my
13 participants were parents. It also points to a particular vulnerability of the
14 specialty to harbour instances of corruption, and it is my recommendation that
15 tightening of measures in the health service targets this specialty concretely.

16 The identification of frequent corruption in specialties as opposed to GPs is a
17 vastly different finding obtained by qualitative interviews from that obtained by
18 survey by Muzik and Szalayova in 2013 on behalf of the Health Policy Institute.
19 The reasons behind this discrepancy can be multiple, but such a difference calls
20 for a re-examination of this particular topic, as my finding is completely novel
21 and in direct contradiction. My participants were, however, given a lot of room
22 to think about and conceptualise what they understand to be corruption in their
23 in-depth interviews and focus groups, which may have accounted for a more
24 detailed answer. In other words, they were given space and time to consider not
25 just monetary bribes, but also gifts, tokens of gratitude, exchange of service,
26 and favours as potential forms of corruption, which may account for their
27 answer being more informed and nuanced. Regional differences as well as
28 education levels, exposure to healthcare, or phrasing of questions on part of the
29 2013 research may also account for a difference in data collected, but the fact
30 that GPs as a possibility was completely disregarded by my participants is an
31 original finding.

32 The reasons behind specialists and not GPs being the source of most frequent
33 corrupt practices for my participants, are multiple. One perspective is that of

1 specialists being sparse and specialty surgeries suffering from a reduced
2 presence of doctors, due to them being stretched very thin across several
3 practices (even private ones). Additionally, the issue of doctor migration is also
4 integral to this sparsity of specialists. In 2017, the statistical internet portal
5 techmed.sk reports that out of cca 19,000 doctors graduated in Slovakia, over
6 4,000 work abroad ([https://www.techmed.sk/4211-slovenskych-lekarov-pracuje-](https://www.techmed.sk/4211-slovenskych-lekarov-pracuje-v-zahranici/)
7 [v-zahranici/](https://www.techmed.sk/4211-slovenskych-lekarov-pracuje-v-zahranici/)). As previously mentioned, the largest group (over 2,000) work in
8 the Czech Republic, second largest group (over 1,000) in Germany and the third
9 largest group (over 300) in Great Britain. The rapidly aging nature of healthcare
10 professionals, with over half of GPs working into retirement age in 2013 and lack
11 of nurses (5.8 nurses per inhabitant as opposed to EU average of 8.8 in 2012)
12 also contributes to the workforce thinning (Beňová 2014, Mužik 2014). Secondly,
13 there is the psychological effect of patients visiting specialists, which implies a
14 certain level of seriousness of illness and uncertainty of outcome. Such
15 uncertainty has been shown to encourage corrupt behaviour in general (Dupuy
16 and Neset 2018). Thirdly, as has already been evidenced above, corruption relies
17 on custom and tradition to survive and this can translate into peer pressure- in
18 other words, it is customary to inquire about a bribe or to bring one, which then
19 creates the impetus to appease not only the health professional, but the whole
20 social network around the service provider. Peer pressure and expectation have
21 also been shown to promote corrupt behaviour in a number of contexts
22 (Momotenko 2015). There was also indication of custom and tradition being tied
23 to communist practices, which further reinforces the idea that corruption in any
24 given part of the world is going to have a unique outlook and needs to be
25 observed individually and qualitatively. Lastly, the participants showed evidence
26 of dismissing GPs as a lower calibre of doctor, insinuating that the problems one
27 visits a GP for are not serious enough to need to ensure the outcome with a
28 bribe. This indicates the lack of awareness of job importance for primary care,
29 as GPs are still needed to make referrals to specialist appointments, but also the
30 rising trend of these appointments being online and self-bookable for a fee
31 without the need to visit a GP. Given the stark difference of reputation as
32 perceived by my participants, and as propagated in global health services such
33 as the NHS, where GPs are regarded as the backbone of the service and the
34 gatekeepers of access to specialist services, it is the recommendation of this
35 thesis for a comparative, cross-country study of perceptions of GPs to be

1 conducted. A crucial part of such a study should be the perception of any
2 respondents as to the frequency and the vulnerability of this sector to corrupt
3 transactions and practices.

4 **14.5 Causes of corruption**

5

6 This section looks to tie in the last remaining strands of the investigation of
7 corruption, regarding perceived causes of corruption. Focusing on the perceived
8 causes is relevant as a determinant of what the participants conceptualise
9 corruption to look like and how they conceptualise it takes place. Therefore, my
10 findings of corruption in real life taking place within an insufficient system and
11 within cultural stigma inform the overarching research question and RQ3 at the
12 same time. The categories that are included in this theme are Reasoning and
13 Reporting and General perceptions of corruption.

14 **Main findings:**

- 15 • **Soviet/communist legacies + deficiency (RQ3 + overarching RQ)**
- 16 • **Fear as a facilitator of corruption (RQ3)**

17 ***14.5.1 Soviet/communist legacies and deficiencies in service*** 18 ***provision***

19 The coding process of Reasoning and Reporting separated the responses of
20 respondents into several labels relating to: bureaucracy, deficiency of services
21 and legal measures, low living wage, morality and mentality of people, and
22 Soviet legacies. These were subscribed to by the participants with various levels
23 of intensity. However, it became clear that there was no single reason for the
24 participants to engage with and single out above the rest, and all reasons
25 intertwined to a certain extent, with the legacies of the past at the heart of the
26 narratives elicited. **Bureaucratic red tape** was seen as particularly crippling for
27 entrepreneurship with over 222 hours spent on bureaucratic tasks by
28 entrepreneurs on average; a result of inefficient administrative processes

1 (www.trend.sk). **Culture** played a significant role, as already described in
2 findings above, and was inseparably linked in language to the idea of past
3 legacies, as well as norms arising from the circumstances of lack. The
4 participants identified **deficiency of services** to be a huge problem, as
5 addressed in previous section of findings, quoting specific problems of brain-
6 drain of medical graduates leaving to work abroad for a better wage. This, along
7 with the aging population of GPs and health professionals in general, painted a
8 stark picture of the future to come (Benova, 2014). The **adverse economic**
9 **situation** faced by doctors, as well as the healthcare environment with outdated
10 facilities, poorly equipped hospitals, and procurement embezzlement linked
11 back to the privatisation problems of transition economies; grappling to date
12 with the repercussions of an inefficient transition from centralised to market
13 economy (Ellman 2005, Wallace and Latcheva 2006, Fazekas, King et al. 2014).
14 The perils of inequality inherent to capitalism and practices of shady deals,
15 oligarchic tendencies, and informal practices that survived from the previous
16 regimes provided a fertile ground for the rise of kleptocracy (Kornai 2006),
17 recognised as another key ingredient in the status quo of corruption by the
18 findings. Therefore, rather than identifying communist legacies as any concrete,
19 cliché soundbites or practices, the participants presented their perceptions as
20 sophisticated and relating to the general journey of the country from the past
21 into the present, with a particular mix of socio-economic circumstances creating
22 a unique environment for corruption. This environment is described by Fric
23 (1999), in the Czech, as well as the Slovak context, to be a ‘type of corrupt
24 climate’, which is defined as a group of collective ideas and cultural formulae,
25 which have made the abuse of power, bribing, and reception of bribes a matter
26 of course, and a customarily excusable act (Fric and Kabele 1999). Dzambazovic
27 (2011) explains that in the context of Soviet legacies, this state of affairs was
28 achieved by an ‘ostrich’ strategy of the Soviet leaders sticking their heads into
29 the sand when alerted to corrupt practices, marginalising the problem of
30 corruption as something that goes directly against the Soviet ideals of an equal
31 society and rejecting this type of ‘accusing of honest Soviet workers’ (Vecernik
32 1998). The problems exacerbated by a slow increase in wages, the narrowing
33 down of resources, and low quality of services, led to corruption becoming an
34 ‘organic part of the regime’ in the 70s and onwards (Simecka 1990).

1 In line with corruption persisting as a ‘climate’ to which all citizens are
2 subjected, my participants identified the **mentality** of the people to be likely a
3 strong determinant of corruption surviving (over half of the participants
4 subscribed to this view). This was inseparably tied with the idea of legal
5 loopholes not creating enough of a deterrent to curb corruption. It appears from
6 my findings that the legal measures in place are not communicated in sufficient
7 levels of depth and clarity to the general population, and they leave a lot of
8 room for interpretation, perpetuating the notion that one can get away with
9 corruption under the right circumstances. Prosecutors can apply the measure of
10 ‘Active Regret’ to any proceeding, effectively permitting them to choose to not
11 pursue acts of petty corruption by their own discretion, and thus the system can
12 create the impression of lack of punitive measures (especially for those with
13 political connections).

14 The findings show that while the participants agreed (over a quarter) that
15 corruption has increased since 1989, several responses indicated that corruption
16 then and now is the same level, but a different form- in other words, corruption
17 has managed to adapt to the new order. Only a quarter of participants linked
18 corruption today directly to corruption in the communist times, believing that
19 there is a unique connection that does not exist in countries without a post-
20 communist past, but this could be said of any unique set of circumstances
21 worldwide. Those who linked corruption to the previous regime and identified
22 practices such as use of personal contacts for private gain, favour exchange, or
23 gifts such as home produce (ducks, geese, eggs, sausages), coffee or chocolates
24 as staples of the previous regime, were over 40 years old. An important finding
25 presents itself of there being a limited amount of time (i.e., the lifespan of
26 participants such as these) to explore this with more in-depth study of practices
27 to be narrated by those who have the memory and the personal experience of
28 both regimes. This type of anecdotal evidence is crucial in the qualitative
29 approach to research, as this unique information is likely to be completely lost
30 once this generation is no longer alive. Overall, the participants made links to
31 communist practices specifically, but also made more opaque links to the past
32 shaping the future, as would be the case anywhere in the world. The past of the
33 post-communist societies, however, has contributed to the general image that
34 corruption has taken on today, with tropes such as gift-giving and gift similarity

1 sustaining themselves through tradition and custom. The participants made an
2 astute observation when speaking about the factor of mentality and moral values
3 coming into play, believing that the real change or uprooting of these practices
4 would have to come from setting an example for the future generation, rather
5 than instilling the same set of values and customs that will perpetuate these
6 practices further. In alignment with previously outlined findings, it was largely
7 women who recognised this responsibility, in a 19/9 ratio.

8 **14.5.2 Fear as a facilitator of corruption**

9 Fear is often given as a reason for not reporting corruption to official bodies
10 (Global Corruption Barometer, 2010). In the Slovak context, fear of one's safety
11 as a deterrent of reporting corruption goes hand in hand with lack of positive
12 examples of punishing corrupt behaviour (Dzambazovic 2011). However, there is
13 reason to believe that any research conducted into this particular perception is
14 likely to be different in the current context, whereby Slovakia has seen a very
15 thorough and active fight against corruption from 2018-2020, sparked in part by
16 the execution of the investigative journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée. Since
17 then, the National Criminal Agency (NAKA) has conducted several operations of
18 'cleansing' the official institutions of the judiciary and law enforcement of
19 corrupt actors- as a result, many heads of departments, as well as prominent
20 political figures were imprisoned and sentenced for crimes of corruption. It
21 stands to reason that such examples of punishment may go some way to
22 encouraging anti-corruption initiatives among the general public as well. Fear as
23 both a motivator and as a deterrent was one of the most significant, but also
24 worrying findings of the thesis. The participants presented narratives of fear in
25 two contexts:

- 26 • Fear as a determinant of corrupt practice
- 27 • Fear as a deterrent from reporting corrupt practice.

28 The strongest motivation for bribes and informal payments in healthcare
29 stemmed from described feelings of anxiety, uncertainty, apprehension- in
30 short, fear- over loved ones not receiving the care they may need. There was a

1 strong indication that the more serious the health problem, the more probable
2 bribe-giving is, in order to secure the desired, successful result. This sense of
3 fear for the health and safety of one's family is an important finding that needs
4 addressed on a fundamental level of public discourse. It is not clear whether it
5 stems from the participants and the general population not having enough
6 confidence in the professionalism or competence of the healthcare staff, or
7 whether this is some assurance they attempt to buy that borders on superstition-
8 i.e., 'if I do not pay and the surgery goes badly, I only have myself to blame'. I
9 believe this to be an extreme view that would be putting lives at risk on a level
10 that is incompatible with any ethical standard of care held by a medical
11 professional. There is no evidence that I could find that the level of healthcare
12 in its fundamental willingness and ability to deliver a professional service is
13 dependent on a petty bribe. There is also no evidence that I was able to find to
14 suggest that any healthcare professional would be able to deliberately mistreat
15 a patient as a result of not receiving a bribe and my participants did not show
16 evidence of believing this view either. There is, however, scope for further
17 research to look into the possibilities of not direct mistreatment, but
18 inadvertent undertreatment as a result of bribe refusal. The 2013 HPI report
19 shows a high element of subjectivity in the participant responses, whereby the
20 respondents were happier with health services received if they happened as a
21 result of an informal payment initiated by themselves, rather than by the doctor
22 (Mužik and Szalayová 2013). This points towards the importance of the
23 'mentality' argument as the motivator for corrupt practices- it is almost
24 suggestive of a certain psychological moment in the patient's understanding of
25 care delivery, where they feel more secure in quality of care, having 'ensured' a
26 positive result by their own initiative.

27 However, there needs to be an honest public discussion about the levels of care
28 outside of the respective surgery or operating theatre. This relates to post-
29 operative care on the wards, the hospital facilities, access to private hospital
30 rooms, and being able to choose a named surgeon based on a transparent
31 publishing of their credentials. Most participants believed that the care they
32 would receive would be sub-par if they did not pay extra to secure better
33 quality; this needs to be addressed not only by reforming the system of
34 insurance with buy-in from hospitals, as well as professionals, but also by a

1 strong promotional campaign of the competence of healthcare professionals.
2 The reputation of the occupation itself and its status must be lifted in the eyes
3 of the public and this agitation should start at the level of medical institutions
4 and universities. In other words, the confidence and faith of the general
5 population must be restored by investing in healthcare- into facilities, but also
6 into a highly skilled social capital within the ranks of the healthcare staff. The
7 public should not feel fear of receiving substandard, incompetent, or insufficient
8 care at the hands of the professionals who easily find employment in better
9 funded healthcare services abroad (statistics I presented earlier show at least
10 4000 graduates of 19000 each year find employment abroad, namely Germany,
11 the Czech Republic and the UK), and who thrive in these systems with the skills
12 they acquired in Slovak education.

13 Secondly, fear was explored as the main reason behind not reporting corruption
14 to the authorities. Admittedly, scepticism that the case would get dealt with
15 effectively was also a running theme of discouragement. However, fear was
16 mentioned explicitly by over half of the participants. This fear included fear for
17 one's own safety, the safety of their loved ones, but also of being harassed by
18 the official structures to the point that the good deed of reporting corruption
19 would become an unbearable hassle. The participants gave examples of similar
20 real-life stories, for example the murder of the investigative journalist Ján
21 Kuciak and his fiancée, or the firing of the whistle-blower Zuzana Hlávková from
22 her position in the Foreign Ministry (see Chapter 5). This level of failure of the
23 system to shield and protect those who fight against corruption is recognised by
24 literature as well, which shows Slovakia to be one of the 7 countries with the
25 weakest whistle-blower protection in place (see Chapter 5).

26 The participants were right to pick up on the shortcomings outlined and it is my
27 hope that the cracking down on corruption by the Slovak Criminal Agency (NAKA)
28 in the past year and a half would now produce less reluctance to reporting
29 corruption to the authorities. In the past year and a half, several public
30 institutions, such as the Office of the Special Prosecutor as well as institutions
31 and justice departments that deal with corruption, the anti-corruption
32 department in the police force, and the HQ of the police force itself, were

1 'purged' of individuals who have been charged with corruption and conspiracy⁹⁰.
2 The modern public discourse is indicative of impending improvements and
3 greater robustness of the system. It is the recommendation of this thesis that
4 reporting of corruption gets propagated by these revitalised institutions to the
5 broader public and that the procedure of reporting is simplified and clarified.
6 **Only 7 of my participants were aware of there being a corruption reporting**
7 **hotline set up by the government**, and several participants distrusted the
8 structures in place so much that they would rather turn to the media or
9 Transparency International to report cases of corruption than the local law
10 enforcement.

11 A similar trend is seen across other countries from the previous communist bloc
12 with regards to underreporting of corruption. The Bulgarian National Statistical
13 Institute, for example, published its data in 2015 suggesting that in 1989 there
14 were 355 people found guilty of corruption and embezzlement, with a steadily
15 declining trend, hitting only 17 in 2015 (NSI 2015)⁹¹, without any indication,
16 however that cases of corruption have effectively decreased. Similarly, a recent
17 2019 statistic gained from over 1000 respondents in Romania shows that 28% of
18 respondents would not report corruption because 'everyone knows about these
19 cases and no one reports them', 27% because it is 'difficult to prove anything',
20 27% because 'reporting it would be pointless because those responsible will not
21 be punished', 25% because 'there is no protection for those who report
22 corruption', and 19% because they 'don't know where to report it to'⁹². This type
23 of narrative, especially reasons hinting at scepticism that the system would be
24 able to punish the culprits, fearing for one's own safety, and not knowing where
25 to effectively report, are congruent with the findings in my research. The
26 process on how and where to report corruption was unclear to most of my
27 participants and very few would consider doing it in the first place.

⁹⁰ For more details see <https://www.trend.sk/spravy/naka-mala-zadrzat-specialneho-prokuratora-dusana-kovacika-dovody-zatial-nie-su-zname> [last accessed 24/02/2021].

⁹¹ For more similar statistics, visit <https://www.nsi.bg/en> [last accessed 6/3/2021].

⁹² For the full statistic, please visit: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1113513/romania-reasons-for-not-reporting-corruption/> [last accessed 6/3/2021].

1 Conclusion

2

3 Rationale and objectives

4 The initial aims of the project were ambitious in their addressing of theoretical
5 gaps in corruption research, while also conducting an empirical study of
6 corruption on the ground. As outlined in the introduction chapter, I have
7 selected a relevant case study of Slovak healthcare to study corruption for
8 several reasons: Slovakia is one of the countries in the EU that has consistently
9 high levels of corruption (especially in healthcare) and presents an illustrative
10 example of post-communist democracies tackling corruption in the region
11 (Eurobarometer 2013, Eurobarometer 2017). Furthermore, a Slovak-specific
12 study also presented with a unique opportunity to conduct research with
13 Slovakia as its focus, outside of research that originates in the country itself.
14 Such original-language research, however, is rarely translated for the
15 international audience. This project provided an opportunity to bring original-
16 language research to the forefront of broader international research into
17 corruption, enriching the scholarly field on corruption in post-communist
18 contexts.

19

20 How could I provide a fresh angle on corruption research and not get lost in
21 statistical generalisation? The process of approaching corruption in a qualitative
22 manner stemmed from a rigorous review of literature which highlighted some
23 key trends. Generally, it became obvious that an economic focus on corruption,
24 generating macro-level reports, is the more prevalent approach to study of
25 corruption (Bussell 2015, Rose-Ackerman 2016). The focus on typology of
26 corruption was also clear, but without evidence as to how terminology was
27 generated beyond theoretical conceptualisations of authors themselves (Shehu
28 2005). The problems of corruption measurement were also one of the main
29 themes elicited, and I sought to tackle these with my methodology (Kenny 2006,
30 Knack 2006, Weber Abramo 2007, Olken 2009). A key issue arising from these

1 approaches and measurements was the reductionist approach to corruption by
2 previous research, disaggregating and reducing corruption to its individual
3 facets, homing in on financial consequences of corruption as comfortably
4 measurable. It became clear that a deeper, qualitative study of corruption based
5 on an interpretivist approach would be able to present a level of detail that was
6 not previously achieved. I wanted to bring the narrative and language that
7 people use in their own lives to describe and comprehend corruption to the
8 centre of future corruption research and debate. In such a way I was able to
9 show whether the typology existing is reflective of what people ‘on the ground’
10 understand corruption to be, and within this study, several aspects of corruption
11 were thus explored within the Slovak context. These were namely the concepts
12 of time, trust, fear, brokerage and power, networks, and cultural customs. Trust
13 and fear proved to be important determinants of corrupt transactions, but also
14 deterrents to corruption reporting. The idea of brokerage was one of the most
15 significant findings, proving to be much more prominent in real-life transactions
16 than the simple principal-agent model previously suggested by literature. The
17 importance of networks was inextricably bound to brokerage, showing the
18 potency of ad hoc interpersonal relationships to be paradigm-generating in how
19 corruption was carried out in practical terms.

20 **Scope of project**

21 Applying the process of deduction, the general concepts (i.e., time, trust, fear,
22 brokerage, cultural customs) were whittled down to specific understandings of
23 anti-corruption policies present, the anthropological, sociological, and cultural
24 attributes of corruption in this context, and were finally reduced to questions
25 used in the field (Appendix 3). I opted for in-depth interviews and focus groups
26 combination of methods to be able to capture detailed narrative relating to
27 these questions, as well as to maximise chances of engagement by the
28 participants (Byrne 2012). Ethical challenges were significant with buzzwords
29 ‘corruption’ and ‘healthcare’ present in the title of the thesis, and the
30 wellbeing, safety, and confidentiality of participants were at the centre of my
31 methodology. I was acutely aware that it would be challenging to recruit and to
32 get participants to open up about a sensitive, taboo topic such as corruption
33 without self-incrimination (Brannen 1988, Lee 1993). As a result, I had to make

1 compromises in the recruitment process, relying on snowballing a lot of the
2 time, and only being able to encompass two regions of the country, which posed
3 limitations of validity and generalisability in a wider context. I do not claim that
4 the sample was representative of the larger population, but I endeavoured to
5 acquire a wide range of age groups, educational levels, and a varied set of
6 employment for the sample, albeit an even split of all these categories was not
7 possible to achieve in each focus group. In an ideal context, I would have been
8 able to interview a representative and a much larger sample, but this was not
9 possible with the time and resource constraints put on the project as a self-
10 funded researcher, with one year out of the three of the project being taken up
11 by a pandemic. However, since I employed a rigorous model of study, there is
12 potential for analytic generalisation to apply to similar social environments
13 within the region (Falk and Guenther 2007), which share a similar socio-
14 economic and historical journey, and a semi-privatised model of healthcare-
15 parallels are drawn in the work with other members of the Visegrad Group, for
16 example.

17

18 The empirical chapters of the thesis grappled at length with several abstract
19 concepts relating to corruption. Concepts such as trust, fear, and importance of
20 time were at the heart of the narratives elicited, alongside more concrete
21 concepts of corruption brokerage, employment of networks, significance of gifts,
22 and particularities of the healthcare sector. The real strength of the methods
23 lies in the deliberately selected, worded, and piloted open-ended questions and
24 their sequence that allowed the participants to think deeply about corruption in
25 ways they may not have considered before. This led to them being able to
26 develop their own narrative and use specific vernacular that formed patterns of
27 repetition for the analysis, which showed the similarities of how people thought
28 about corruption in a real-life context. These included language about gifts,
29 gratitude and attention payments, 'arranging' or 'getting something done' as
30 equivalent with corruption, and 'helping' or 'putting in a good word' as
31 synonyms to brokering corrupt deals. As a result, several key findings emerged
32 that addressed the research questions and should get explored in more detail in

1 future research. These findings are outlined in the following, final section of the
2 thesis, embedded in the architecture of the thesis research questions.

3

4 **Findings and Research Questions**

5 **RQ1 & 2**

6 *'It is difficult to imagine a reality in which petty corruption exists and*
7 *grand would not' ELITE1*

RQ1: How does awareness of grand corruption inform/justify individual engagement in petty corruption?

RQ2: How does awareness of petty corruption inform/justify individual engagement in grand corruption?

H_{0a}: Awareness of grand corruption will have no impact on the engagement of individuals in petty corruption and vice versa.

H_{1a}: Awareness of grand corruption will inform/justify individual engagement in petty corruption.

H_{1b}: Awareness of petty corruption will inform/justify individual engagement in grand corruption.

8 Based on findings regarding petty and grand corruption outlined in section 14.4,
9 the hypotheses **H1a and H1b have been confirmed**. There is evidence of
10 awareness of grand and petty corruption informing/justifying individual
11 engagement in petty or grand corruption. The participant responses relating to
12 real-life understanding of corruption showed that there is awareness of one level
13 of corruption either conditioning or causing the other. There was evidence of
14 participants believing that it is either learned behaviour at the petty level that
15 perpetuates to grand level of corruption, or, conversely, that the petty level
16 corrupt acts are carried out due to emulating the trends set on grand levels.
17 There was a level of sophistication of understanding displayed, whereby
18 participants could pinpoint that there are different factors impacting on each

1 level of corruption (e.g., lack of services impacting on petty levels more than
2 profiteering, which impacted more on grand levels), but the principle of
3 behaviour on both levels was shared. This principle of hypothesising this
4 connection is based on the petty experience of participants and their ability to
5 compare the strategies exhibited with those on grand levels, based on the
6 available evidence of public perceptions. As the thesis has demonstrated,
7 namely through its presentation of the media frequently highlighting corruption
8 scandals and arrests of high-ranking officials, often drawing clear links between
9 involved actors and even publishing transcripts of recorded secret meetings of
10 grand corruption scandals (such as the Gorila scandal, see Chapter 5), public
11 discourse is saturated with awareness of how grand corruption is carried out. In
12 theoretical terms, therefore, the participants were able to connect their own
13 experience of carrying out corruption with the corrupt practices as observed in
14 public discourse. This is a unique finding which shows that the conceptualisation
15 of corruption as existing exclusively on several different levels is only valid to a
16 certain extent, as in practice, these levels are inseparably linked and feed off
17 of one another in the behaviour displayed. The definition of corrupt ‘strategies’
18 that exhibit similarity on both grand and petty levels, as labelled by the thesis
19 (and described in Chapter 1.4), follows Warburton’s (2013) idea of ‘dynamic
20 networks and relationships’. In other words, the thesis hypothesises, based on its
21 own results and the public discourse that informs the views of the participants,
22 **that the common strategies used on both petty and grand levels are namely**
23 **the use of personal contacts and networks** in order to gain an advantage.

24 All typological distinctions between levels of corruption as stipulated by
25 literature should be verified in a similar manner by future, qualitative research.
26 The implications of such verification on policy and regulation construction are
27 significant, as such documents are often inaccessible to the wider public and
28 suffer from ambiguity (Schane 1963, Caplan 1988) unless, potentially, the
29 language in them is reflective of the real-life understanding of the phenomenon.
30 This proves to be the case here, too, where a lot of participants were unaware
31 of whistle-blower protection laws, of there being no difference between a gift
32 and a bribe in the law, and also of where and how to report corruption. It stands
33 to reason that inclusion of such language in official policy will make it more

1 accessible and understandable to the greater public, creating greater
2 opportunity for them to adhere to any ensuing regulations.

3 **RQ3**

4

RQ3: What are the strategies utilised to carry out grand and petty corrupt practices?

Theoretical assumption: There will be similarities in the strategies utilised to carry out grand and petty corrupt practices.

5

6 The findings in sections 14.3, 14.4, and 14.5 all relate to the particular
7 strategies utilised by people to carry out corrupt transactions. The findings
8 confirm that there was little distinction drawn between the principles of
9 carrying out petty and carrying out grand corruption. Both levels were
10 understood to behave and manifest in similar terms; both levels related to the
11 ideas of **gift-giving, networks, use of a broker/middleman, and the concept of**
12 **‘arranging’ something outside of regular structures.** Both levels incorporated
13 the ideas of **fear and trust as both conditions of corrupt practices and**
14 **deterrents of reporting corruption.** All of these concepts, recognised as valid
15 and important by the participants in real-life understanding of corruption, are
16 applicable to both levels of corruption. In other words, grand levels benefit as
17 much as petty from interpersonal contacts and networks, frequently utilise third
18 parties acting as brokers/middlemen, and require certain levels of trust between
19 the individual parties for a successful corrupt transaction. The only difference is
20 the sums or types of goods and services that are in question on either level, but
21 the fundamental strategies employed by corrupt parties remain the same,
22 **confirming the theoretical assumption of RQ3.** Moreover, as indicated by the
23 answered RQ1 & 2, these strategies are learned from, or passed on to, one level
24 to the other: creating a perpetual vicious circle of corruption sustaining itself
25 across the strata of society.

1 The implication of this finding has as much bearing on theoretical
2 conceptualisation of corruption as for the empirical study of it. Future research
3 should recognise the need to approach corruption from a holistic perspective,
4 rather than assume that principal differences exist between corruption taking
5 place on different levels. To the contrary, corruption in future research should
6 be approached with the understanding that all levels of corruption share core
7 normative features and that one level cannot be disaggregated from the other in
8 any anti-corruption measures implemented.

9 The importance of the **middleman** was one of the most significant findings of
10 the thesis. The middleman/broker was a vital figure in nearly all corrupt
11 transactions described by my participants, despite their reluctance to see the
12 broker as a corrupt figure. The reason this was ignored by the participants was
13 their naïve belief that the broker required nothing in return for their ‘help’,
14 when the truth is that the return value is most often cashed in by the broker in a
15 reciprocal service at a later date. The broker was conceptualised by the
16 participants in the ‘representative brokerage’ model (Jancsics, 2015), posing as
17 member of the same group as those they were ‘helping’. The broker would then
18 be able to, through their connections and networks, acquire a specific service
19 from an agent for the clients. The pernicious nature of this opaque, but
20 ubiquitous brokerage lies in the fact that all of these networks are ad hoc and
21 informal and can reproduce *ad infinitum*. The broker does not belong to just one
22 group, but through informal connections can be tied to several social groups, the
23 members of which can pass contact details of the broker to more groups, thus
24 increasing the broker’s prominence. The broker does not share their influence or
25 reservoir of information and contacts with the rest of the group, which makes
26 their position unique in this context, unlike the theories of social network (SNT)
27 or corruption as a collective action problem. The SNT suggests the growing of
28 connections within a network according to the individual needs and desires of
29 group actors, for example (Warburton 2013). In my conceptualisation, the
30 connections do not expand for the benefit of the group and among members of
31 the group, but buttress the dominant position of the individual broker alone. The
32 more people the broker ‘helps’ by accessing privileged areas of health care
33 independent of clinical need, the greater the broker’s influence, power, and
34 standing. Since this is a concept dependent entirely on organic, ad hoc social

1 networking that is not tied to just one country or region, I expect that the role
2 of the broker as a standalone powerful figure in this sense would exist in more
3 countries and contexts. As such, it should be explored in more case studies by
4 future research, to confirm that representative brokerage is the most common
5 and most pressing to address by anti-corruption measures in real, everyday life.

6 **Gift-giving** was another significant finding, inseparably tied to the communist
7 legacies in the participants' views. The participants made a distinction between
8 gifts and bribes that was inconsistent with the legal definition of bribes in Slovak
9 Criminal Code, which does not take timing of the gift into consideration.
10 However, for the participants, the concept of **time** was extremely important and
11 justified their engagement in corruption by suggesting that as long as a gift is
12 given after the service, it has no negative connotations. A similar provision of
13 **time** leniency was made for the broker as outlined above, whereby as long as
14 the return value was not requested immediately, the broker was not associated
15 with corruption. It is the recommendation of the thesis that the wording in the
16 Criminal Code is reviewed to include the language the participants used to
17 justify their involvement in corrupt practices and state in plain terms that
18 'gratitude payments' or 'attention payments', and all other permutations of
19 these, regardless of when they are given, are considered a bribe and are subject
20 to prosecution. A constant update of language in official policy documents is
21 necessary, as language is as diverse as humans themselves, incessantly
22 developing, and with a limitless potential for production of varied facets of
23 communication (Greenberg 1971, Chomsky 1980, Nowak and Krakauer 1999). The
24 regulations must keep up with these developments through qualitative research,
25 in order for the people to have no basis for justifying corrupt behaviour.

26 RQ3a

27
28

RQ3a- subquestion: What is the significance of trust as a pre-requisite for corrupt interactions?

Theoretical assumption: Trust is understood as one of the processes of corruption that links the corrupt practices on grand and petty levels; as such it is seen as a condition more often than it is understood as a result of corrupt practice.

1 The role of **trust** in my participants' real-life understanding of corruption
2 primarily aligned itself with the existing literature on the subject, which defines
3 trust as fulfilling expectations of behaviour (as opposed to the colloquially-
4 accepted definition of trust, which, as per the OED, would be: '*firm belief in*
5 *the reliability, truth, or ability of someone or something; confidence or faith in*
6 *a person or thing, or in an attribute of a person or thing*⁹³'. In other words, the
7 theoretical assumption was confirmed, whereby trust was seen more as a pre-
8 requisite for a successful corrupt transaction, than as a result of one. However,
9 there was also an indication that a relationship resembling trust develops as a
10 result of a successful corrupt transaction between the parties involved, which
11 then spurs on possible future corrupt transactions and expands the networks of
12 middlemen between individual social networks. The individual findings therefore
13 organically intertwine themselves in the understanding and the narrative of the
14 participants.

15 In a similar manner, the role of **fear** in the corrupt transaction was also
16 significant and seen as both a pre-requisite for engaging in corruption, but also
17 as a deterrent in reporting it. The participants showed that fear for lack of care
18 for their loved ones or sub-optimal care were integral to engaging in corrupt
19 practices. They also intimated that fear for their own safety was a contributing
20 factor to not reporting corruption. This level of fear needs to be addressed both
21 by systemic measures that make the reporting process clearer, safer, and more
22 robust, but also by an information campaign that would boost the standing of
23 care in people's minds (as outlined in detailed suggestions in Chapter 14). More
24 than the level of care, there is also problems with lack of awareness as to the
25 standard of care available to the general population and I recommend that this
26 is a priority for the revamping of the health insurance packages, as well as for
27 government guidelines.

⁹³ For more contextual information and etymology of the definition, visit <https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.lib.gla.ac.uk/view/Entry/207004?rskey=OgpOuN&result=1#eid> [last accessed 8/3/2021]

1 RQ3b

RQ3b- sub question: To what extent are social rules and customs important in the carrying out of corrupt practices?

Theoretical assumption: Social rules and customs are understood as one of the processes of corruption that links corrupt practices on grand and petty levels; as such they will prove as important determinants in carrying out corrupt practices.

2

3 **Social rules and customs** were shown to lie at the heart of the real-life
4 understanding of corruption. It is social rules and customs that encompassed the
5 gift-giving phenomenon, the types of gifts considered acceptable, the
6 acceptability (or lack thereof) of corrupt practices, and peer pressure. These
7 were inextricably linked to the communist legacies of the previous regime,
8 which, according to my participants, played a key role in determining the image
9 corruption takes on today. This is visible in the outlook of the gifts themselves,
10 which bear resemblance to those from communist times (alcohol, chocolates,
11 coffee). While the participants did not unanimously draw a causal link between
12 communist practices and corruption today, the language implied a shared set of
13 values and customs taken over from the past regime and then deliberately or
14 inadvertently taught forward to the next generation. The theoretical assumption
15 is therefore confirmed for RQ3b and the role of communist legacies in this region
16 is shown to affect not only people's mindset and opinion of corrupt practices,
17 but also the particular elements of corruption as transferred from the past to
18 the present. This includes the very particular set of socio-economic
19 circumstances that impacted on corrupt practices in the early transitions from a
20 centralised to a market economy, creating unique opportunities for privatisation
21 and kleptocracy.

22 This finding underlines the crucial importance of qualitative research to be
23 conducted into corruption on a more frequent basis and in a regional or country-
24 specific setting, to be able to pick up on differences and insights such as
25 this. Future research may look into whether gift-giving in the shape seen in

1 Slovakia is seen elsewhere or whether the gifts that survived in Slovakia may not
2 be prevalent in other post-communist societies, which may now have converted
3 to completely cash payments, for example. These types of differences will have
4 significant bearing on the tailoring of specific anti-corruption measures for
5 different societies and contexts.

6 **OVERARCHING RESEARCH QUESTION:**

7 **To what extent is the theoretical difference between grand and petty**
8 **corruption reflected in the real-life understanding of corruption in Slovakia's**
9 **healthcare?**

10 In light of the above findings, the theoretical difference between grand and
11 petty corruption is only reflected in the real-life understanding of corruption in
12 Slovakia's healthcare **to a certain extent**. The findings show an awareness of
13 there being different factors impacting on corruption on grand and petty levels,
14 but also an indisputable and profound link of similar strategies of contacts and
15 networks used between the two levels, which turns them into one holistic
16 phenomenon. Previous findings in literature are confirmed throughout, but there
17 are certain discrepancies shown that make for unique findings and disprove the
18 theory on corruption in these cases. For example, the principal-agent theory of
19 corruption is ultimately disproved on both grand and petty levels in the real-life
20 understanding of corruption, which incorporates the use of a single-person
21 middleman on a very frequent basis. This also disproves other theoretical
22 assumptions about corrupt practices in this region, such as the social network
23 theory or corruption as a collective action problem- instead, the broker as a
24 lone, but powerful figure dominates the arena of corrupt transactions and
25 domains, always looking to capitalise on their own position before sharing
26 information with the rest of the group. Furthermore, the existing finding on the
27 GP sector in healthcare to be most impacted by corruption was completely
28 disproved by the findings of the thesis, which showed the GP sector to be the
29 least affected, as opposed to that of specialist doctors and surgeries. Further
30 research into the GP sector and corruption is called for and a comparative study
31 into levels of corruption in corresponding branches of healthcare in different
32 countries too. A comparative study would provide the scope to capture levels

1 and manifestations of corruption in this sector elsewhere compared to Slovakia,
2 clarify views on the GP profession and its position in healthcare in a real-life
3 understanding by people, and also contribute to any potential targeted anti-
4 corruption policy for the GP/ specialist sector.

5 Overall, the thesis has shown that there are elements of cognitive dissonance
6 between the theoretical conceptualisation of corruption and the real-life
7 understanding of it. The case study of Slovakia's healthcare sector has shown
8 that corruption is fundamentally bred on the basis of asymmetry between what
9 is available as care in real-life, what is standard care on paper, and what can be
10 delivered within the constraints of the system. This asymmetry relates to the
11 perceptions and realities of standard of care, working conditions of professionals
12 and their oversight, and the health insurance business. These factors joined with
13 the cultural and socio-economic factors outlined by the thesis together create a
14 breeding ground for an environment where goal posts are constantly being
15 shifted for both the care provider and the care recipient, but never at the same
16 time. The addressing of corruption therefore cannot be expected to work on
17 individual, separated levels- it must be achieved by a set of measures that will
18 work together to address the existing asymmetry at once. The most impactful
19 start to this, according to my findings, is: to boost the levels of education on
20 corruption, to invest in healthcare as the most precious resource that it is, to
21 clarify the language in existing legislation and policy to include the vernacular
22 used by the people in real life, to revamp the existing health insurance packages
23 in a transparent manner, and to instil a sense of confidence in healthcare
24 professionals. Finally, instilling a greater sense of ethics, and standards of
25 professionalism beyond criminal measures would hopefully result in greater
26 levels of corruption rejection and a greater sense of pride in one's work for the
27 healthcare professional. The quality of care received by those who can't afford
28 to bribe is, after all, the real measure of any society.

Appendix 1

Nodes of the project

Name	Description	Files	References
Corruption vs token of gratitude		35	61
Time scale importance	The distinction of giving a bribe before or after medical treatment is an emergent key characteristic for people	25	33
Definitions of corruption	Responses to the question on what people understand to be corruption	41	61
Examples	Examples of grand and petty corruption taking place in everyday situations for the respondents. Some are specific as to levels, which are depicted in child notes	27	51
Grand		25	33
Petty		23	35
General perception of corruption	General comments about corruption, its status and levels, its prevalence in society	37	126
Neighbours comparison	Perceptions on how Slovakia is placed compared to its neighbouring states	19	22
Mechanism of corruption	How people think corruption takes place- ie, where do they get information, how do they know who to pay etc.	21	28
Media scandals	How does finding out about corruption scandals make the respondents feel about the state of corruption?	27	28
Most likely occurrences of corruption	Where do people think/perceive corruption to be most likely to take place? With reference to real life situations or to sectors	31	38
Patient or doctor	Who is more likely to initiate the corrupt exchange? Specific delineation captured in children nodes	12	16
Doctor initiates		12	15
Patient initiates		19	22
Personal contacts	People's opinions on whether using personal contacts should be seen as corrupt behaviour	32	50
They are corrupt		19	26
They are not corrupt		16	23
Petty and Grand	Do people distinguish between the two types?	24	26
Address separately	Should they be addressed separately	9	10
Distinction	Is there a distinction between grand and petty	19	22

Link between them	Is there a link between the two types of corruption	30	39
Which is worse	Which type is worse for society?	16	17
Reasons for corruption in Slovakia	What do people see as causes for corruption in Slovakia? Who or what is responsible?	10	16
Bureaucracy		5	7
Culture Norm		24	39
Deficiency of services		17	40
Lack of morals		11	18
Legislative deficiencies		12	20
Low living standard		25	39
Mentality of people		27	46
Soviet legacy		34	51
Reporting corruption	Do respondents think that people are likely to report corruption? If so, do they know where to report it?	30	36
Sceptical that it gets looked at		17	18
Unlikely to report		30	37
Where to report		30	34
Scenarios	When presented with a few health care scenarios, what are people's responses? Do they feel outraged at the injustice of someone skipping the queue? Or do they feel envious?	4	8
Systemic change	Should the system change or does it function as it is? If it should change, what kind of change should this be?	27	41
Change bottom-top		10	12
Change top-bottom		10	10
Combination of both		6	6
Trust	Is there an element of trust required between corrupt parties for corruption to successfully take place?	11	11
Where is it most frequent	Where do respondents think that corruption is most prevalent in health care?	1	1
GP		10	10
Private clinics		17	22
Specialists		32	35

Appendix 3

Field Questions

1. Can you think of any situations where corruption occurs usually?
1a V akých situáciách podľa vás najčastejšie dochádza ku korupcii?
2. What do you understand by the term corruption? Have you heard the term grand and petty corruption before?
2a. Čo rozumiete pod pojmom korupcia? Už ste počuli výraz vysoká a nízka korupcia?
3. I am now going to present you with the definitions of grand and petty corruption for the purpose of this project. Do you think that the definitions presented to you are a fair representation of your idea of corruption? Is your idea of grand and petty corruption different?
3a. Teraz vám predstavím definície vysokej a nízkej korupcie podľa tézy p rojektu.
Do akej miery odrážajú tieto definície vašu predstavu o vysokej a nízkej k orupcii?

Grand Corruption

Abuse of power and/or distortion of centralised policies or resources at a managerial level within public services, with the purpose of the few benefiting at the expense of the many.

Zneužitie moci a/alebo narušenie centrálného poriadku, politiky a zdrojov na riadiacej pozícii v rámci verejných služieb, za účelom prospechu mála na úkor väčšiny.

Short example: Inflated prices for procurement of hospital equipment or outsourcing hospital services such as a CT scan or an MRI scan by insurance companies to private facilities for a much greater price than the market standard.

Petty Corruption

'Everyday' customary payment of bribes, or other material and immaterial means of motivating officials to amend their behaviour to facilitate higher quality or faster reception of service provision.

Každodenné, bežné platby úplatkov alebo iných materiálnych či nemateriáln ych kompenzácií, ako motivácia pre verejných činiteľov upraviť správanie a lebo reguly za cieľom obstarania služby rýchlejšie alebo vyššej kvality ako j e norma.

Short example: Paying a bribe to a nurse/doctor to skip waiting times for check-ups or minor procedures; offering a gift to the health professional for preferential treatment in the respective hospital ward.

4. Why do you think corruption occurs? Do you think corruption is an ethical problem or a cultural norm?
4a Prečo si myslíte, že dochádza ku korupcii? Myslíte si, že korupcia je mo rálnym problémom alebo je kultúrnou normou?
5. How bad do you think grand corruption is? Do you think it is worse than petty corruption? Does your answer alter when addressing health

care? Could you elaborate? Do you think they are different and if so, how in the healthcare context?

5a Ako vážny je podľa vás problém vysokej korupcie? Myslíte si, že je horší ako stav nízkej korupcie? Líši sa váš názor ak sa bavíme vo sfére zdravotníctva?

6. How do you perceive corruption in the health sector?

6a Ako vnímate korupciu v zdravotníctve?

7. Do you think corruption is widespread in Slovakia? If so, why?

7a Myslíte si, že korupcia na Slovensku je rozsiahla?

8. How would you rank Slovakia's position in terms of its corruption levels with its immediate neighbours/V4? What do you think are the main issues of corruption abroad? Which do you think are the most affected sectors? Which sector of the economy seems to be the most corrupt one in Slovakia and why? If not then which one and why? How do you think this compares abroad?

8a

Kam

by ste zaradili Slovensko v úrovni korupcie v porovnaní so susedskými krajinami? Aké problémy s korupciou majú podľa vás susedské krajiny V4?

9. Do you think that the healthcare sector is corrupt? If so, why do you think that this sector in particular is corrupt?

9a Myslíte si, že existuje korupcia v zdravotníctve? Ak áno, prečo si myslíte, že práve tento sektor je ovplyvnený korupciou v porovnaní s ostatnými?

10. How do you feel when you hear about a corruption scandal in the news or read about it in the paper (for example the select few receiving goods or products or government contracts unexpectedly or undeservedly in your opinion)? Do you feel a sense of injustice? Do you know of any such scandals or occurrences recently? Do you feel like such occurrences justify the every man's corrupt behaviour? (also asked differently in 17, 28, 30, 31- this is central Research question)

10a Ako sa cítite, keď sa z médií dozviete o korupcii? Máte pocit bezprávia? Viete o nejakých nedávnych škandáloch?

11. OPTIONAL SCENARIO: I will read you a few scenarios, can you please tell me how these make you feel?

You are in a waiting room in your GP surgery; you have now been waiting for two hours to be seen. You have moved up from being 20th in line to being 13th. Someone has now walked in to the waiting room, knocked on the door of the surgery. The nurse opens and greets the patient; they clearly know each other. The nurse ushers the patient in before the person who is now first in line. How does that make you feel?

Your parent is long-term hospitalised and is on a ward of 40 patients, with 2 nurses working around the clock. You pop in to see your parent everyday and every week you bring the nurse on duty a box of chocolates and a packet of nice coffee to make sure your parent is looked after. You notice that the patient in the bed next to your parent has much dirtier sheets and has not been taken for a shower for several days. You also notice that they do not have anyone visiting them or paying special attention to the nurses. How does this make you feel?

12. ** Please be careful not to mention anything that could incriminate you or anyone personally in this question** Have you witnessed/heard of instances of corruption? Can you tell me what happened? (here several follow ups will be asked depending on the response to elicit as much information as possible- for example 'What was the reason for providing a bribe' 'Do you think that the service received in this case was better or worse because of involvement in corruption' 'How did the given third party know who to ask about what is accepted for whatever procedure' etc)

12a ****Prosím, nespomeňte nič, čo by vás alebo niekoho osobne inkriminovalo** Máte nejakú vedomosť o korupcii, viete o niekom so skúsenosťou s korupciou v zdravotníctve? Môžete mi povedať, čo sa stalo?**

13. What do you think are the conditions needed for corruption to take place in real life? Do you think trust plays a role? If so, in what way do you think it is important? (*similar concepts in 13, 15, 20*)

13a **Aké podmienky sú podľa vás potrebné na to, aby sa reálne udiala korupcia? Myslíte si, že hrá určitú rolu aj dôvera? Ak áno, v akom zmysle podľa vás?**

14. How do you think corruption is carried out? Who and how do you think gets approached for corrupt transaction to take place? Where do you think one can find information on how corruption can be carried out? (*similar in 15*)

14a **Ako podľa vás dochádza ku korupcii? Koho podľa vás ľudia oslovia, za účelom korupčného chovania? Ako a kde sa podľa vás dá získať informácia o špecifických častiach korupčného chovania?**

15. Do you consider the use of personal contacts and connections to be a form of corruption? What do you think is the importance of having the right contacts to receive quality healthcare? If so where would you class this, within petty or grand and what do you think of this? (*also asked differently in 19*)

15a **Považujete využitie osobných kontaktov za formu korupcie? Myslíte si, že je dôležité mať tie správne kontakty na to aby sa vám dostalo kvalitnej zdravotnej starostlivosti? Zaradili by ste využitie kontaktov do nízkej alebo vysokej korupcie?**

16. Do you think some people have greater access to underground informal networks than others? If so why? *le do you think there is a class issue even with corrupt networks of privilege? If this proves true then this questions the whole existence of corruption because if there is preferential treatment within preferential treatment itself, the meta analysis of such questions the whole validity of the first level in the first place.*

17. Why do you think that the healthcare sector is corrupt?

17a **Prečo si myslíte, že je korupcia v zdravotníctve?**

18. Who or what do you think is responsible for health care corruption?

18a **Kto alebo čo je podľa vás zodpovedný za korupciu v zdravotníctve?**

19. Where in health care do you think is corruption at its highest level? Within GPs, specialised health care clinics, specialty doctors, state or private facilities?

19a **V ktorej časti zdravotníctva je podľa vás korupcia vysoká? Obvodný lekár, špecializované kliniky, špecialisti, štátne alebo súkromné zariadenia?**

20. How do you think the behaviour of healthcare professionals facilitates or hinders corruption? What is your view of healthcare professionals and their behaviour towards patients in this concept? Do you think it should change? If so, how?

20a Akým spôsobom podľa vás správanie zdravotného personálu pomáha alebo zabraňuje korupcii? Aký je váš pohľad na túto skutočnosť? Myslíte si, že by sa to malo zmeniť? Ak áno, akým spôsobom?

21. Do you think that the gravity of the medical context dictates the doctor's or the patient's conduct? I.e. do you think that the graver the issue the more likely one is to engage in corruption in order to mitigate a negative result?

21a Myslíte si, že vážnosť zdravotného stavu pacienta určuje správanie pacienta alebo personálu v tejto problematike? Inými slovami, máte pocit, že čím vážnejší je určitý prípad, tým je väčšia pravdepodobnosť, že sa pacient rozhodne pre úplatok?

22. Do you think that the healthcare authorities are corrupt? (this question will be amended for elite interviews so as not to antagonise) (*maybe include scenario here*)

22a Myslíte si, že sú funkcionári v zdravotníctve skorumpovaní?

23. How do you understand the difference between giving a token of 'thanks' to a doctor and inducement of corruption? What are the most important criteria of distinction? *This goes to the eternal debate on gratitude tokens and/or corruption. Is the timeline important? I.e. does gifting after matter more than before or is there an expectation at the 'before' stage to receive later anyway, in which case is the timeline argument moot altogether?*

23a Aký je podľa vás rozdiel medzi "pod'akovaním sa" a korupciou? Aké sú podľa vás rozdiely?

24. Do you think people generally condemn corruption in the healthcare sector or other sectors or only once they have 'skin in the game' so to say? I.e. when they are negatively affected by someone else taking advantage of corrupt practices to get ahead on their account?

24a Myslíte si, že ľudia väčšinou odsudzujú korupciu v zdravotníctve len keď sú negatívne ovplyvnení?

25. Is there a specific amount of people's budget that you think people put away or save up for to accommodate corrupt behaviour such as bribes or gifts? I.e. some safety net budget in case something happens that needs taken care of in this manner?

25a Máte pocit, že v rodinách existuje konkrétny rozpočet na úplatky alebo dary? Na horšie časy?

26. Do you think things should change or do you think they work well as they stand? *This goes to the grease in wheels vs sand in wheels debate.*

26a Myslíte si, že by sa mali veci zmeniť, alebo system funguje tak ako momentálne je?

27. Do you think that corruption levels are better or worse since 1989 in Slovakia?

27a Myslíte si, že úroveň korupcie na Slovensku je vyššia alebo nižšia ako pred Novembrom 1989?

28. How do you think Slovakia's past has influenced the people's ability to receive reform attempts by the government positively? Do you think this will ever change?

28a

Do akej miery myslíte, že história Slovenska ovplyvnila schopnosť ľudí pozitívne vnímať vládne reformy? Myslíte si, že sa tento trend niekedy zmení?

29. Do you think there is a connection between high and low level corruption?

29a Myslíte si, že existuje spojenie medzi vysokou a nízkou korupciou?

30. Do you think that corruption of healthcare authorities makes it easier for low-level corruption to occur? Do you think that the opposite is true?

30a Myslíte si, že korupcia vo vedení zdravotníctva ospravedlňuje nízku formu korupcie? Myslíte si, že je to naopak?

31. Have you got insight into the systemic factors preconditioning the need for corruption to survive? (elite-specific)

31a Viete o nejakých systemických faktoroch, ktoré robia korupciu nevyhnutnú v danom čase?

32. Do you think that the prevalence of petty corruption encourages the grand corruption taking place in healthcare and other sectors?

32a Máte pocit, že množstvo existujúcej nízkej korupcie ospravedlňuje korupciu na vyšších miestach v zdravotníctve a iných sektoroch? Myslíte si, že je to naopak?

33. In your professional experience and capacity, how do you see corruption today? (elite-specific)

33a Z vašej skúsenosti a pozície, ako vidíte korupciu dnes vy?

34. Do you think greater education on the subject would help people engage in both kinds of corruption less? Do you think this is relevant to health care? Any suggestions of what you think could work?

34a Myslíte si, že väčšia informovanosť ľudí o problematike by pomohla zníženiu korupcie? Čo myslíte, že by fungovalo najlepšie?

35. Would you report corruption if you saw it? If so, would you know where to turn to?

35a Nahlásili by ste korupciu ak by ste sa s ňou stretli? Ak áno, vedeli by ste kam sa obrátiť?

Appendix 4

Ethical approval



College of Social
Sciences
18/06/2019

Dear Kristina Cimova

College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Project Title: Investigation of grand and petty corruption through the lens of Slovakia's health care sector

Application No: 400180226

The College Research Ethics Committee has reviewed your application and has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. It is happy therefore to approve the project, subject to the following conditions:

- Start date of ethical approval: 20/06/2019 _____
- Project end date: _31/06/2021_____
- Any outstanding permissions needed from third parties in order to recruit research participants or to access facilities or venues for research purposes must be obtained in writing and submitted to the CoSS Research Ethics Administrator before research commences. Permissions you must provide are shown in the *College Ethics Review Feedback* document that has been sent to you.
- The data should be held securely for a period of ten years after the completion of the research project, or for longer if specified by the research funder or sponsor, in accordance with the University's Code of Good Practice in Research: (https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_490311_en.pdf) (Unless there is an agreed exemption to this, noted here).
- The research should be carried out only on the sites, and/or with the groups and using the methods defined in the application.
- Any proposed changes in the protocol should be submitted for reassessment as an amendment to the original application. The *Request for Amendments to an Approved Application* form should be used: <https://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/students/ethics/forms/staffandpostgraduateresearchstudents/>

Yours sincerely,

Dr Muir Houston
College Ethics Officer

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Appendix 5

Research Questions and Field Questions

Research Question (RQ)	Hypotheses or Theoretical assumptions	Categories addressing RQs	Field question examples, addressing RQs. This is orientational, however, not exhaustive of all questions and follow-ups asked, allowing for the potential for several questions to address more than just one RQ, dependent on answers.
<p>Overarching research question (RQ): To what extent is the theoretical difference between grand and petty corruption reflected in the real-life understanding of corruption in Slovakia's health care?</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General perceptions of corruption • Reasoning and reporting • Petty v Grand • Common corrupt practices • Gratitude payments • Health care corrupt practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you think of any situations where corruption occurs usually? • Why do you think corruption occurs? Do you think corruption is an ethical problem or a cultural norm? • How do you perceive corruption in the health sector? • Do you think corruption is widespread in Slovakia? If so, why? • How do you feel when you hear about a corruption scandal in the news or read about it in the paper? • Please be careful not to mention anything that could incriminate you or anyone personally in this question** Have you witnessed/heard of instances of corruption? Can you tell me what happened? • What do you think are the conditions needed for corruption to take place in real life? • Who or what do you think is responsible for health care corruption? • Do you think things should change or do you think they work well as they stand?
<p>RQ1: How does awareness of grand corruption inform/justify individual engagement in petty corruption?</p>	<p>H0a: Awareness of grand corruption will have no impact on the engagement of individuals in petty corruption and vice versa. H1a: Awareness of grand corruption will inform/justify individual engagement in petty corruption.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Petty v Grand • Gratitude payments • Common corrupt practices • Reasoning and Reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you understand by the term corruption? Have you heard the term grand and petty corruption before? • I am now going to present you with the definitions of grand and petty corruption for the purpose of this project. Do you think that the definitions presented to you are a fair representation of your idea of corruption? Is your idea of grand and petty corruption different? • How bad do you think grand corruption is? Do you think it is worse than petty corruption?

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you understand the difference between giving a token of 'thanks' to a doctor and inducement of corruption? What are the most important criteria of distinction? • Do you think people generally condemn corruption in the healthcare sector or other sectors or only once they have 'skin in the game' so to say? • Do you think that corruption levels are better or worse since 1989 in Slovakia? • Would you report corruption if you saw it? If so, would you know where to turn to?
RQ2: How does awareness of petty corruption inform/justify individual engagement in grand corruption?	<p>H0b: Awareness of grand corruption will have no impact on the engagement of individuals in petty corruption and vice versa.</p> <p>H1b: Awareness of petty corruption will inform/justify individual engagement in grand corruption.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Petty v Grand • Gratitude payments • Common corrupt practices • Reasoning and Reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How bad do you think grand corruption is? Do you think it is worse than petty corruption? (vice versa) • How do you feel when you hear about a corruption scandal in the news or read about it in the paper? • Do you think there is a connection between high and low level corruption? • Do you think that corruption of health care authorities makes it easier for low-level corruption to occur? • Do you think that the prevalence of petty corruption encourages the grand corruption taking place in health care and other sectors?
RQ3: What are the strategies utilised to carry out grand and petty corrupt practices?	Theoretical assumption: There will be similarities in the strategies utilised to carry out grand and petty corrupt practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common corrupt practices • Health care corrupt practices • General perceptions of corruption • Gratitude payments • Petty v Grand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think are the conditions needed for corruption to take place in real life? • How do you think corruption is carried out? Who and how do you think gets approached for corrupt transaction to take place? Where do you think one can find information on how corruption can be carried out? • Do you consider the use of personal contacts and connections to be a form of corruption? • How do you think the behaviour of healthcare professionals facilitates or hinders corruption? What is your view of healthcare professionals and their behaviour towards patients in this concept? • How do you understand the difference between giving a token of 'thanks' to a doctor and inducement of corruption? What are the most important criteria of distinction?

RQ3a- subquestion: What is the significance of trust as a pre-requisite for corrupt interactions?	Theoretical assumption: Trust is understood as one of the processes of corruption that links the corrupt practices on grand and petty levels; as such it is seen as a condition more often than it is understood as a result of corrupt practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health care corrupt practices • Common corrupt practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think are the conditions needed for corruption to take place in real life? Do you think trust plays a role? If so, in what way do you think it is important? • What do you think is the importance of having the right contacts to receive quality healthcare? If so, where would you class this, within petty or grand and what do you think of this?
RQ3b- subquestion: To what extent are social rules and customs important in the carrying out of corrupt practices?	Theoretical assumption: Social rules and customs are understood as one of the processes of corruption that links corrupt practices on grand and petty levels; as such they will prove as important determinants in carrying out corrupt practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Common corrupt practices • Health care corrupt practices • Gratitude payments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you understand the difference between giving a token of 'thanks' to a doctor and inducement of corruption? What are the most important criteria of distinction? • Is there a specific amount of people's budget that you think people put away or save up for to accommodate corrupt behaviour such as bribes or gifts? • Do you think people generally condemn corruption in the healthcare sector or other sectors or only once they have 'skin in the game' so to say?

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