# The Invisible Filipino Conga Line: A Comparative Study on the Tolerance Level of Imus Government Employees and Ordinary Imuseños Towards Corruption

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Corruption and corrupt practices have always been associated as a behavioral term issue rather than a psychological term. The more that the government employees and ordinary Filipino citizens engage themselves with corrupt practices such as bribing, they produce a lesser motivation and political will to—if not totally eradicate but at least alleviate the never-ending cycle and existence of corruption in the Philippine political system. The excessive release of tolerance of the Filipino people leads to a much more perilous and unprogressive system, hence further establishment of corrupt practices which result in this malicious act being socially accepted as a norm. Throughout the processes of this paper, it exhibited the capacity of the government employees and constituents to recognize corrupt acts such as bribing but their sense of respect, moral, and political toleration always overrides their judgements and perceptions. Despite their awareness of anomalies that occur within their surroundings, they still focus on weighing their bond and respect with people around them. They give heavy emphasis on having mutual understanding and having tolerance of adoption for the sake of peace, harmony, and belongingness with each other.

**Keywords:** political psychology, collective action and tolerance theory, concept of belongingness, moral toleration, systemic corruption

**BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

The Philippine political system is complex and is known for having a thick layer of underlying problems that can be considered as one of the setbacks in achieving a more progressive and developed country. One of the hardest political issues that needs immediate action from the national government is corruption. Corruption has been a long-time problem that was gradually established and embedded in the Philippine political system. This phenomenon leads the Filipinos into thinking—when did corruption start being accepted in the system? This issue remained unresolved for generations after generation because it slowly brainwashed the public into thinking that public officials doing corrupt practice is normal and acceptable. To the extent that they no longer see this a threat to them, they no longer see corruption as unethical and unusual—even if public servants are caught up in grand scandals, some of the people even defend and reason out that this issue is innate when someone is part of the government. Corruption and corrupt practices have been a long overdue problem that hasn't been resolved. It no longer scares the public if a public official is blatantly displaying their immoral acts. Corruption has been so accepted by society that even if highly elected officials admit to their unethical practices, it remains ignored and some of the public acts unbothered. With this, it eventually made corruption a social norm that can no longer be solved regardless of the public servants who lead the country.

Transparency International is an organization that holds the powerful and the corrupt government accountable by exposing the political system of 180 countries. Moreover, they strongly advocate for crafting policies that shall challenge the status quo. According to the 2021 gathered data of use of their Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI), they were able to score the Philippines' corruption level at 33/100 and gave the ranking of 117/180 from least to most corrupt countries.3 In addition to that information, using Transparency international's Global Corruption Barometer (GCB)—GCB is the only worldwide public survey on corruption, having said that, they were able to gather information about the varying perceptions and experiences of people who are facing corruption around the world.4 The recent gathered data of GCB in the Philippines in 2020 showed that 86% of the population sees the government's corruption as a big problem that should be addressed immediately. In addition, 19% of the population of public service users admitted that they committed bribes in the previous 12 months.

Particularly, this thesis will scrutinize the effects of one's decision-making and influence in terms of assessing a certain act/practice. This shall manifest how an individual unconsciously inculcates their feelings, morality, and beliefs in their decisions that are brought about by influence of those who surround them or based on what they witness as a social norm.

This study utilized *political psychology* as a tool that enabled the researcher to have a greater understanding of how an individual's political behavior is molded, built, and influenced by its environment. Political Psychology is a thriving field of study of social scientific inquiry rooted from Political Science and Psychology. Political Psychology sets its focus in explaining the psychological underpinnings, roots, and the consequences of political behavior. Thus, this

helped in providing guidelines to this paper to follow and to enable its readers to grasp the behavior and social relations as an account of political phenomena. Since the researcher aimed to collect evidence in regard to whether tolerance plays a significant role in the unending cycle of corruption in the government—this specific political aspect will provide a lens in studying the political behavior that are being exhibited by the public and the government employees. It was mentioned in the earlier parts of the paper that the decisions and mindset of an individual is heavily affected by their feelings, morals, beliefs, and how the people who surround them influence their perceptions.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The researcher aims to focus on proving the varying levels of tolerance between government employees and the constituents pertaining to the ordinary Imuseños. Furthermore, this study will be looking into the varying perspectives of government employees and their constituents on corrupt practices. Throughout this thesis's navigation, it will continuously look for signs and evidence that will prove the tolerance towards acts of corruption.

The main problem this paper will answer throughout this study is: How does the levels of tolerance to corruption of government employees differ from their constituents in a local government unit?

Moreover, this thesis will specifically answer the following sub-problems:

1. What is the level of tolerance of government employees to corruption?

2. What is the level of tolerance of the ordinary Imuseños to corruption?

3. What are the significant differences to each perspective?

4. What is the recommendation that can be suggested based on the results of the study to mitigate corruption?

## SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

The researcher will only focus on proving the existence of tolerance on corruption within the Philippine political system. In addition, this thesis will also provide a well-laid-out recommendation as to how the political system can mitigate corruption. This paper will aim to survey some of the Imus Municipal Hall employees and the ordinary Imuseños. This study will only be covering the entire Imus City—encompassing all the 97 barangays. Thus, this paper will not speak on the overall culture of the National government.

The corrupt practice that will be studied in this thesis is bribery—simple bribery, specifically Indirect Bribery. This act is described as a crime committed by a public officer who accepts a gift given by reason of his office or position. The officer must have done an act appropriating the gift for himself, his family, or employees. The price for the recognized bribery in this study is limited up to ₱2000.

The theories that will be used all throughout this study, for Collective Action Theory, the variables that will only be utilized is the *collective action* performed by multiple individuals that leads these actions into becoming a societal norm. On the other hand, out of the four (4) conceptions under the Tolerance theory, only the *respect conception* will be utilized and in determining what level shall encompass the study's goal, *ordinary level* will be applied. Lastly, *moral and political toleration* will be used as a tool from the Tolerance theory to understand the effect of tolerance on the morality and political behavior of an individual.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is supported by two (2) theories that allowed the researcher to elaborately explain and provide an explanation if there is really an existence of tolerance on corruption within the Philippine political system: (1) for corruption, *Collective Action Theory* will be utilized as it will give an overview on the existing and surrounding factors— as to why and how an individual's acts end up being a norm. (2) For levels of tolerance, *Tolerance Theory* will be maximized to inform the readers of the levels, types and conceptions of tolerance that shall explain one's mindset and behavior. Below is a graphical representation on the variables and concepts that will be used all throughout this study:
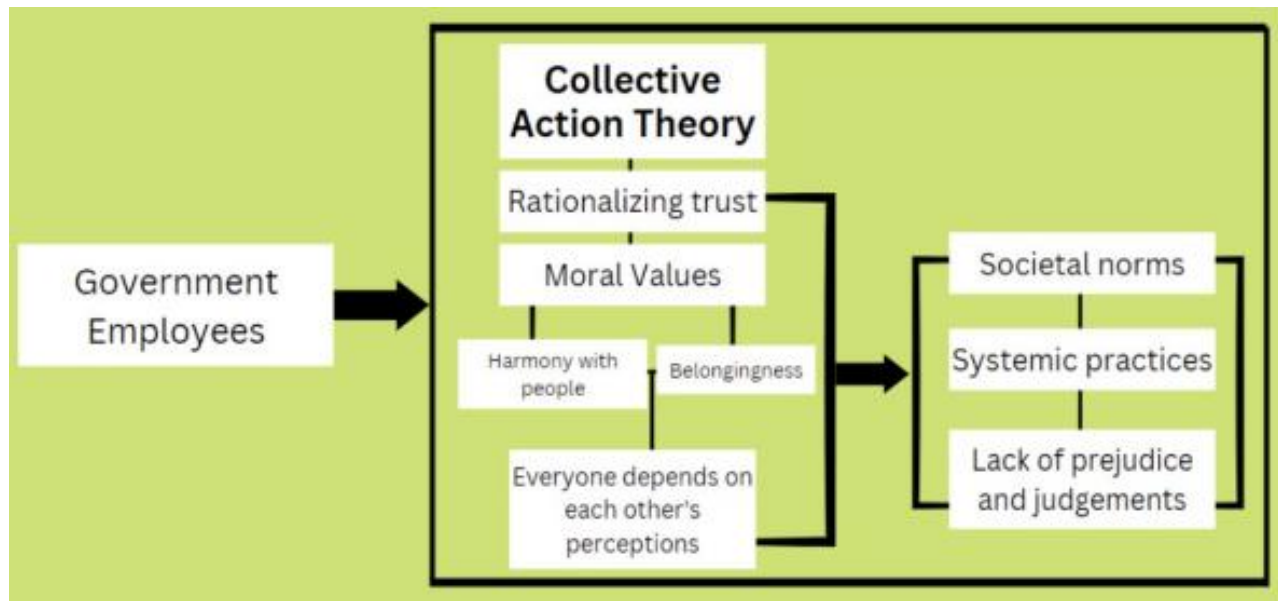
Figure 1. Theoretical Framework on the Collective Action Theory

The Collective Action Theory revolves around individuals rationalizing their trust in people who surround them which results in evaluating their moral values and societal norms. As they delve into understanding their moral values, they unconsciously adapt the actions of behavior of other people that is also brought by mass influence—which eventually leads them to acquiring belongingness within a certain group. This belongingness also umbrellas the term dependence of every individual that belongs to a certain group. It explains their reliance on committing the same act that was made by another member as their reaction when put in a certain situation. With that, these actions eventually become parts of societal norms within a specific system—systemic practices then occur, and it shall further the interjection of lack of prejudice and judgment in the mindset of an individual.
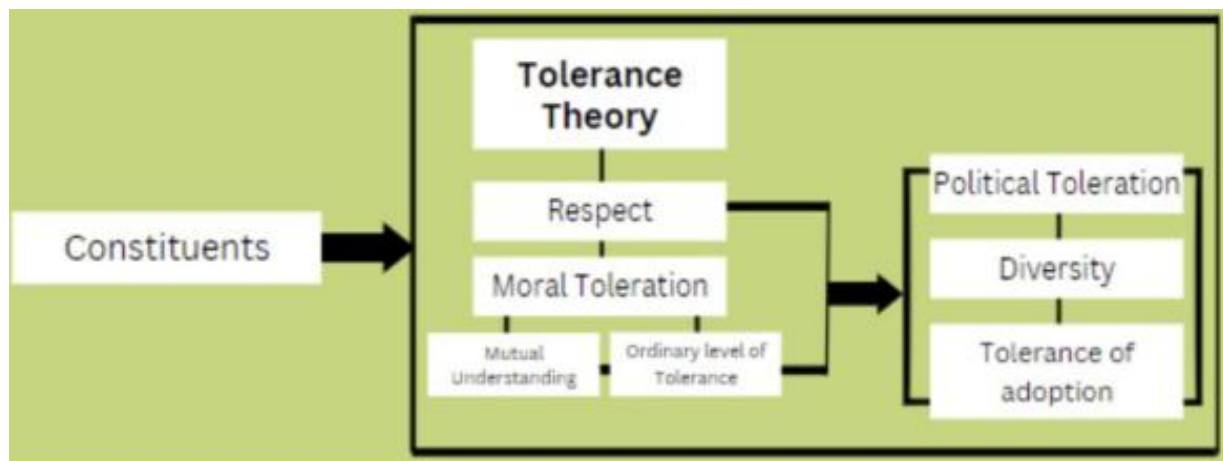
Figure 1.2. On the Tolerance Theory

This paper explains the inevitable presence of tolerance on corruption within the Philippine political system. Looking through the lens of Collective Action Theory, it gives enlightenment in understanding and grasping the complex mindset of government employees and ordinary people on their respective perceptions on the systemic, unjust practices that become a societal norm. The theory gives a foundation in analyzing the collective action being utilized in the political system wherein principles and morality are being neglected as they see the systematic practices as a way of getting things done; and for the sake of satisfying their needs and interests. This theory will serve as the foundation in studying the actions and mindset of ordinary Imuseños.

In Sociology, an individual's choice not to interfere with behavior of which one disapproves specifically pertains to toleration. As this theory is used in this study, tolerance refers to the value, while toleration refers to the act of an individual preventing their interference with someone's differing beliefs, actions, and/or practices. In addition, tolerance in the lens of Political psychology is acceptance of others whose actions, beliefs, physical capabilities, religion, customs, ethnicity, nationality, and so on differ from one's own.

The Tolerance Theory is maximized in this study through the circulation of the idea and concept of individuals having and gaining respect for each other. The concept of respect umbrellas the concept of Moral and Political toleration whereas, it explains the role of diversity in the acquisition of mutual understanding. Having said that, the respect conception further explains wherein individuals produce excessive tolerance to avoid any conflict and confrontation. This also elucidates on the evil outcomes of having excessive tolerance within an individual which eventually leads to tolerance of adoption—as to why people unconsciously adapt their surroundings' practices without having second thoughts about their acts. In the end, these people end up manifesting the ordinary level of tolerance wherein, their restrictions in associating their feelings with their acts and intentions are becoming general, which makes it

difficult in terms of making rational decisions.

As mentioned on the earlier part of this paper, the researcher will not only attempt to analyze how systemic practices occur within a system through the use of the Collective Action Theory, but this paper can also enlighten its readers on the matter of understanding and measuring distinct levels of tolerance, grasp the seemingly inevitable occurrence of tolerance within an individual's perception when faced with a certain situation, and how it eventually becomes a part of a system—through the lens of the Tolerance Theory. Taking all the things mentioned into consideration, the Tolerance Theory will help the researcher in having a categorical position in scrutinizing the significant role of tolerance on ones' decision-making. In addition, it will give a clear differentiation on perceptions in terms of determining the levels of tolerance between a government employee and an ordinary person.

**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

The diagram below shall exhibit the flow and interconnection of this study's concepts and different elements—and how it is utilized all throughout the processes and organization of this paper. This shall give an enlightenment on the trajectory that this study will take through the lens of *Collective Action and Tolerance Theory*; in the matter of addressing the problems.
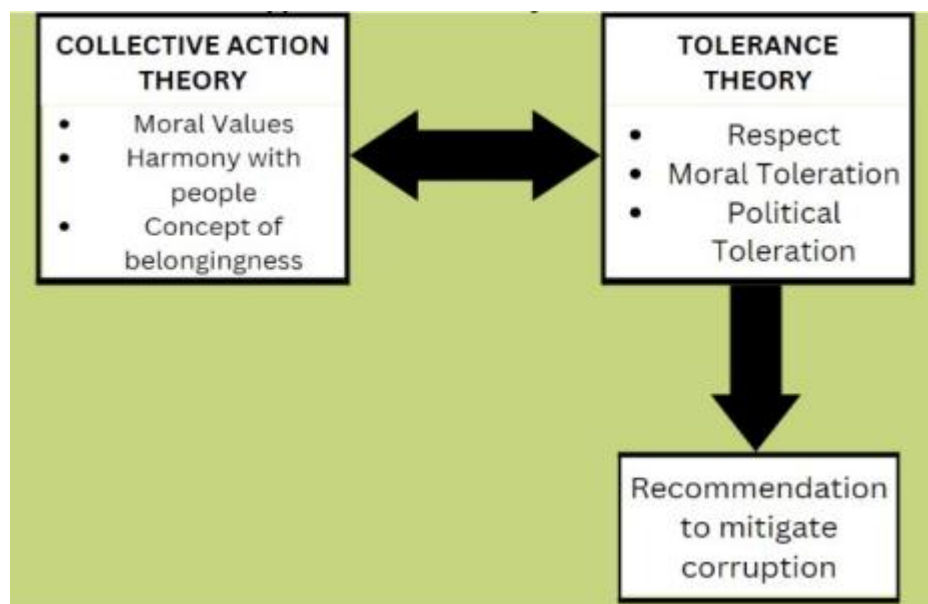


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

Under collective action, are the key concepts: *moral values, harmony with people,* and *the concept of belongingness*. The concept of belongingness is one of the inevitable desires of

human beings to achieve harmony with people and to prevent having any confrontation or conflict with anyone. On that account, it puts their moral values at stake that leads them to having little to no criteria in giving their judgments and prejudices against any acts/practices that they tend to witness. In other words, people end up having these practices grow into their system which eventually society. Having said that, all these occurrences are rooted in a human's desire to belong to a certain group. They commit to anything that society accepts because it gives them the validation and recognition that they belong with the rest of the population.

On the other hand, tolerance presents three (3) key concepts: *moral toleration, mutual understanding,* and *respect conception*. An individual's tolerance manifests their respect for other people's opinion and liberty. Having said that, respect conception happens in the first place because as mentioned earlier, most humans prioritize social peace above all, thus tolerating any just/unjust acts. They respect the varying ways that an individual expresses themselves—how they act upon their beliefs in life. It can be safely said that this will soon become a problem when shown and done excessively. For the sake of mutual understanding, their moral toleration will be heavily affected as their feelings and biased judgements will become one of the factors that determine their rationality. It will lead to an individual having an actual moral dilemma— whether they should call out one's inappropriate actions or should they let them be because they respect their liberty and their pursuance of their interests. With that dilemma, some actions are eventually being adopted by the witnesses which furthers their tolerance of adoption.

Altogether, the key concepts are not only significant in determining, proving, and answering if there is a tolerance towards corruption—may it be from a government employee, or from an ordinary person; but also, in the matter of having a deeper and critical understanding of the mindset of an individual. It will elucidate on an individual criterion and their ways of measuring tolerance towards any corrupt practices in the Philippine political system.


## METHODOLOGY

Quantitative research is a set of strategies, techniques and assumptions used to study psychological, social and economic processes through the exploration of numeric patterns which explains its need to gather a range of numeric data. Quantitative research often includes the creation of items, scales, and measurements in the research instrument. It is frequently distinguished by standardized and structured data collection through execution of questionnaire surveys and experiments.

This thesis aims to determine and prove if one's tolerance affects the mindset of an individual in terms of assessing a certain practice/act—corrupt or not. It needs to study the psychological state of the individuals that are to be studied in this paper which will require the help of numerical data to accurately prove how tolerance affects ones' mindset in assessing corrupt practices which furthers corruption in the political system.

Since quantitative research will be the utilized design in this study, it will specifically employ the descriptive-comparative design. Descriptive-comparative research supported conclusions that one variable has a predictable strength over another variable but does not equate to causation. Descriptive statistics will establish the value behind the measures of central tendency, which will include the process to describe whether the frequency is normal or skewed. Additionally, the measures of spread will provide a summary of how far the scores are from the mean.

One of the core goals of this thesis is to describe the phenomenon of tolerance on corruption. This will be executed by measuring and analyzing the tolerance levels and differences of government employees and ordinary Filipino people's perception in terms of assessing certain practices whether it is corrupt or not. Thus, by comparing the differing perceptions of the mentioned respondents on this study this shall strengthen in achieving good results for this study.

## DATA COLLECTION METHOD

A survey design is deemed appropriate for this study because the investigation will be focused on examining a broad phenomenon such as tolerance on corruption. Results from the aggregate data generated from a survey can be generalized to a wider population provided the logic of sampling has been carefully considered and adopted in the survey design.

By measuring the tolerance levels of the respondents, the Likert Scale is the best method to gather answers in the survey. Through the Likert scale—which is a four, five (or seven) point scale—this shall allow the individual to express how much they agree or disagree with the given statement in the survey. Likert scale (typically) provides four, five, or seven possible answers to a statement or question that allows respondents to indicate their positive-to-negative strength of agreement or strength of feeling regarding the question or statement.

## RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The questionnaire that was formulated by the researcher is made to measure levels of tolerance of the respondents. It was based on the theoretical framework of this study which aims to study how the indicators (trust, moral values, belongingness, and societal norms) of the Collective Action Theory occurs within the participant's workplace. Moreover, the formulated questionnaire measured the tolerance levels of the respondents which was supported by the indicators (respect, moral toleration, and political toleration) of the Tolerance Theory.

## RESPONDENTS

The stratified random sampling method was utilized throughout the processes of data gathering for this research to have an unbiased representation of the total population. The needed respondents for this study were government employees from the Imus Municipal Hall and the constituents which refers to the ordinary Filipino people that reside within the 97 barangays of Imus. The criteria that the researcher have set are; the participant must be a Filipino that is aged 18-65 and is a resident around Imus—specifically, the government employees should be working in the Municipal for 5 years or more, while the constituents should be an Imus citizen for 5 years or more.

The desired sample size was generated from the Raosoft sample size calculator with the 95% confidence level of interval, with a total of 384. It was allocated proportionally to 97 barangays of Imus City.


## RESEARCH LOCALE

The researcher focused on studying the government employees who work in the Imus Municipal Hall and the ordinary Filipino residents in Imus, Cavite. Learning and investigating whether tolerance plays a significant role in maintaining the unending cycle of corruption in the Philippine political system is already a complex job to do and focusing on an LGU is one of the first steps in terms of having a stepping stone throughout this research. There is little to no research about this topic in the Philippines, thus starting from a small locale is already a big step in developing and improving this study because it will further support the claims or assumptions in this study—if it happens in the smaller and lower government agencies, what more does it say into the national government agencies?


## SUMMARY

The moral toleration of government employees and the ordinary Imuseños are statistically significant. Whereas it states that there are significant differences in their perspectives towards corruption. Both variables show tolerance towards corruption— specifically bribing, however the tolerance levels of government employees towards corruption are deemed higher than the ordinary Imuseños. The public servants that are expected to adhere to the laws and to protect the interests of the people at all times are caught lacking through their evident tolerance towards bribing. This says a lot as to how they deal with corrupt acts in the Imus Municipal Hall because of their high levels of moral toleration, their morality is at the expense every time they make and act upon their decisions.

There is significance in the relationship between respect, moral toleration, and political toleration of government employees that is conditioned on mitigating corruption, thus the

mentioned indicators of tolerance affect their way of deciding in their work. They give high regards to all of the indicators as they consider it to prevent disrupting the long- established system in their work environment as well as to the political system in general. This exhibits how they are dependent on the perceptions and socially accepted systematic norms of their co-workers, hence their neglected prejudice and judgements on malicious phenomenon they encounter and witness.

On the other hand, the relationship between the respect, moral toleration, and political toleration variable with the ordinary Imuseños conditioned on mitigating corruption is significant, thus their high tolerance towards corruption rather than mitigating the said social issue. They give high regards for respect, moral, and political toleration to other people—for the sake of avoiding conflict and miscommunications, they allow people to pursue their interests in any way that they can. ￼

The ordinary Imuseños, political toleration and eagerness to mitigate corruption are significant which entails that they have higher levels of political toleration rather than having the will to mitigate corruption. The Imuseños have been somehow desensitized and treated corruption as a norm due to the frequency of reports and since it already exists before. The social issue became a routine for some, while some treat it as a socially accepted act as it is not treated with any sense of urgency, and the others treat it as an inevitable phenomenon that cannot be resolved any time soon.

All in all, the government employees' respect and moral toleration have no relationship, as well as their respect and political toleration indicators. Meanwhile, the constituents' respect and moral toleration; respect and political toleration; and moral and political toleration indicators showed a linear relationship with each other. The relationship is weak however it is still evident that ordinary Filipino people have a strong connection with tolerance which affects their perceptions and decision-making skill in general. It is also notable to mention the high levels of agreement with political toleration of the government employees and their constituents. All the while, having low levels of agreement to mitigate corruption. This alone says a lot as to how each variable perceives bribing with toleration at the expense of having a strong motivation to alleviate corruption in all aspects. With their high levels of agreement to political toleration, they give more importance to diversity as to how the people around them deal with bribing and having huge trust with their decision-making skills.

**CONCLUSION**

With all the things considered, the Collective Action Theory that was utilized for the government employees emphasized the importance and role of one's working environment when it comes to their decision-making skills. Once influenced by systemic practices such as bribing—are seen as norms an individual no longer depends on their judgements, rather they become

dependent on other people's perceptions. Hence, there is a lack of prejudice and judgements. On the other hand, as Tolerance Theory was utilized to both government employees and constituents, it enabled this research to understand and differentiate both variable's tolerance levels.

To edify, the more that the government employees and ordinary Filipino citizens engage themselves with corrupt practices such as bribing, they produce a lesser motivation and political will to—if not totally eradicate, but at least alleviate the never-ending cycle and existence of corruption in the Philippine political system. The excessive release of tolerance of the Filipino people leads to a much more perilous and unprogressive system, hence further establishment of corrupt practices which results in the malicious act being socially accepted as a norm.

All throughout the processes of this paper, it exhibited the capacity of the government employees and constituents to recognize corrupt acts such as bribing but their sense of respect, moral, and political toleration always overrides their judgements and perceptions. Despite their awareness of anomalies that occur within their surroundings, they still focus on weighing their bond and respect with people around them. They give heavy emphasis on having mutual understanding and having tolerance of adoption for the sake of peace, harmony, and belongingness with each other.


## RECOMMENDATION

Tolerance and Corruption are two variables that are complex and broad which needs a more in-depth investigation, distinction, and characterization. Knowing the roots of the Filipinos as tolerant individuals is also one way of gaining a greater knowledge as to how culture and tradition changes the trajectory of the social, economic, and political state of a country. In addition, despite numerous attempts to alleviate corruption, governments still find it difficult to decipher patterns and the roots of corruption in the system. Therefore, through the end of this thesis, the researcher recommends the future researchers investigate all the sources and the base of corruption. Tolerance is just one of its underlying roots, there is more to it aside from its historical, social, and western roots. The future researchers could also look for more basis on the establishment of tolerance as a value and virtue of the Filipino people. In addition, they could also seek other locals and/or government agencies to improve and broaden the scope of this topic. Pinpointing the levels of tolerance of Filipinos in general is a tedious job and the researcher believes that with this topic, it will serve as a stepping stone into having a much greater understanding on the political issue—corruption.

This thesis will contribute to the body of knowledge in the field of Political Science in terms of creating a more encompassing Anti-Graft and Corruption policies that shall ensure strict implementation to the Filipino people, especially to the government employees. In addition, in the field of Political Psychology, in the Philippine context, they would be able to have a deeper understanding and research on all the internal and external determinants that affect the mindset

of an individual—how it is influenced and molded by themselves and those people who surround them. In addition, the effect of principles, values, and ideologies of other people to every person they connect, work, and communicate with.

Aside from that, with all the gathered data that was provided and presented in this paper, it was concluded that with excessive tolerance of a person it contributes to failing to recognize systemic corrupt actions and the individual tends to unconsciously adapt to their environment. Consequently, in the Philippine political arena the government could provide psychological training to all the public servants to enable themselves in building a stronger mental state which may result in them conforming to their sworn duties and to perform their professions dutifully. It is important to note that this is only one way of preventing furthering the tolerance of government employees towards corruption. If the psychological training becomes effective and there will be less cases of bribing within the government employees, this will then be followed by the strict adherence of ordinary Filipino citizens to laws. The changed system in the political arena will affect the mindset and perceptions of Filipino people as to how corruption—specifically bribing—should not be tolerated and accepted in the first place. Moreover, the government could also apply incentives and a competitive performances system wherein the employees will be properly compensated for their work and performance. Considering the state of the economy, this shall help the employees in avoiding under the table transactions, being compensated enough prevents them from having dissatisfaction with their salary, hence there may be more progress and developments in resolving graft and corruption in the Philippines.

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