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Getting the message: Examining the intended – and unintended – impacts of corruption awareness-raising

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The Developmental Leadership Program (DLP) is an international research initiative based at the University of Birmingham, and working in partnership with La Trobe University in Melbourne.

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Contents

About the author

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Acknowledgements

Executive summary

This study uses data from a novel survey-experiment to examine whether, and if so, how, corruption awareness-raising messages affect people's attitudes towards corruption and their willingness to fight or resist corruption. A structural equation model (SEM) is used to test several potential mediators.

Despite the significant and widespread investments made in anti-corruption awareness-raising, there is actually little available evidence on their effectiveness. It is assumed that priming the issue of corruption through messages that raise awareness of the problem will shape beliefs about it. Those beliefs, in turn, will inspire civic activism against corruption.

This aligns well with some of the broad lessons from experimental political psychology. These include findings that a range of political messages can significantly affect citizens' attitudes and behaviour; and that priming on influential messages is especially likely to shape attitudes if they touch on a topic that people already hold strong views about, such as corruption.

However, research on desensitisation and motivated processing suggests that awareness-raising efforts may struggle to influence perceptions or inspire action. Krane et al. (2011) discuss 'the gradual reduction in responsiveness to an arousal-eliciting stimulus as a function of repeated exposure', and this might well apply to citizens seemingly inundated with messages about corruption. Taber et al. (2008) argue that motivated processing suggests people may ignore information that disagrees with certain perceptions they have already formed.

The research draws on data from an original survey experiment conducted across 1,000 households in Jakarta. Respondents were randomly exposed to either one of four messages about corruption or no message at all (control group). All respondents were then asked several questions about their perceptions and attitudes towards corruption and anti-corruption efforts in Indonesia. A complex quantitative, structural equation model (SEM) was used to analyse whether and how exposure to the four messages shapes beliefs about corruption, the government, and a citizen's role in the fight against corruption. It also evaluates the impact of the messages on respondents' attitudes towards reporting corruption and on their willingness to report corruption, to join an anti-corruption organisation or protest against corruption.

Findings

The results show there is a risk that corruption awareness-raising efforts that aim to promote civic engagement to fight corruption may be ineffective, or even do more harm than good. Exposure to the messages tended to have either very little influence on willingness to get involved, or a sizeable net negative influence.

The SEM analysis shows that where only small changes in attitudes were detected, this was because all of the messages, regardless of tone or content, drew attention to the same, several perceptions. These had significant – but competing – influences on respondents' willingness to get involved, and cancelled each other out.

For instance, exposure to all of the messages made people less likely to agree that 'it is easy to get involved in the fight against corruption', and this reduced their willingness to report corruption and get involved. Exposure to all of the messages also increased the likelihood of respondents being worried that corruption was harmful to development; that belief increased their willingness to get involved.

The SEM also reveals that where the analysis detected the 'backfiring' of messages, making respondents less likely to want to engage in anti-corruption efforts, this was mostly because exposure to such messages – regardless of tone or content – reduced citizens' confidence that they could feasibly engage in the civic fight against corruption.

Do anti-corruption messages influence perceptions? Anti-corruption messages – whether positive or negative in tone – both increased respondents' worries about corruption harming development and reduced their confidence that citizens can easily fight corruption.

Do perceptions influence citizens' willingness to act against corruption? These findings from Jakarta suggest that, instead of feeling 'fatigued' by the notion that corruption is harming development, citizens tend to find inspiration to report corruption when they are worried about its consequences. However, citizens are less likely to feel willing to get involved in the fight against corruption when they lack confidence in their own ability to do so. But if citizens think their government is genuinely fighting corruption with some success, they are inspired to engage in anti-corruption civic activity.

Does messaging shape attitudes towards reporting corruption? This study suggests that messaging had very little overall influence on respondents' attitudes towards reporting. This was not because the messages were ignored or respondents were desensitised to them; instead it was because the messages reinforced several competing beliefs that, for the most part, counteracted each other.

Does messaging shape attitudes towards other forms of anti-corruption action? In relation to respondents' willingness to join an anti-corruption organisation or to protest against corruption, the messages, on the whole, actually 'backfired'. Exposure to all of the messages reduced respondents' willingness to take part in these activities, and this was largely because the messages reduced their confidence that they could easily engage in the fight against corruption. Only the message that highlighted the government's anti-corruption successes elicited a substantial net positive agreement with the idea that citizens have a duty to report corruption.

Pointers for future research

Much can be done to build on these findings. Future research might examine the extent to which they can be generalised beyond Jakarta, and beyond the context of the specific messages tested here.

Similar experimental studies could also examine whether there are differences in the way repeated exposure to a message influences attitudes towards engagement in anti-corruption civic action, and/or the extent to which prolonged exposure (for example, in the form of an anti-corruption film, or attendance at an all-day anti-corruption event) shapes attitudes towards engagement in intended – or unintended – ways.

It will also be important to examine whether, and the extent to which, exposure to various messages about corruption shapes perceptions and attitudes towards engagement over weeks or months.

Finally, more could be done to see how, if at all, awareness-raising messages about corruption affect actual corrupt behaviour. Do they deter someone from engaging in bribery, for example, or do they backfire and encourage such behaviour?

Policy pointers

Despite its inherent limitations, this study offers some practical lessons for anti-corruption policy and programming.

- The evidence of messages 'backfiring' suggests that the effects of proposed awareness-raising efforts should first be tested through pilot schemes to find out whether they are likely to prompt unintended reactions.

- Care should be taken to evaluate how anti-corruption messages make citizens feel about their ability to act against corruption. Where messages decreased respondents' confidence that they could easily get involved in tackling it, this discouraged them from wanting to do so.

- The findings also suggest, however, that highlighting the consequences of corruption can inspire citizens to be willing to take action against it. Stories of sincere, successful government efforts to fight corruption may help to combat 'corruption fatigue'.

If similar conclusions are drawn from future research, this will pose significant challenges to current thinking about how to effectively engage the public in the fight against corruption. This is not to suggest that all efforts to raise awareness of corruption and its far-reaching consequences should stop. But both researchers and policymakers are likely to need a sharper focus on what types of messages encourage and empower, and how awareness-raising efforts are likely to be received in different governance contexts.

1

Introduction

A simple commute through many, if not most, of the global south's major cities presents advertisement spots—billboards, posters, and murals—taken up with messages about the ills that corruption has caused, encouragement to refuse requests for bribes, the rights afforded to citizens to report corruption or the hotline to call to report it. In the privacy of homes, anti-corruption awareness-raising efforts can seep through, as well; many countries' anti-corruption agencies, and their supportive foreign donors, fund the production and airing of corruption themed films, television programs and commercials. In Timor-Leste, for example, 86 percent of the 1,387 civil servants surveyed by the country's Anti-corruption Commission in 2013 reported seeing information about the Commission on television or hearing about it on the radio in just the 6 months prior (CAC, 2011).

Those hoping to control corruption craft many of these messages, but 'awareness' to the issue of corruption is arguably also raised in headlines around the world that frequently feature corruption news. Speaking of the news coverage in Indonesia, Widjayanto, a Professor at the University of Paramadina commented "Nowadays, if you open the newspaper, my friend jokingly says, if there are 10 stories, then 11 will be about corruption" (Kuris, 2012: 19). A joke like this is easy to make elsewhere. A simple search for news stories published in 2016 containing the word 'corruption' on the website of Kenya's most widely circulated daily newspaper, the Daily Nation, returned almost two and a half times as many news items as the same search did for stories containing the word 'economy'.

Where has all of this awareness gotten us? Advocates of anti-corruption awareness-raising efforts hope that by raising the profile of corruption, the public will be more motivated to resist corruption, report corruption, or even join the wider anti-corruption civic movement. However, recent scholarship has raised cause for concern by suggesting that such efforts might actually backfire. The argument goes that instead of inspiring action, awareness-raising efforts may make people think that corruption is too big of a issue to tackle, and so instead of inspiring resistance against corruption, awareness-raising efforts may provoke a greater sense of resignation (Peiffer and Alvarez, 2016; Persson, Rothstein and Teorell, 2013; Bauhr and Grimes, 2014; Bauhr & Nasiritousi, 2011). With no previous research yet done on the topic, the effects of awareness-raising efforts are presently unclear.

This research is the first in the field to examine whether and how exposure to messages about corruption influences attitudes towards anti-corruption civic activity. The research draws on data from an original survey experiment—conducted across 1,000 households in Jakarta—that randomly exposed respondents to either four different messages about corruption or no message at all (control group), and then asked of all respondents several questions about their perceptions and attitudes towards corruption and anti-corruption in Indonesia. A complex structural equation model (SEM) is used here to analyse whether and how exposure to the four messages shapes beliefs about corruption, the government, and a citizens' role in the fight against corruption, as well as attitudes towards reporting corruption, and willingness to report corruption, join an anti-corruption organisation, and protest against corruption.

The results show that awareness-raising efforts that aim to promote civic engagement may risk being ineffective or, even worse, doing more harm than good. Exposure to the messages tended to either have very little influence on willingness to get involved, or a sizeable net negative influence. The SEM shows that small effects detected are due to the fact that the messages made salient several perceptions that, in turn had competing significant influences on willingness to get involved, which effectively cancelled each other out. The SEM also reveals that the 'backfiring' detected is mostly due to the fact that exposure to all of the messages, regardless of tone or content, reduced citizens' confidence that they could feasibly engage in the civic fight against corruption.

2

Literature review

Raising awareness as a matter of policy

The anti-corruption awareness-raising agenda has achieved an extraordinary geographic reach; awareness-raising now has a prominent role in most donor funded anti-corruption programs and government authored anti-corruption strategies. The expectation is that these efforts will motivate the public to get involved in the civic anti-corruption movement or, at the very least, reject opportunities to engage in corruption. Those espousing for greater transparency as a measure to fight corruption similarly assume that citizens will both disapprove of the corrupt acts revealed and that that disapproval will translate into a willingness to become active in the effort to hold corrupt officials accountable (Bauhr and Grimes, 2014).

This simple thinking is codified in Article 13 in the 2004 United Nations Convention Against Corruption. It called signatory states to 'take appropriate measures' to 'promote the active participation of individuals and groups outside the public sector, such as civil society, non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations, in the prevention of and the fight against corruption and to raise public awareness regarding the existence, causes and gravity of and the threat posed by corruption'. Civic participation, it goes on to argue, will be strengthened by 'undertaking public information activities that contribute to non-tolerance of corruption, as well as public education programmes, including school and university curricula' (United Nations, 2014: 15).

A power-point presentation posted online, authored in 2011 by the then Chief of Communication and Advocacy for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Alun Jones, is the only resource found that tries to summarise the best practices of raising awareness in anti-corruption. It lists several factors that makes for a good awareness campaign, including: use of statistics and other evidence to show that there is a corruption problem, the highlighting of a timely and/or relevant corruption issue (like a recent corruption scandal), and showing that there is wide support for the fight against corruption from all sectors of society (Jones, 2011). Two implicit assumptions are made by this list, which are arguably made by anti-corruption awareness-raising advocates, in general. The first is that exposure to a message about corruption will indeed raise the salience of the issue itself. The second is that once the perception of corruption as being a widespread problem grows, so will willingness to reject opportunities to engage in corruption and/or join with others to fight corruption through various civic activities.

Mediating perceptions

This implied causal chain – priming the issue of corruption leads to shaping beliefs about corruption and that those beliefs inspire civic activism – aligns well with some of the broad lessons learned from research done under the large umbrella of experimental political psychology. Research has shown that a range of political messages can impact significantly on citizens' attitudes and behaviour (e.g. Berinsky et al., 2010; Carter, Ferguson, & Hassin, 2011; Nosek, Graham, & Hawkins, 2010), and that this is even the case when messages go noticed, but are not recognised as being particularly influential (Erisen, Lodge, & Taber 2014). Messages have been shown to shape a range of attitudes by priming an issue, which is when a citizen's attitudes might shift because the message causes them to think more about an issue than they would have otherwise.[1] And, influential messages are especially likely to shape attitudes through priming when they touch on a topic that people already hold strong views about, which is often times the case with corruption (Lenz, 2009; Carmine & Stimson, 1989).

Though, a number of perceptions—in addition to the perception that corruption is a widespread problem—might be primed by a single message about corruption or anti-corruption. For example, news coverage of the government successfully investigating and prosecuting high profile public officials for engaging in corruption may prime a perception of the government being successful in fighting corruption and/or it may also prime a perception of high profile corruption being a widespread problem. So while the hope may be that certain perceptions are primed by awareness-raising messages, it may be the case that awareness-raising efforts are also, or instead, priming others.

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[1] Messages can also influence attitudes through teaching citizens something new about an issue (learning), and/or persuading them to think about the issue differently—for example, because the message was particularly emotive or because it was delivered by a member of a political group they were particularly sympathetic to (persuasion), (Lenz, 2009; Riker, 1986; Alvarez, 1997; Brody and Page, 1972).

Moreover, it is unclear to what extent and which of these potentially influential perceptions behave as mediators between the messages that are propagated and the will to fight corruption. Put differently, which perceptions matter? And, how do they matter? Does the perception of corruption being widespread shift willingness to get involved? Or is it a belief that ordinary people can make a difference to control corruption? Does a perception of the government's efforts to fight corruption being effective inspire citizens to also something about corruption?

To understand *whether* and *how* a message about corruption might influence willingness to engage in anti-corruption civic action, it is important to examine two links in a potential causal chain; 1) if and how a message about corruption shapes a range of potentially important perceptions, and 2) if and how changes in perceptions influences willingness to actively oppose corruption.

Missing the mark?

Research on desensitisation and motivated processing suggests that awareness-raising efforts may struggle to influence perceptions or inspire action. In an environment wherein citizens are seemingly inundated with messages about corruption, they may have already become desensitised to anti-corruption efforts to raise awareness. 'In general terms, desentisation refers to the gradual reduction in responsiveness to an arousal-eliciting stimulus as a function of repeated exposure' (Krane et al. 2011). If a person has become desensitised to a message about corruption deeply harming development, for example, though perhaps a message on this topic initially heightened fears about corruption's consequences, once desensitised, additional exposure to similar messages would not necessarily stimulate worries at all, and certainly may not stimulate worries to the same degree that happened with the initial exposure.

Exposure to corruption messages may also not influence beliefs or behaviour because people tend to ignore information that disagrees with certain perceptions that they have already formed (Taber and Lodge 2006; Taber, Cann, & Kucsova, 2009; Meffert et al. 2006; Druckman & Bolsen, 2011). Motivated processing describes the tendency of people to discount information that upsets how they have come to view the world. So to apply this to the subject at hand, if someone has come to view the government's efforts to fight corruption as ineffective, and they are exposed to a message that touts the government's achievements in fighting corruption, they may not, fully or at all, take the message's information about success into consideration. If they are pure motivated processors, when evaluating the government's efforts, instead of using new information about the government's achievements, they will recall only the failures that had previously so strongly shaped their opinion of the government's efforts.

Only two studies, to the author's knowledge, have researched how messages influence perceptions of corruption. Hawkins et al. (2015) exposed a convenience sample of survey respondents in Lima, Peru to 'transparency information'—information on how money is spent and what procedures exist to execute policies—from government websites. They found that while exposure to 'transparency information' increased positive perceptions about the government's fight against corruption, it did not impact perceived levels of corruption. Chong et al. (2015) examined whether information about mayoral corruption in Mexico influenced perceptions of corruption levels. For the most part, their treatment did not influence the degree to which people thought that the municipal government was dishonest. While this literature is limited—both studies tested how one type of message influenced only one or two perceptions—the results from both suggest that instead of changing minds, citizens may be unfazed by anti-corruption messages.

Awareness-raising as potentially backfiring

Others have fairly recently warned that by priming the perception that corruption is a wide scale problem, anti-corruption awareness-raising messages may be backfiring by effectively reducing willingness to fight corruption. Worse than the fear of wasting resources, this fear suggests that investments made into awareness-raising may cause more harm than good. This worry finds its roots in a budding literature that has argued that systemic corruption is best thought of through the prism of collective action theory. The argument goes that when corruption is systemic and perceived to be the norm, it is much more likely that people will continue to go with the corrupt grain rather than try to challenge it (Persson, Rothstein and Teorell, 2013; Bauhr and Grimes, 2014; Marquette 2012; Mungiu-Pippidi, 2011; Bauhr & Nasiritousi, 2011; Rothstein, 2011; Dong, Dulleck and Torgler, 2012). Collective action theory is used to make sense of this; scholars researching collective action have shown that people's perceptions of group members' behaviour can work to reduce individual willingness to work toward a common goal.

If awareness-raising efforts successfully prime the issue of widespread corruption, the fear is that, instead of inspiring people to get involved in the fight against corruption, exposure to awareness-raising messages would induce a so-called 'corruption fatigue' (Peiffer and Alvarez, 2016: 353). Instead of feeling inspired to fight corruption, people may walk away from an awareness-raising message feeling more overwhelmed by how pervasive corruption seems to be, and come to the conclusion that their individual efforts to resist or fight corruption will be in vain or come at too great a cost for any perceived potential payoff (Persson, Rothstein & Teorell, 2013: 464). If this is the case, the perception of corruption being a widespread problem will act as a mediator between being exposed to awareness-raising message and being *less* willing to do anything to try to resist or fight corruption, which is the opposite expectation of what awareness-raising advocates have.

Consistent with this notion, research has shown that a perception of widespread corruption is significantly associated with being unwilling to protest against corruption, report corruption to the authorities, and pay more for a product produced by a company that has not engaged in corruption (Peiffer and Alvarez, 2016). These findings come from a cross-sectional series of analyses of the 2013 Global Corruption Barometer, which asked over 50,000 citizens, from 76 countries about their experiences and perceptions of corruption, as well as their willingness to engage in a range of anti-corruption civic activities. As the referenced study was not experimental, causality between the two variables—willingness to actively oppose corruption and perceptions of widespread corruption—was not established, however. Therefore, it may be the case that changes in the perception of corruption causes changes in willingness to fight corruption—as the corruption fatigue hypothesis stipulates—but the opposite may be true, instead, or the two variables may have been spuriously related, altogether.

Potential influence of tone

Erisen, Lodge and Taber's (2014) research suggests that a message's tone might also be influential with respect to what perceptions or ideas it primes. They find that positively and negatively toned messages activate positively and negatively charged attitudes, respectively. Examples of positively toned messages may in fact be those that highlight successes the government or other citizens have had in fighting corruption. Citizens may walk away from positively toned messages feeling better about the problem of corruption, the government's efforts to fight it, and/or their own efficacy in engaging in anti-corruption civic activities. Of course, negatively-toned messages about corruption should also be expected to elicit negative feelings about the fight against corruption.

Along this vein, Peiffer and Alvarez (2016) also find that the 'positive' perception of the government's effectiveness in fighting corruption is significantly and positively associated with being willing to report corruption and to join an anti-corruption organisation as an active member. Again, the same caveat applies here, as above—due to the design of the research, the causal direction of the relationship between these variables remains presently unclear. However, it is argued that we should expect changes in the perception of a government's efforts to control corruption to awaken activism, 'people may feel encouraged by a perceived effective government's response to control corruption and want to join in on the anti-corruption fight, instead of sit on the side-lines,' (Peiffer and Alvarez: 355).

For ease of reference, the many, competing hypotheses from the literature reviewed here are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Hypotheses from the literature

Source	Expectation
Messages' - Perceptions	
Advocates/Collective Action	Exposure to a message about corruption will induce a perception of corruption being a widespread problem.
Desensitisation/Motivated Bias	Exposure to a message about corruption will have no influence on perceptions.
Erisen, Lodge, & Taber (2014)	Exposure to a positively-toned/negatively-toned message about corruption will elicit positive/negative perceptions about the fight against corruption.
Perceptions - Willingness	
Advocates	The more someone perceives corruption to be a widespread problem, the more willing they will be to engage in anticorruption civic activities.
Collective Action	The more someone perceives corruption to be a widespread problem, the less willing they will be to engage in anticorruption civic activities
Peiffer & Alvarez (2016)	The more someone perceives the government to be effective in its fight against corruption, the more willing they will be to engage in anticorruption civic activities.

Lack of existing evidence on the effectiveness of awareness-raising

Despite the investments made into anti-corruption awareness-raising, there is actually little available evidence on the efficacy of these efforts. In Alun Jones's presentation on awareness-raising, he writes that while there seemed to be some national successes documented, the effectiveness of awareness-raising campaigns was 'hard to pin down' (Jones, 2011: 8). The topic seems to have also eluded academic attention, as only a handful of scholars have researched how messages about corruption influence attitudes and behaviour, and those that have, have primarily focused on how different messages about corruption influence voting patterns (e.g. Figueirdo, Hidalgo & Kasahara, 2011; Winters & Weitz-Shapiro, 2013; Chong, et al. 2015). These studies, using experimental research designs, tend to expose citizens to messages about a specific politician engaging in corruption and gauge whether that exposure provokes citizens to punish the implicated politicians at the polls. An extensive search of the literature failed to uncover anything that focused specifically on whether messages about corruption actually influenced willingness to engage in any form of anti-corruption civic action, like reporting corruption or joining an anti-corruption organisation. This identified gap is consistent with what Johnson, Taxell and Zaum (2012: 28) write in their then exhaustive review of research done on the effectiveness of anti-corruption programming; they too failed to unearth a single study that yet focused on the effectiveness of awareness-raising campaigns.

The present study, therefore, stands to contribute a great deal to the field's limited understanding of how messages about corruption influence perceptions and willingness to fight corruption. The data used is from a novel field survey-experiment. The experimental nature of the study means that the analyses of the data can convincingly establish the causal directions between exposure to an awareness-raising effort and how attitudes and willingness to fight or resist corruption are consequently shaped. By employing a structural equation model (SEM) to analyse the data, the study is also able to simultaneously test several potential mediators. This means that the results show not only whether exposure to a message about corruption influenced willingness to engage in anti-corruption civic activity, but also why the messages do.

3

Survey experiment design

The analyses that follow draws from an original survey-experiment conducted in Jakarta, Indonesia. Indonesia was chosen as the location for the survey-experiment for a few reasons; first, corruption at all levels is thought to be a considerable problem there. It is also discussed openly in social situations, which means that responses to survey questions about corruption have a good chance at being honest reflections of beliefs. And third, the government's KPK has led a very public, and by some accounts, successful fight against corruption. This was important to the interest this study has in examining what impact a message about government success in fighting corruption might have on perceptions and intended civic action.

The survey-experiment was conducted from June 8th 2015 to July 7th 2015. 1,000 participants from different households within Jakarta were recruited. Working with the *Regional Economic Development Institute*, 100 villages within Jakarta were identified in the aim of recruiting subjects from different socio-economic backgrounds, 35 were relatively 'low income' villages, 45 were 'middle income, 15 were 'higher income', and 5 were of a 'very high income'. At the village level, 10 households in each were selected. These households were selected by choosing every 5th household encountered by the enumerator who was walking through the village. The sample was split evenly among males and females, its educational attainment distribution was similar to that of the nation as a whole, but the respondents are, on average, slightly younger than the average Indonesian (World Bank's World Development Indicators—most recent year available). More details on the demographic characteristics of the sample are documented in Appendix A.

Design

Participants in the study were randomly assigned to one of five groups: control, *grand corruption, petty corruption, government success*, or *civic engagement* (n=200 for each group). Difference of means tests on basic demographic indicators revealed that there were no significant differences among the five groups with respect to the demographic data collected. Eleven professional enumerators from the Regional Economic Development Institute visited the selected households. Enumerators read a short introductory paragraph to the subjects that described the study's aims as wanting to 'learn what citizens think about public services and the experiences they have had with public officials.' It was explained that the responses to the questions on the survey would be treated confidentially, that the interview would likely take a maximum of 15 minutes, and that, if at any time they wanted to, the subject could stop answering the questions posed.

The subjects were then asked basic socio-demographic questions. If assigned to the *grand corruption, petty corruption, government success*, or *civic engagement* groups, the demographic questions were followed by the respective treatment paragraphs (messages). After exposure to the treatment (or not for those in the *control* group, which proceeded immediately to the next set of questions), the subjects were asked questions gauging their perceptions of corruption, the government's fight against corruption, and their own role in the fight against corruption. Then asked of all subjects were questions gauging their willingness to engage in anti-corruption civic activity.

Treatments

The first two treatments used are negative in tone. They highlight the prevalence of different types of corruption. Specifically, the *grand corruption* treatment mentioned scandals that have been the subject of front page news in Indonesia. The inspiration for this treatment comes from advice given from Alun Jones in 2011—the then Chief of Communication and Advocacy for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime—that awareness-raising efforts should call attention to the issue by publicising big corruption scandals (Jones, 2011). The treatment paragraph read:

> "Corruption continues to undermine the economy, the quality of services, and the capacity of the government to reduce poverty in this country. A recent report notes that 'never in Indonesian history have there been so many politicians imprisoned for corruption, often together with officials and businesspeople.' Recent corruption cases include a former Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court taking billions of rupiahs in bribes and the Sport Minister being involved in a multi-billion rupiah corruption scandal."

The *petty corruption* treatment exposed subjects to statements meant to heighten awareness about the widespread prevalence of 'local-level' corruption. This treatment was included because bribery and other 'local-level' corruption are the types of corruption that ordinary people tend to have direct experiences with and 'corruption fatigue' is hypothesised as being triggered when people believe that their peers in society are engaging in corruption (not just elites). It read:

> "Corruption continues to undermine the economy, the quality of services, and the capacity of the government to reduce poverty in this country. Local-level corruption is considered to be widespread across all public services and agencies. According to a recent survey, 43% of Indonesians have had to pay a bribe to a government official in the past year and 70% believe that this type of corruption has increased in the last two years."

The second two treatments are positive in tone. The first of these is the *government success* treatment; it aimed to make salient achievements made by the Indonesian government, and specifically the KPK, in fighting corruption. It was tested because Peiffer and Alvarez (2016) found that perceptions of government effectiveness in fighting corruption were positively associated with a greater willingness to fight corruption. It read:

> "The government has received praise from the international community for its recent successes in fighting corruption. The Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), especially, has an impressive record of attacking corruption. Since the KPK was established it has arrested nearly 400 people on charges of corruption, and has achieved a 100% conviction rate. In the first 6 months of 2014 the KPK recovered 2.8 trillion rupiah of stolen government money."

The final, *civic engagement,* treatment included statements to emphasise the many things that citizens can do to join in the fight against corruption and was included as an attempt to echo messages that anti-corruption civic campaigns often publicise to try to empower ordinary citizens to fight corruption; it read:

> "Now, more than ever before, ordinary citizens are finding it easy to get involved in the fight against corruption. If corruption is witnessed, ordinary citizens can either call or text the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK)'s 1575 corruption hotline, and those that do are guaranteed to remain anonymous and the information shared confidential. People have the right to access government information and last year the government launched an online data portal to make it even easier for the public to access government budgets and documents. Also, several vibrant anti-corruption organisations exist across the country; citizens can get further involved by becoming a member of these organisations or attending their events, like the annual anti-corruption week events or rallies held on International Anti-corruption Day."

All of the facts cited in the treatments were drawn from news and political reports, or from the results of Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer.

Measuring perceptions

Four types of perceptions of the corruption environment were scrutinised. Table 2 displays the exact wording of each perception question, the range of response options and the mean response score given by the full sample of respondents (full distribution figures are provided in Appendix B). The perceived level of corruption was gauged by responses to a question about how common corruption was believed to be amongst public officials (*level*). The perceived negative impact that corruption is having in Indonesia is measured by a question asking for the extent to which the respondent is worried about the harm that corruption is doing to development in Indonesia (*consequence*). Respondents were also asked about whether they thought that their government was effective in its fight against corruption (*government success)* and for agreement with a statement about it being easier now, more than ever before, for 'ordinary citizens' to get involved in the fight against corruption (*easy for citizens*). To these questions, respectively, the 'average' respondent's answers were closest to thinking that corruption is 'common' among public officials, being 'somewhat worried' about the harm that corruption was causing to development, thinking their government was 'neither effective nor ineffective' in its fight against corruption, and agreeing with the idea that it is now easier than ever for citizens to get involved in the fight against corruption.

Table 2: Perception questions

Perception	Wording	Response Options	Mean Response
Level	Taking into account your own experience or what you have heard, corruption among public officials is…	1 very uncommon to 5 very common	4.1 (closest to 'common')
Consequence	How worried are you that petty corruption is harming development in Indonesia? By petty corruption, I mean bribes paid by ordinary citizens and corrupt acts committed by local level public officials.	1 not worried at all to 4 very worried	3.2 (closest to 'somewhat worried')
Government success	How effective do you think your government's actions are in the fight against corruption?	1 very ineffective to 5 very effective	3.2 (closest to 'neither effective nor ineffective)
Easy for citizens	How much do you agree with the following statement: it is now easier than ever for an ordinary citizen like me to report corruption or attend rallies against corruption?	1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree	3.7 (closest to 'agree')

Note: Mean response scores reflect the full sample's mean response.

Measuring anti-corruption civic action

Willingness to engage in anti-corruption civic action is measured with four survey questions. Table 3 summarises how each of these questions were worded (full distribution figures are provided in Appendix B). Attitudes towards reporting corruption are measured with two questions, asking for agreement with the following two statements, respectively: *'If I witnessed corruption, I would feel that it was my duty to report it to authorities,'* (*duty report*) and '*I would report a case of corruption even if I would have to spend a day in court to give evidence' (court report).* Though very similar in content, the responses to these two questions were correlated by only sixty percent. Likewise, views towards joining an anti-corruption organisation and participating in an anti-corruption protest are gauged with questions asking for agreement with these two statements, respectively: '*I would become an active member of an anti-corruption organisation, spending a few hours a month at meetings and organisational events,'* and '*I would protest against corruption even if it meant having to travel for two hours to get to the protest.'* Responses to these two questions were correlated at 48 percent. The average respondent agreed that they would feel that it was their duty to report corruption to authorities, but neither agreed nor disagreed with all of the other three statements.

Table 3: Anticorruption civic action questions

Action	Wording	Response Options	Mean Response
Duty report	How much do you agree with the following statements… If I witnessed corruption, I would feel that it was my duty to report it to the authorities.	1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree	3.7 (closest to 'agree')
Court report	I would report a case of corruption even if I would have to spend a day in court to give evidence	1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree	3.2 (closest to 'neither agree nor disagree')
Join Organisation	I would become an active member of an anti-corruption organisation, spending a few hours a month at meetings and organisational events.	1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree	2.8 (closest to 'neither agree nor disagree')
Protest	I would protest against corruption even if it meant having to travel two hours to get to the protest.	1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree	2.8 (closest to 'neither agree nor disagree')

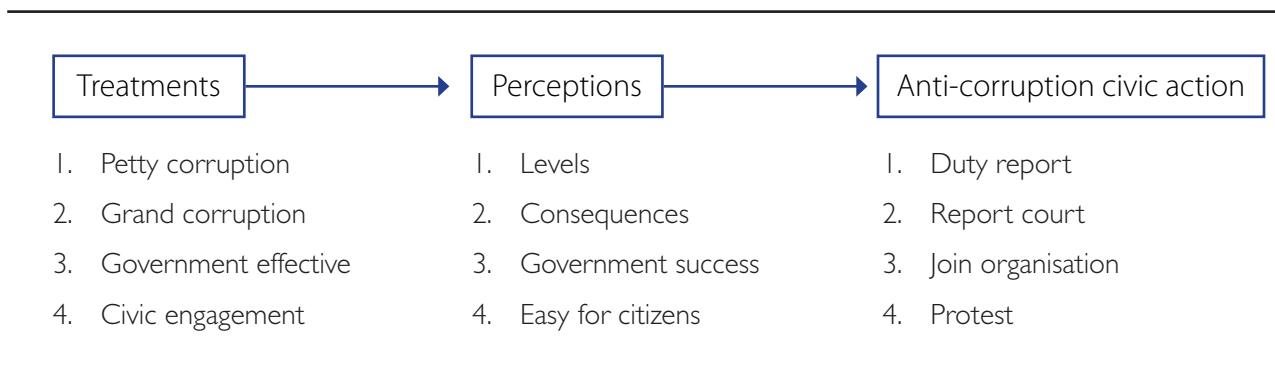Note: Mean response scores reflect the full sample's mean response.

4

Estimation strategy

This paper has thus far articulated hypotheses that imply a causal chain that starts with citizens being exposed to messages about corruption. From exposure, various types of perceptions of the corruption environment are potentially shaped, and by doing so, messages potentially influence willingness to engage in anti-corruption civic activity. Figure 1 displays this conceptual causal chain and summarises the treatments tested in this study, as well as the types of perceptions gauged and anti-corruption civic activities asked about.

Figure 1: Conceptual causal chain of perceptions mediating the impact of messages on anti-corruption civic action

Treatments	Perceptions	Anti-corruption civic action
1. Petty corruption	1. Levels	1. Duty report
2. Grand corruption	2. Consequences	2. Report court
3. Government effective	3. Government success	3. Join organisation
4. Civic engagement	4. Easy for citizens	4. Protest

Methodologically, conventional single equation techniques are not well suited to test the merits of this theorised causal chain.[2] Single equation techniques are best suited to test the direct effects of variables and are insensitive to potential indirect effects. The potential indirect influence that messages have on anti-corruption civic action is of primary interest to this research. To fully test the *collective action* hypothesis, for example, it is important that the analysis examine whether exposure to messages about corruption cause people to perceive corruption to be widespread, and whether this perception of corruption being widespread then limits willingness to engage in anti-corruption civic activity.

Moreover, single equation techniques are also unable to examine simultaneously whether and how a potential mediator influences the outcome variable, independent of other possible mediators. As this study is interested in four potential mediators (4 types of perceptions), single equation techniques are not appropriate to use. To overcome these problems, structural equation modelling (SEM) is used instead. SEM simultaneously estimates a set of interrelated equations. It permits the estimation of direct and indirect effects within a single, albeit complex model. The version of SEM used in this study, AMOS, employs full information maximum likelihood estimators (Arbuckle and Wothke, 1995).

The SEM used is explicitly set up to test for whether and to what extent any of the perception variables act as mediators for the influence that exposure to a message about corruption has on willingness to engage in anti-corruption civic activity. The SEM tested is complex; in total, it was set up to test 64 potential linkages between the following four sets of variables: 1) treatment group assignment, 2) perceptions of corruption environment, 3) willingness to engage in anti-corruption activity, and 4) demographic control variables.

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2   The commonly used Baron and Kenny (1986) test for mediation, for example, identifies mediation to occur when four single equation based tests are passed, one of which requires that the causal variable (exposure to treatment, in this case) is correlated with the outcome variable (attitudes towards anti-corruption civic action). MacKinnon, Fairchild and Fritz (2007) showed that this step is not necessary to establish mediation.

Given the number of linkages tested, the linkages of the model are better described in text, rather than displayed in a figure. Four dichotomous variables are used to indicate whether the respondent was assigned to each of the four treatment groups (*petty corruption, grand corruption, government effective*, and *civic engagement*). Assignment to the *control* group is treated as the baseline.

- 16 linkages, between each of the four group variables and each of the four perception variables, test what influence exposure to each of the messages have on each of the four perceptions people hold of the corruption environment (*levels, consequences, government success*, and *easy for citizens*).

- 16 linkages, between each of the four group variables and each of the four anti-corruption civic activity variables (*report court, duty report, join organisation*, and *protest*), test what influence exposure to each of the messages, or assignment to the control group directly have each of the anti-corruption civic activity variables.

- 16 linkages between each of the four perceptions variables and the four anti-corruption civic activity variables test what influence these four perceptions have on each of the anti-corruption civic activity variables.

- 16 additional linkages control for the influence that a respondent's gender, income, education and age have on each of the anti-corruption civic activity variables.

Goodness of fit statistics for the SEM, displayed in table 4, show that the model fits the data very well. The relative Chi-Square statistic (cmin/df) is less than 2.0, which according to Carmines and McIver (1981), demonstrates an "acceptable fit between the hypothetical model and the sample data" (p. 80). Schumaker and Lomax (2004) suggest that a good model is reflected in an RMSEA that is less than or equal to 0.05. Bollen (1989) suggests that the CFI should be above 0.90, and Hu and Bentler (1999) suggest that a TLI over 0.95 is also acceptable.

Table 4: Goodness of fit statistics and R2 for Structural Equation Model

GoF		R2 of Perceptions		R2 of Anticorruption activities	
CMIN/DF	1.251	Easy for citizens	0.009	Report court	0.071
TLI	0.982	Gov't effective	0.006	Duty report	0.083
CFI	0.992	Level	0.005	Join org.	0.042
RMSEA	0.016	Consequences	0.034	Protest	0.037

5

Results

Although the SEM used provides simultaneous estimates for how exposure to different messages influenced perceptions and willingness to engage in anti-corruption civic action, it is useful to treat the estimates in separate categories for clarity of exposition. First discussed are the estimates of the first link in the hypothesised causal chain; they show what influence exposure to the four messages has on perceptions of the corruption environment. The next group of estimates test the second link in the causal chain, which is whether and how the four different perceptions measured influence willingness to engage in anti-corruption civic activity. And, finally, discussed is what the SEM estimates to be the direct and indirect impact of exposure to the four messages on willingness to engage in anti-corruption civic activity.

Does exposure to corruption messages influence perceptions of the corruption environment?

Unexpectedly, regardless of tone or content, exposure to all four messages tended to have similar impacts on the four perceptions tested. The results in Table 5 show that respondents exposed to any of the four messages, compared to the baseline control group, were significantly (p<0.10) less likely to believe that it is now easier than ever before to engage in anti-corruption civic activity, and significantly more likely to be worried about the negative impact corruption is having on development in Indonesia. This is surprising because, as these findings are both true with exposure to both positively toned—*government success and civic engagement*—and negatively toned—*grand corruption* and *petty corruption*—messages, the results directly challenge the idea the tone of the message will be reflected in how perceptions are shaped (Erisen, Lodge, & Taber, 2014).

Exposure to the messages, however, had less robust influence on the belief that the government is effective in its effort to fight corruption or on how common corruption is in the government. With respect to the former, respondents exposed to the *government success* message were significantly more likely, than those not exposed to a message, to rate the government's efforts as being effective. This is not entirely surprising, as that message was purposively designed to prime this specific perception. Exposure to the other three messages, however, did not significantly influence this perception.

With respect to the latter, the results also challenge the idea that exposure to a message about corruption or anti-corruption will induce a perception of corruption being a widespread problem. This is both an explicit hope of anti-corruption awareness advocates (Jones 2011) and a fear of some who have argued that corruption is best seen as a collective action problem (e.g. Persson, Rothstein & Teorell, 2013). Instead, the results show that none of the messages had this impact on the perception of corruption being common (*levels*). Though, puzzlingly, respondents exposed to the *grand corruption* treatment were significantly less likely, compared to the control group, to rate corruption as being common among public servants. Exposure to the other three messages did significantly not influence this perception at all.

Finally, that the messages influenced some perceptions, and not others, gives mixed support to the idea that citizens may process messages with a motivated bias. For example, one interpretation of the results suggests that exposure to the messages largely failed to shape a perception of the government being effective in controlling corruption and of corruption levels because citizens largely hold strong ideas about each of these topics, and so exposure to a new message, priming the issues, only causes citizens to recall a perception that they have previously formed.

Table 5: Effects of treatments on perceptions

	Easy for citizens		Gov't effective		Level		Consequences	
	Std. Coef.	P-value	Std. Coef.	P-value	Std. Coef.	P-value	Std. Coef.	P-value
Grand corruption	-0.073	0.083	0.011	0.999	-0.060	0.069	0.179	0.010
Petty corruption	-0.110	0.019	0.013	0.682	0.003	0.910	0.209	0.015
Gov't success	-0.070	0.043	0.079	0.015	0.003	0.987	0.162	0.009
Civic engagement	-0.097	0.007	-0.097	0.131	-0.046	0.170	0.107	0.015

Do perceptions influence willingness to fight corruption?

The results of the SEM reveal that three of the perceptions tested can significantly influence willingness to get involved in anti-corruption civic activities (Table 6). The belief that it is easy for citizens to get involved in anti-corruption activities positively and significantly influenced all four of the anti-corruption civic activity dependent variables. This finding suggests that 'citizens generally must believe that they can actually do something about corruption in order to summon the courage to act upon that belief' (Panth, 2011: 1).

In contrast, a perception of the level of corruption in government was not significantly associated with any of the anti-corruption civic activity variables. This null finding undermines awareness-raising advocates' hope that a perception of corruption being a problem will inspire action (Jones, 2011), but should provide some comfort to those who worry that a belief of corruption being common will dissuade people from engaging in anti-corruption activism (Persson Rothstein and Teorell, 2013).

The other two perceptions—a belief that corruption has had negative consequences on development and that the government is effective in its efforts to fight corruption—have uneven influences across the anti-corruption civic activity variables. A perception that corruption is harming development is positively associated with willingness to report corruption and the belief that citizens have a duty to report corruption, but it is not related to joining an organisation or protesting. That this perception is positively and significantly associated with attitudes towards reporting suggests that instead of becoming overwhelmed or 'fatigued' (Peiffer and Alvarez, 2016) by the potential harms to development corruption is causing, citizens may feel more compelled to report the issue.

A perception that the government is effective in its efforts to fight corruption is positively and significantly associated with willingness to join an anti-corruption organisation and the belief that it is a duty of citizens to report corruption. Its positive association with these two variables provides uneven support to the notion that citizens can find inspiration to join in on the fight against corruption when they believe that their government is earnest in its own effort to confront corruption (Peiffer and Alvarez, 2016). A perception of the government as being effective, however, is not significantly related to the other two anti-corruption civic activity variables.

Table 6: Effects of perceptions on willingness to engage in anti-corruption civic activity

	Report court		Duty to report		Join org.		Protest	
	Std. Coef.	P-value	Std. Coef.	P-value	Std. Coef.	P-value	Std. Coef.	P-value
Consequences	0.071	0.048	0.075	0.035	0.005	0.756	0.020	0.536
Easy for citizens	0.116	0.005	0.090	0.005	0.088	0.012	0.130	0.012
Gov't effective	0.043	0.309	0.097	0.012	0.071	0.048	0.021	0.498
Level	0.025	0.395	0.027	0.525	0.006	0.777	-0.025	0.451

Does exposure to messages influence willingness to engage in anti-corruption civic activity?

The SEM tests whether exposure to the messages has any *direct* or *indirect* influences on attitudes towards anti-corruption civic activity. In the context of this research, indirect influences of exposure to the treatment messages are those that are mediated by one or more of the four perception variables. Put another way, a significant indirect influence would show that exposure to the messages significantly shaped willingness to engage in anti-corruption civic activity *because* it shaped how the corruption environment is perceived. In contrast, direct influences are those where mediation by one of the four perception variables was not detected, but exposure to a treatment message garnered changes in attitudes towards anti-corruption civic activity.

Table 7, which displays the estimated direct effects of the treatments on attitudes towards anti-corruption civic activity shows that there are almost no significant direct effects detected. The only significant direct effect detected is found from exposure to the *government success* message. Exposure to that message directly, significantly and positively influencing the belief that citizens have a duty to report corruption that they witness or experience, and this influence is only significant at the p-value <0.10 level.[3]

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3   Also controlled for were the direct effects of four control variables (gender, education level, income, and age) on each of the anti-

Table 7: Direct effects of treatments on anti-corruption civic activity

	Report court		Duty to report		Join org.		Protest	
	Std. Coef.	P-value	Std. Coef.	P-value	Std. Coef.	P-value	Std. Coef.	P-value
Grand corruption	0.000	0.999	-0.027	0.682	0.024	0.557	0.008	0.809
Petty corruption	-0.006	0.791	-0.002	0.976	-0.024	0.479	-0.007	0.857
Gov't Success	0.032	0.415	0.065	0.087	-0.023	0.431	0.021	0.626
Civic engagement	-0.021	0.480	-0.042	0.400	-0.036	0.314	-0.013	0.594

However, Table 8, which displays the estimated indirect effects, shows that all of the messages significantly and indirectly influenced all four attitudes towards engaging in anti-corruption civic activity. Table 8 displays four sets of estimates, one for each anti-corruption civic activity variable. As indirect influences are those that are mediated by the perception variables, the columns of Table 8 show whether and to what degree exposure to each of the messages influenced attitudes towards anti-corruption civic activity through each of the potential mediating perception variables.

Three trends in the estimates of indirect effects stand out. First, the perception that it is easy for citizens to engage in anti-corruption civic activity acts as an influential mediator between exposure to all of the treatment messages and attitudes towards all of the anti-corruption civic activity variables. Across the board, the results of the fourth column show that, because of how exposure to the treatment messages negatively influence the belief that it is easy for citizens to engage in anti-corruption civic activities, compared to respondents who were not exposed to a message at all (*control*), all other respondents (who were exposed to any of the four messages) were significantly less likely to agree that it is a citizen's duty to report corruption, and indicate willingness to report corruption, join an anti-corruption or protest against corruption.

Second, the perception of corruption harming development acts as a 'positive' mediator between exposure to the messages and attitudes to reporting. The estimates in the second column show that, due to the positive influence exposure to any of the treatments has on the perception that corruption is harming development, compared to the *control* group, respondents who were exposed to any of the four messages were significantly more likely to agree that it is a citizen's duty to report corruption, and indicate willingness to report corruption. The same indirect effects, through this mediation channel, however, were not statistically significant with respect to the other two anti-corruption civic activity variables.

Third, as exposure to none of the messages had the expected influence on the perceived level of corruption (Table 5) it is not surprising that the perceived level of corruption failed to be a significant mediator between exposure to any of the messages and the anti-corruption civic activity variables (first column of Table 8).

These three trends deserve highlighting as they show that exposure to all of the messages—regardless of their differing tones or content—are found to either significantly or insignificantly shape attitudes to anti-corruption civic activity through the same channels and in the same direction. These results strongly suggest that any message about corruption will prime similar perceptions (or fail to prime the perception of corruption being a widespread problem) and in doing so, will similarly influence (or fail to influence) willingness to fight corruption.

Table 8, however, also shows that the perception of the government being effective in its effort to fight corruption served as a significant and positive mediator between exposure to the *government success* message and agreement with the idea that it is a citizen's duty to report corruption, and willingness to report corruption and join an anti-corruption organisation (column 3). This gels well with the notion that citizens may be inspired by a belief that the government is sincerely fighting corruption (Peiffer & Alvarez 2016:355). Finally, exposure to the *civic engagement* message significantly and positively influenced agreement with the idea that it is a citizen's duty to report corruption and willingness to join an organisation, through the mediated channel of positively shaping how effective the government is perceived to be in its fight to control corruption.

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corruption civic activity variables. The results showed that females and older respondents were significantly less likely than males and younger respondents to be willing to report, join an organisation, protest or agree that citizens have a duty to fight corruption. Education is positively and significantly associated with both reporting variables, which is consistent with what Walton and Peiffer (2015) find. Finally, income was positively and significantly associated with willingness to report, but was not significantly associated with any of the other variables. The full estimates of the control variables are displayed in Appendix C.

Table 8. Indirect influence, through mediated channels, of treatments on anti-corruption civic action

	Levels		Consequences		Gov't effective		Easy for citizens	
	Std. Coef.	P-value	Std. Coef.	P-value	Std. Coef.	P-value	Std. Coef.	P-value
DV: Report court								
Grand corruption	-0.002	0.197	0.014	0.051	0.001	0.374	-0.011	0.003
Petty corruption	0.000	0.387	0.016	0.045	0.002	0.302	-0.017	0.003
Gov't Success	0.000	0.649	0.012	0.035	0.004	0.099	-0.013	0.002
Civic engagement	-0.001	0.238	0.009	0.047	0.003	0.198	-0.014	0.002
DV: Duty report								
Grand corruption	-0.002	0.348	0.015	0.019	0.003	0.357	-0.009	0.005
Petty corruption	0.000	0.588	0.017	0.027	0.005	0.188	-0.013	0.006
Gov't Success	0.000	0.656	0.013	0.024	0.010	0.003	-0.010	0.003
Civic engagement	-0.001	0.383	0.010	0.035	0.007	0.035	-0.011	0.003
DV: Join Organisation								
Grand corruption	0.000	0.726	0.001	0.776	0.002	0.438	-0.009	0.005
Petty corruption	0.000	0.791	0.001	0.718	0.003	0.181	-0.013	0.006
Gov't Success	0.000	0.775	0.001	0.718	0.007	0.026	-0.010	0.003
Civic engagement	0.000	0.510	0.001	0.732	0.005	0.035	-0.011	0.003
DV: Protest								
Grand corruption	0.002	0.296	0.004	0.471	0.001	0.446	-0.013	0.006
Petty corruption	0.000	0.457	0.005	0.456	0.001	0.426	-0.019	0.008
Gov't Success	0.000	0.854	0.004	0.397	0.002	0.345	-0.014	0.003
Civic engagement	0.001	0.286	0.003	0.418	0.002	0.305	-0.016	0.005

The estimates in Table 8 show both positive and negative significant mediated effects, emanating from exposure to all of the messages, which begs the question: to what extent do these competing positive and negative indirect effects cancel each other out? Table 9 summarises the net effects of the treatments, which are the sum of all significant (p<0.10) indirect and direct standardised coefficients.

With respect to attitudes towards reporting, Table 9 (first two columns) shows that exposure to the four messages tested tends to have a very small, net negative influence on willingness to report corruption, and similarly, small net positive influences on the opinion that it is the duty of citizens to report corruption when they experience or witness it. The small sizes of most of these net effects articulate the fact that the competing, and indirect effects cancelled each other out. Exposure to all of the treatment messages both positively influenced these attitudes, because they heightened worries about corruption's consequences, and negatively influenced these attitudes because they depressed confidence in the idea that ordinary citizens can find it easy to report corruption. Exposure to the *government success* treatment, however, also had a sizeable direct and positive influence on *duty report,* which accounts for its much larger estimated associated net effect.

The net effects, however, also teach us that exposure to all of the messages reduced willingness to join an anti-corruption organisation or protest (last two columns). For the most part, these estimated net effects are much larger than the net effects associated with reporting attitudes, and are mostly due to the knock on effect that all of the messages had in first reducing confidence in the idea that citizens find it easy to engage in anti-corruption civic activities. As an exception, exposure to the *government success* and *civic engagement* treatments positively influenced willingness to join an organisation because they positively shaped perceptions of the government's effectiveness in fighting corruption. However, these positive effects were smaller than the negative effects, and this explains the net negative influence of both messages on willingness to join an organisation

Table 9. Summary of estimated net effects of treatments and mediation channels

	Report court		Duty to report		Join org.		Protest	
	N.E.	Channel	N.E.	Channel	N.E.	Channel	N.E.	Channel
Grand corruption	0.003	+C, -E	0.006	+C, -E	-0.009	-E	-0.013	-E
Petty corruption	-0.001	+C, -E	0.004	+C, -E	-0.013	-E	-0.019	-E
Gov't Success	-0.001	+C, -E	0.078	+C, +G, -E	-0.003	+G, -E	-0.014	-E
Civic engagement	-0.005	+C, -E	0.006	+C, +G, -E	-0.006	+G, -E	-0.016	-E

Note: N.E. = Net effects, which are the sum of significant (p<0.10) indirect and direct standardised coefficients. Channel refers to the significant mediation perception channel, with 'C' = consequences, 'G' = government effective, 'E' = easy citizen, while the positive and negative signs indicate the positive or negative influence exposure to the messages had on the respective D.V.s because of the associated mediated channel.

6

Discussion and conclusion

This study investigated whether and, perhaps more importantly, how anti-corruption messaging shapes willingness to engage in anti-corruption civic activity. The following findings stand out as the main themes in the results. On whether and how messages influenced perceptions, regardless of tone, messages about corruption elicited both increased worries about corruption harming development and a reduced sense of confidence that citizens will find it easy to fight corruption. On whether and how perceptions influence willingness to engage, instead of feeling 'fatigued' by the notion that corruption is harming development, citizens tend to find inspiration to report corruption when they are worried about its consequences. Also, citizens are less likely to feel willing to get involved in the fight against corruption when they lack confidence in their own ability to do so. And, finally, citizens can find some inspiration to engage in anti-corruption civic activity when they think their government is genuinely fighting corruption, with some success.

Perhaps most importantly, the results tell us that awareness-raising efforts that aim to promote civic engagement may risk being ineffective, or even doing more harm than good. On the whole, in this study, messaging had very little influence in shaping attitudes towards reporting. However, this was not because the messages were ignored or that citizens were desensitised to them, instead it was because the messages made salient several beliefs that had competing influences on willingness to get involved, which, for the most part, effectively cancelled each other out. For willingness to join an organisation or protest, the messages, on the whole, actually 'backfired'. Exposure to all of the messages reduced willingness to engage in these activities, and this was largely because the messages reduced citizens' confidence that they could effectively engage in the fight against corruption. Only the message that highlighted the government's success elicited a substantially large net positive agreement with the idea that citizens have a duty to report corruption.

Much can be done to build upon this research. Future research should examine the extent to which these findings are generalisable, beyond the context of Jakarta, and beyond the context of the specific messages tested here. Similar experimental studies could also examine whether repeated exposure to a message influences attitudes towards engagement differently, and/or the extent to which prolonged exposure (for example, in the form of an anti-corruption film, or attendance at an all-day anti-corruption event) shapes attitudes towards engagement in intended (or unintended ways). It will also be important to examine whether and the extent to which exposure to various messages about corruption shape perceptions and attitudes towards engagement over weeks or months. Finally, more could be done to see how, if at all, messages about corruption shape actual corrupt behaviour. Do they deter someone from engaging in bribery, for example, or do they backfire, and encourage such behaviour?

Despite the inherent limitations of the present study, some practical lessons emanate from the results. First, the evidence of backfiring suggests that the effects of all awareness-raising efforts should be tested through pilots, for they may garner unintended reactions. Consistent evidence of backfiring or ineffectiveness will naturally suggest that resources dedicated to awareness-raising will be best spent elsewhere. Second, care should be taken to evaluate how the messages make citizens feel about their ability to effectively engage in anti-corruption civic activity, as this was a negative and fairly consistent driver of attitudes towards (not) getting involved. Third, exposing the consequences of corruption can work to inspire, and not necessarily overwhelm, citizens to engage in anti-corruption activity. Finally, stories of the government sincerely fighting corruption may help to combat 'corruption fatigue'.

Evidence of backfiring and ineffectiveness, clearly sits uncomfortably with hopes for using awareness-raising as a tool to inspire civic anti-corruption activism. If similar conclusions are drawn from future research, then current thinking about how to effectively engage the public in the fight against corruption will be radically challenged. It seems incomprehensible to suggest, however, that all efforts to raise awareness about the problem of corruption should stop. After all, it is a normative democratic goal that citizens have access to information and learn about the quality of their government and the misgivings of those that govern. Future research focusing on awareness-raising will hopefully provide some direction, not only with respect to what types of messages can work to encourage and empower, but how awareness-raising efforts will be received in different governance contexts. Getting awareness-raising right will obviously mean going beyond 'doing no harm'; it will require policy makers to deepen their understanding of how beliefs about government are formed and how policy interventions shape them. The first port of call, however, will be to make sure that current efforts are not backfiring altogether.

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Appendix A: Details on the demographic characteristics of the sample

- **Age**: Of this sample, 9% were under 25 years old, 24% were between 25 and 35 years old, 30% were between 36 and 45 years old, 21% were between 46 and 55 years old, 13% were between 56 and 65 years old and the rest (3%) were over the age of 65.

- **Education**: A small percentage of the sample (2) had no formal education, 14% had completed primary school only, 67% had completed secondary school and the rest (17%) either had some university education or had completed university education.

- **Income**: Twenty-eight percent of the sample reported a household monthly income of below 3 million IDR, 29% reported between 3 and 6 million IDR, 18% between 6 and 9 million IDR, 13% between 9 and 12 million IDR, and 10% over 12 million IDR. The sample was split evenly between males and females.

To the extent to which they were available, the demographic statistics of the sample can be compared with statistics for all of Indonesia, reported by the World Bank's World Development Indicators (most recent year available). According to these indicators, close to 100% of the adult population have completed primary school and 81% have completed lower secondary school. These statistics are fairly consistent with the sample of subjects used here. Also, 93% of the Indonesian adult population are between 15 and 64 years old, and 7% are over 65 years old. The sample of subjects in this experiment, therefore, seems to be slightly younger. While this and other potential differences not unearthed should be kept in mind when drawing generalisations from this study, there is no expectation that this difference will affect the efficacy of the experiment.

Appendix B: Distribution figures of responses to perceptions and attitudes towards anticorruption activity variables
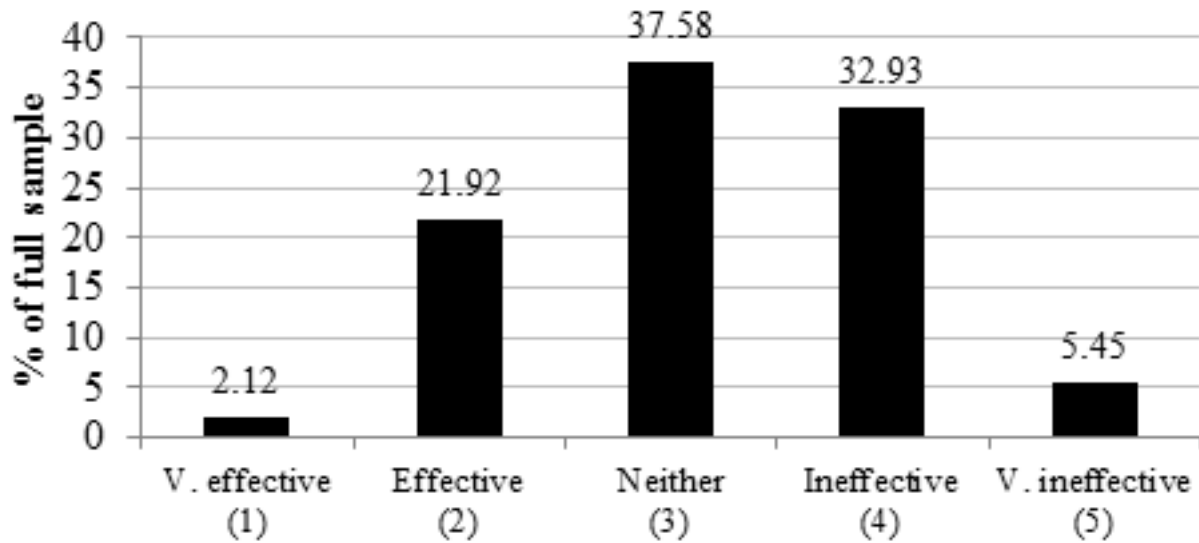
Perceptions questions

Distribution of *level* perception
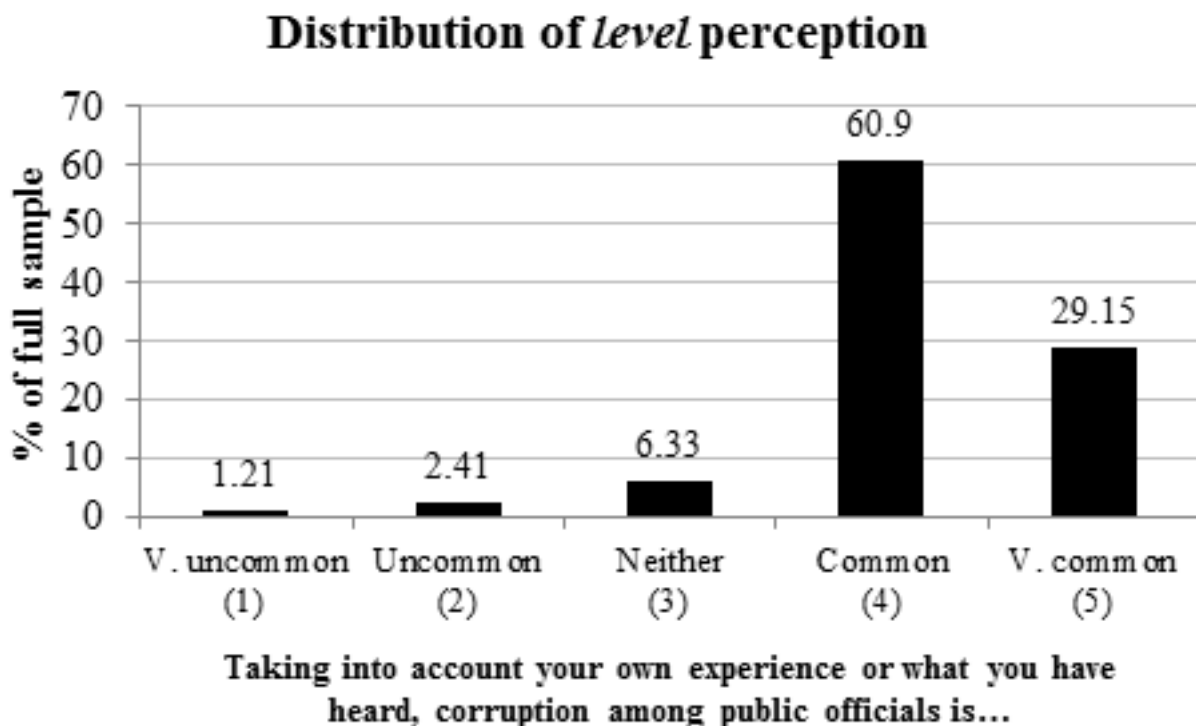
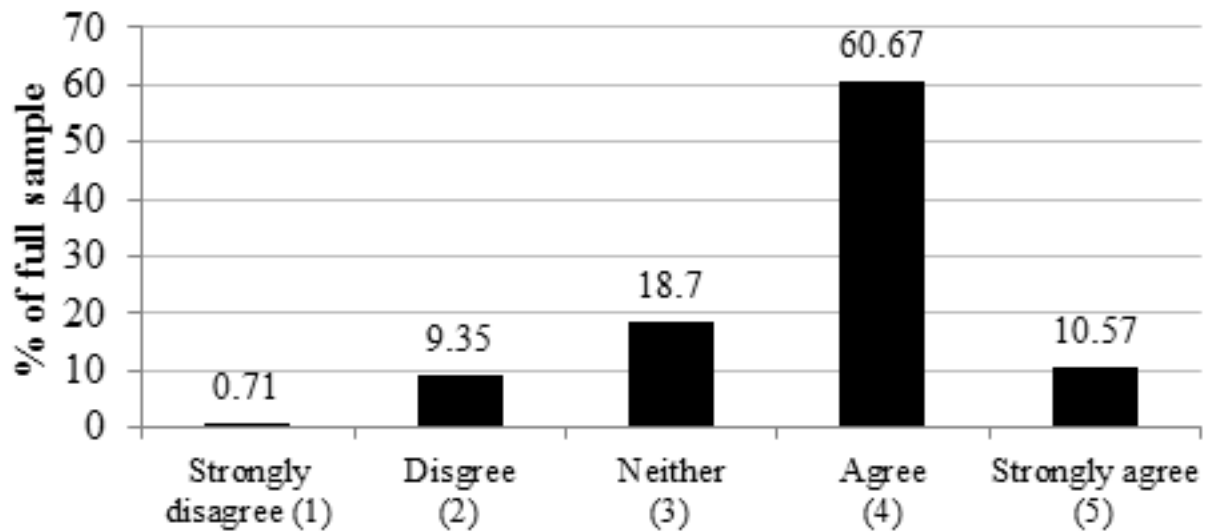## Distribution of *consequence* perception
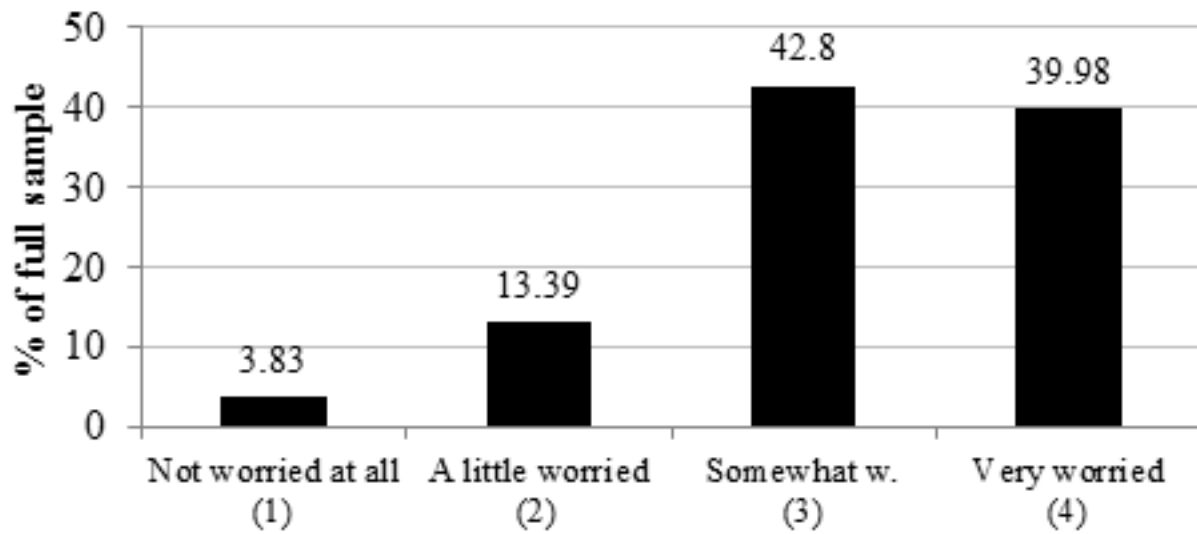
How worried are you that petty corruption is harming development in Indonesia?
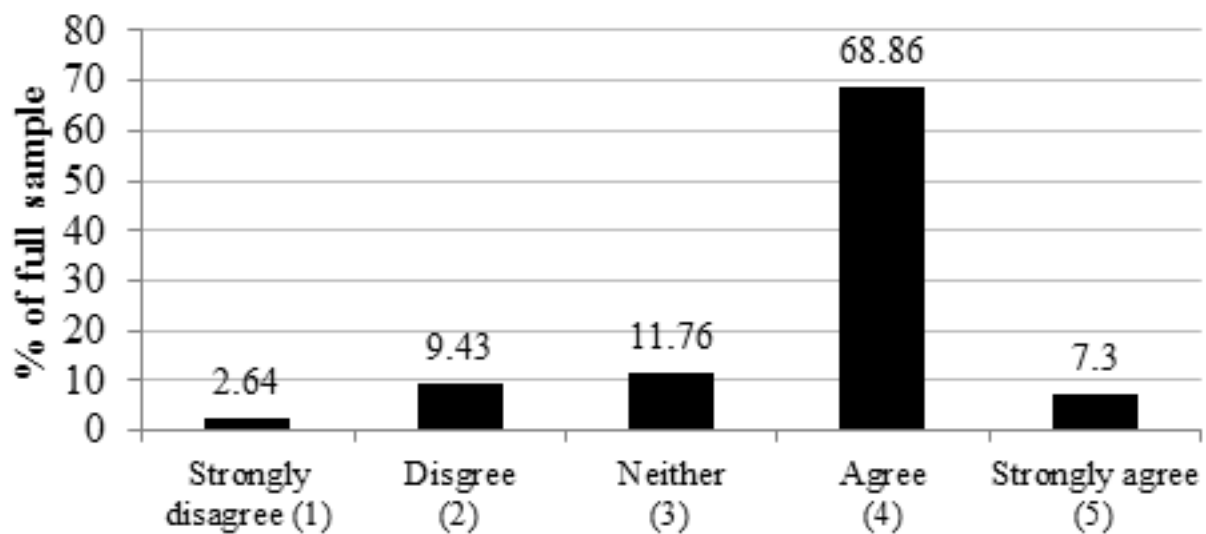
Distribution of *gov't success* perception

How effective do you think your government's actions are in the fight against corruption?

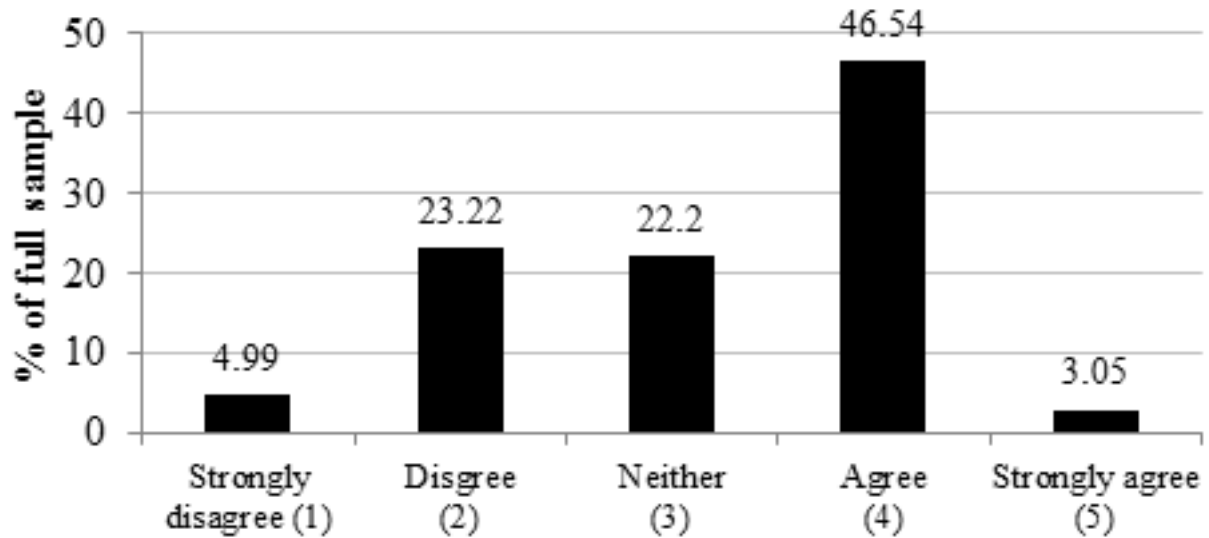## Distribution of *easy for citizens* perception

Statement: it is now easier than ever for an ordinary citizen like me to report corruption or attend rallies against corruption?
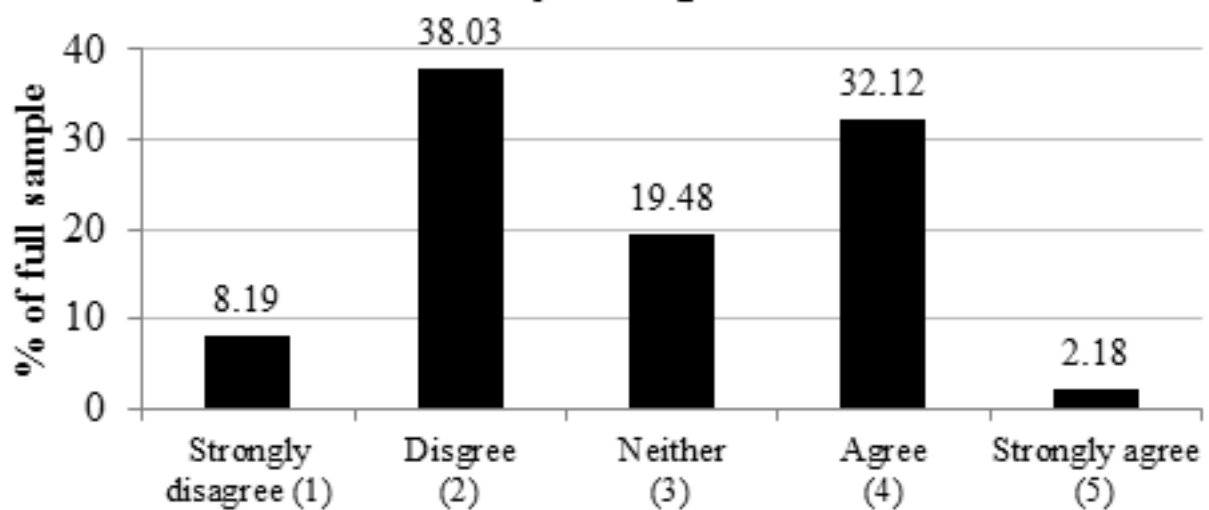
Distribution of *duty report* DV

Statement: If I witnessed corruption, I would feel that it was my duty to report it to the authorities.
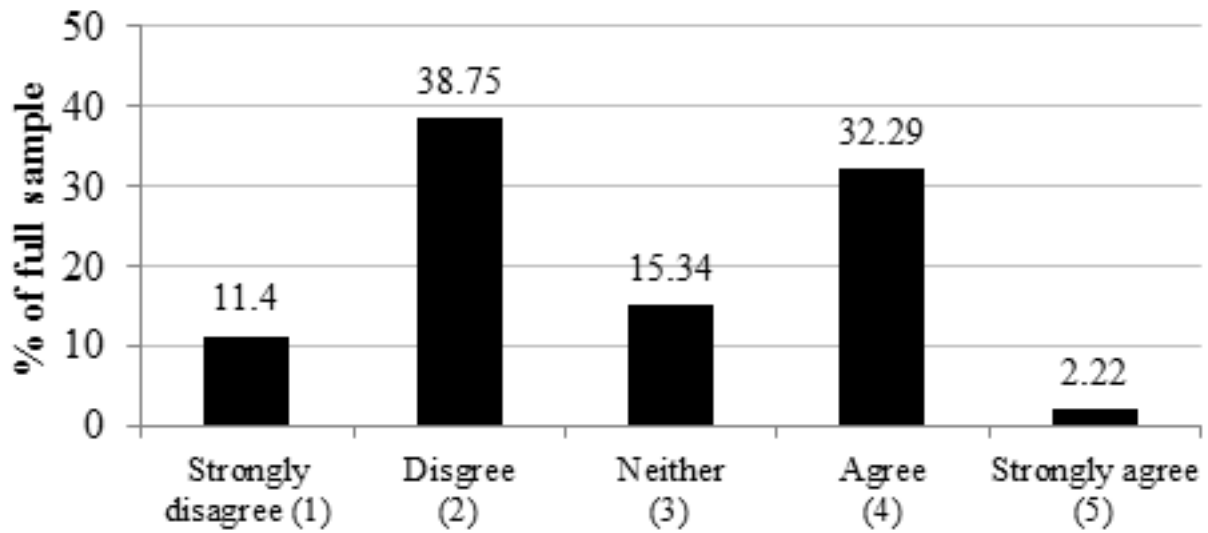
Distribution of *report court* DV

Statement: I would report a case of corruption even if I would
have to spend a day in court to give evidence

Distribution of *join organisation* DV

Statement: I would become an active member of an
anticorruption organisation, spending a few hours a month at
meetings and organisational events.

Distribution of *protest* DV

Statement: I would protest against corruption even if it meant having to travel two hours to get to the protest.

Appendix C: Direct effects of control variables on anticorruption civic action

	Report court		Duty to report		Join org.		Protest	
	N.E.	Channel	N.E.	Channel	N.E.	Channel	N.E.	Channel
Female	-0.122	0.010	-0.089	0.008	-0.140	0.003	-0.120	0.007
Income	0.064	0.079	0.041	0.408	-0.005	0.748	-0.029	0.234
Educ	0.073	0.025	0.147	0.013	0.014	0.737	-0.008	0.995
Age	-0.131	0.011	-0.080	0.029	-0.084	0.012	-0.060	0.076

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