

## Citizens, bribery and the propensity to protest

Article (Accepted Version)

Monyake, Moletsane and Hough, Dan (2019) Citizens, bribery and the propensity to protest. *Journal of Comparative and Commonwealth Politics*, 57 (3). pp. 282-302. ISSN 1466-2043

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# Citizens, Bribery and the Propensity to Protest

## Abstract

It is widely assumed that the more one experiences corruption the more likely one is to want to protest about it. Yet empirical evidence illustrating this is thin on the ground. This paper fills that gap by focusing on the extent to which self-reported experience of bribery affects the willingness to engage in protests against corruption in Africa. We find that the more one experiences bribery the more one is likely to support anti-corruption protests. A further unexpected finding is that personal experience of corruption also increases the willingness to rely on bribes to solve public administration problems. In fact, an increase in the frequency of paying bribes has a stronger effect on the likelihood to use bribery to solve problems with public officials than preferring to join protests and demonstrations.

## Keywords

Corruption, Bribery, Citizens, Protest, Africa

## 1. Introduction

Increasing experiences of corruption are widely assumed to be a key rallying point for ordinary citizens around the world to engage in anti-corruption protests (see Bayerle 2014, African Development Bank 2014, Chayes 2018). Pierre Landell-Mills (2013), for example, identifies bribery as one of the triggers of civic engagement. “People” he notes “are increasingly intolerant of being squeezed for bribes and more incensed at officials growing fat on extortions and crooked deals” (Landell-Mills 2013: iv).

Yet apart from analysis of a small number of South American cases (see Faughnan & Seligson 2015, McCann and Domínguez 1998, Gingerich 2009) and former communist countries (Kostadinova 2009), the nature of the relationship between exposure to bribery and protest has attracted little academic attention. Scholars interested in Africa often examine individual-level predictors of bribery experiences (see Justesen & Bjornskov 2014; Peiffer & Rose 2016; Mbate 2017) and not the impact of bribery experience on political action. Other Africanists focus on the impact of perceptions of corruption on the propensity to participate in protests more generally (Inman & Andrew 2008). It is, therefore, unclear first, why some ordinary Africans protest against corruption specifically while others do not, and second, what role direct exposure

to bribery plays in the decision to participate in anti-corruption protests. This paper fills these gaps by focusing on the extent to which self-reported experience of bribery affects the willingness to engage in protests against corruption in the African context. Specifically, we test the idea that the experience of paying bribes acts as a mobilising grievance, and that an increase in the frequency of paying bribes will lead to an increase in the willingness to use protests as a means to tackle corruption.

We choose Africa both as it is a continent that has been ravaged by the corrupt practices of many of its politicians and also as there have been an array of ever more prominent anti-corruption protests across many of its countries. Corruption matters everywhere, but nowhere more than it does in Africa. The analysis draws upon the third and sixth rounds of the Afrobarometer surveys. The third round was conducted in 2005/06 in 18 countries while the sixth round was conducted between 2014 and 2016 in 36 countries.

Protest participants seldom single out ‘corruption’ as the reason for their decision to engage in political action. In her analysis of popular resistance against corruption in 12 countries, for instance, Beyerle (2014:247) notes that “most of the civic initiatives targeting corruption were linked to other injustices and struggles”. This, as Bauhr (2016:6) poignantly observes, makes it difficult to know exactly what spurs anti-corruption movements, more especially since corruption is often “used as a ‘catch-all’ concept, including both economic grievances and democratic deficits”. The Afrobarometer data used in this paper enable us to circumvent this challenge of isolating the effect of the experience of corruption on propensity to use protests as one way to challenge corruption. The data do these by providing information on the attitudes of ordinary Africans towards the use of protests to challenge corruption and on personal experiences of bribery. The data also allow us to examine how an increase in experience of corruption affects the propensity to have taken part in actual protests in the year prior to the survey.

The paper is structured as follows. The next section offers a brief overview of the theoretical framework linking the experience of bribery and the propensity to protest. This is followed by a brief discussion of the data and empirical strategies employed. The third section outlines the results while the final section discusses these and concludes. To anticipate the main findings, an increase in bribery experience does increase the support for the use of protests to tackle corruption. Second, and most importantly, an increase in experience of bribery increases the

probability of having taken part in protests and demonstrations in the year prior to the survey. A further unexpected finding is that personal experience of corruption also increases the willingness to rely on bribes to solve public administration problems. In fact, an increase in the frequency of paying bribes has a stronger effect on likelihood to use bribery to solve problems with public officials than preferring to join protests and demonstrations.

## **2. A grievances explanation of collective action**

Grievance explanations of protests draw from the seminal work of Ted Robert Gurr (1970). The grievance model posits that personal discontent underpins individual willingness to bear the costs of collective civic action (Gurr 2015). Indeed, as Snow and Soule (2010:23) argue, “none of the various sets of conditions necessary for the emergence and operation of social movements is more important than the generation of deeply felt [and] shared grievances”. The grievance model (or some of its versions) has been used to explain collective civic engagement in many parts of the African continent (see Mottiar & Bond 2012, Resnick 2015). A major flaw in the grievance analysis is that in most cases the rate of collective civic engagement does not correspond with the ever-present nature of discontent (Tarrow 1998, Tilly 2003). As Tarrow observes, “even a cursory look at modern history shows that outbreaks of contention cannot be derived from the deprivation people suffer or the disorganization in their societies. For these preconditions are far more enduring than the movements they support” (Tarrow 1998: 71). Results of a multilevel regression analysis of self-reported rates of protest across the globe are consistent with Tarrow’s argument as they indicate that “many people who hold equal grievances do not protest” (Dalton, van Sickle & Weldon 2010:17). Lichbach (1996) explains that even if aggrieved individuals wanted to engage in collective action, the spectre of free-riding would prove to be a major hindrance.

One of the points that proponents of the grievance model stress, mostly in response to rebuttals rooted in collective action theory, is that grievances are not created equally (see Snow 1998). Some grievances have a stronger mobilising potential than others. Bergstrand (2014) argues that grievances that are more direct and personal or that lead to significant personal losses have a particularly strong mobilisation effect. Research on the individual-level effects of corruption, as a grievance, corroborate Bergstrand’s (2014) argument. Bauhr (2012:80) maintains, for instance, that “if corruption is not clearly felt in everyday life and its effects are divided and diffuse, it may motivate less engagement among broad sections of the population”.

Olken's (2007) research in rural Indonesia illustrates how personalised grievances motivate citizens to challenge specific types of corruption. Olken (2007) found that Indonesian villagers were keener to prevent the officials (of the road construction projects) from fraudulently billing the labour they (i.e. villagers) had offered voluntarily and keeping the money for themselves. The villagers were less interested in preventing officials from stealing the building materials and selling them off in the black market, even though this was a more harmful form of corruption for the project (and thus for the interests of the entire community). The strong incentive to prevent illegal wage expenditures was grounded in the fact that this type of corruption was felt at the individual-level (i.e. the loss was more personal). Finding out that one has been personally cheated can produce grievances that are more intense than discovering that the community was ripped off.

### *2.1. The experience of bribery as a mobilising grievance*

*People who have not endured the hardship of living with endemic bribery may think that official demands for bribery are nothing more than background noise, easily and quickly paid and forgotten. In truth, every bribe demand represents an assertion of power over those without power or adequate redress, which over time engenders deep frustration, resentment, and anger (Nichols & Robertson 2017:7).*

Based on the analysis of the Global Corruption Barometer (GCB), Bauhr (2016) provides an explanation that is consistent with the above observation. Bauhr divides bribe payers into two groups: need bribers and greed bribers. Her analysis shows that individuals who pay bribes to gain illicit advantages (i.e. greed bribers) are less willing to undertake civic action targeting corruption. On the contrary, those who are 'forced' to pay above and beyond the officially sanctioned fees are more willing to support anti-corruption mobilisation. Bauhr's (2016) explanation is that demand for bribes (i.e. extortions) provokes a strong sense of indignation and consequently, the willingness to be personally involved in anti-corruption efforts. Much of the social movement literature indeed suggests that emotions of resentment and anger prompt individuals to discount the personal costs of taking part in collective dissent (see Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans 2013). According to Jasper (1998) such 'reactive emotions' provide a powerful motivation for individuals to support a variety of collective resistance efforts. Paying more attention to the emotional side of the grievance explanation has enabled social movement scholars to explain why collective action arises in highly repressive settings or among individuals who may not feel equipped to make a difference (i.e. individuals with a low sense of both internal and external efficacy) (Goodwin, Jasper & Polletta 2001).

While Bauhr’s analysis is insightful, it overlooks the impact of the financial burden that having to pay a bribe imposes on individuals and households. The analysis does not reveal whether socio-economic status of a need briber moderates her willingness to act against corruption in a significant way. To the extent that reactive emotions intensify with the amount of personal losses as Bergstrand (2014) has argued, it is possible that poor people who pay bribes on a regular basis are more willing to challenge corruption than their well-to-do compatriots who also pay bribes regularly.

The analysis by Gingerich (2009) suggests that the accumulated burden of bribe payments intensifies citizens’ propensity to undertake aggressive anti-government protests in Bolivia. In this regard, he finds a non-linear relationship between the experience of bribery and propensity to participate in these activities. As he notes, the initial experiences of bribery do not produce noticeable changes in the likelihood to engage in anti-government protests “until the exposure level crosses some threshold point, after which further increases in exposure produce very large increases in the propensity to engage in anti-government protest” (Gingerich 2009:27). In other words, the positive impact of the experience of bribery has a tipping point. There is a threshold beyond which further extortions lead to a significant impetus to challenge the state through aggressive collective action. It is important to note that the survey items Gingerich (2009) used did not ask how much respondents paid in bribes, instead they provided information on the number of public institutions where a bribe was demanded and paid. This justifies his argument that it is not just the paying of bribes that pushes people to challenge the state; it is the accumulated burden of corruption that is key.

### **3. Materials and Methods**

#### ***3.1. Dependent variables***

This study’s dependent variable is measured using items drawn from rounds three and six of Afrobarometer surveys. To be sure, these items do not tell us what citizens have actually done to address corruption. Rather, they elicit opinions about the action they would take (or prefer people like them to take) against corruption. Thus, the items can be construed as measuring attitudinal support for collective action against corruption. In round three, Afrobarometer posed the following question:

What, if anything, would you do to try to resolve each of the following situations: ‘you suspected a school or clinic official of stealing’. Answers were coded as follows:

- do nothing
- don’t worry, things will be resolved given enough time
- lodge a complaint through proper channels or procedures
- use connections with influential people
- offer a tip or bribe and
- join in public protest.

Each respondent chose only one option. Few people would contest the view that the act of stealing from local schools and clinics by officials constitutes ‘corruption’, to the extent that it violates the relationship of trust between citizens as a collective principal and officers as their agents. Asking people about a vague phenomenon like corruption can be fraught with measurement errors as respondents are likely to invoke a wide range of practices to answer the question. These are, hopefully, mitigated when respondents are made to adopt a similar frame of reference that this item provides by speaking of theft by officials instead of the value-laden concept of ‘corruption’. The response option ‘join protests’ will be the focus of data analysis and discussions in the next section.

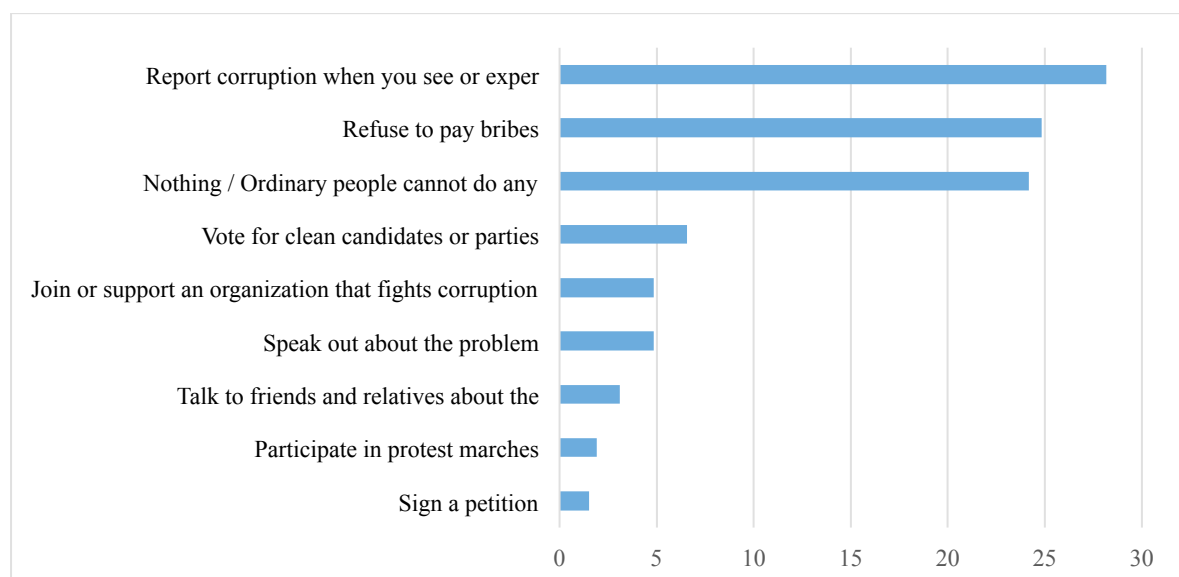
To reduce the number of response categories, we collapsed options four (use connections with influential people) and five (offer a tip or bribe) into a single category. Nevertheless, does it make sense to ‘offer a tip or bribe’ or ‘use connections with influential people’ as a way to tackle corruption? Alam (1995) contends that that a form of corruption such as bribery is one way in which victims of corruption can deal with venal officials. Alam calls this an ‘illicit countervailing action against corruption’. To illustrate how it works, he provides an example involving a powerful factory that pays bribes so that government officials so that they ignore the toxic chemicals it dumps into the river, thereby hurting the fisheries. Illicit countervailing action arises when the fishermen respond with bribes of their own to ‘influence’ the government to enforce the law regarding appropriate disposal of this toxic waste (Alam 1995). Alam’s illicit countervailing action echoes the sentiments by James Scott who noted that, “those who feel that their essential interests are ignored or considered illegitimate in the formal political system will gravitate to the informal channel of influence represented by corruption” (Scott 1969: 328).

When asked how they would react to suspected acts of corruption in schools and clinics, more than two-thirds (68%) of the 25,391 respondents said they would report these to relevant

authorities (hereafter, the *reporters*). About 18% felt that nothing could be done about such issues (the *acquiescents*); 7% said they would use their connections with influential people or offer tips and bribes (the *bribers*); 4% said they would not worry about the problem as it would eventually get resolved given enough time (the *carefrees*). A small minority (2%) said they would resort to collective action in the form of protests (the *protesters*).

The sixth round of Afrobarometer surveys asked respondents what they thought was the most effective thing that ‘ordinary people like you can do to help combat corruption’. This item has two important features. First, the use of the phrase “*ordinary person like you*” positions respondents at the centre of the fight against corruption. Second, in contrast with the item used in round three, this item specifically speaks about corruption more broadly. Again, respondents were restricted to choosing or mentioning only one option. Most of the respondents mentioned reporting the corrupt practices (29%) or refusing to pay bribes (25%). One in four respondents felt that there was nothing civilians could do to challenge corruption. Voting for clean candidates was mentioned by seven per cent of the respondents while speaking out (e.g. by calling a radio programme or writing a letter to the newspaper) was approved by 5 per cent of the respondents. Another 5 per cent felt that joining or supporting organisations that are fighting corruption could be the most effective thing to do. The least popular strategies were joining public protests (2%) and signing a petition calling for tougher sanctions against corruption (1.52%). **Figure 1** illustrates these frequency distributions.

*Figure 1: What is the most effective thing that an ordinary person like you can do to help combat corruption in this country?*





Since estimating and interpreting the results of a multinomial logistic regression model with a nine-category outcome is cumbersome (and likely to consume too many degrees of freedom), we merged the options ‘speak about the problem’ with ‘talk to friends’ and labelled the resulting response category as ‘raise awareness’. We also merged ‘sign petitions’ with ‘support anticorruption organisations’ into one response category. This resulted into a seven-category variable in which about 6 per cent of the respondents preferred to sign a petition or support anti-corruption organisations, while 8 per cent preferred to raise awareness about corruption. The frequency values of the other response options remained the same.

As some scholars have argued, there could be a disjuncture between reported willingness to engage in civic action and taking part in it (van Zomeren et. al. 2012). This necessitates the comparison of the results regarding support for protests with the results on actual participation in protests and demonstrations. Indeed, according to Finkel & Muller (1998), utilising data on willingness or intentions to take part in protests with data on past protest behaviour can shed more light on the findings. Although the Afrobarometer did not ask about the main subject of the protest events that respondents attended, analysing the impact of corruption on the likelihood to have attended offers a layer of robustness for the results of the main analysis. The survey item used for this purpose reads as follows: ‘Here is a list of actions that people sometimes take as citizens. For each of these, please tell me whether you, personally, have done any of these things during the past year: Attended a street demonstration or protest march?’

### *3.2. Independent and control variables*

The main independent variable, the experience of bribery, is measured based on an additive index of five similarly worded questions about respondents’ payment of bribes. The questions read as follows: ‘In the past year, how often (if ever) have you had to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour to government officials in order to: A) Get a document or permit? B) Get a child admitted in school? C) Get medicine or medical attention? D) Get a household service (like piped water, electricity, or phone)? E) Avoid problems with the police (like passing a checkpoint or avoiding a fine or arrest)?’ The response options were: ‘No experience with this in the past year,’ ‘Once or twice,’ ‘A few times,’ and ‘Often’.

Apart from the experience of bribery, there are several other variables that potentially influence the propensity to take part in protests. These can be grouped into grievances, resources and values. To account for the effect of socioeconomic grievances, the estimated model includes three variables that we believe cover much of the spectrum of the economic deprivation concept: experiential poverty, personal living conditions and relative living conditions. Experiential poverty is measured based on Afrobarometer's lived poverty index (LPI). The personal living conditions is measured based on the item asking respondents to assess their present economic conditions. Lastly, we consider respondents' evaluation of their personal living conditions compared to other citizens as a measure of *relative* living conditions.

We use the following variables as proxies for political grievances: the index of corruption perceptions and the index of political trust. The index of corruption perceptions is measured based on respondents' assessment of how many of the officials in several public institutions (e.g. Parliament, public service, judiciary etc.) were corrupt. The response options on a four-point Likert scale ranged from 'none of them are involved in corruption' to 'all of them are involved'. Political or institutional trust is measured based on items asking how much trust a respondent has in the president/prime minister, parliament, the police, the army and the courts of law, among others.

The individual-level resources likely to influence support for anti-corruption protests are formal education attainment, membership in voluntary associations, generalised trust, a sense of self-efficacy (i.e. internal efficacy) and interest in politics. Lastly, our model adjusts for the effect of tolerance for corruption. This variable is measured based on the additive index from three questions about the extent to which citizens think incidents such as political patronage, nepotism and bribery are 'not wrong at all', 'wrong but understandable' or 'wrong and punishable'. In addition to these variables, we control for the usual demographic variables of age, gender and urban-rural status. **Table A1** (in appendix) provides the exact wording of the items used to measure these variables and the Cronbach alpha values of the composite measures.

### **3.3. Estimation strategies**

Since the main response variable is a discrete choice set (i.e. unordered categorical variable), the analysis employs a multinomial logistic regression model and reports the relative probability of preferring a particular action against corruption. Since the objective of this paper is to assess how willingness to take part in anti-corruption protests changes in line with experiences of

corruption, it would be more meaningful to contrast the preference for other actions with the preference for protests. However, given that two thirds of the Afrobarometer respondents would rather report suspected acts of corruption, using reporters as a reference category is more efficient from the statistical perspective<sup>1</sup>. This notwithstanding, we re-estimated the MNL model using different reference categories to ascertain whether results are sensitive to changes in the base outcome

#### 4. Results

Before turning to the main thrust of this paper — impact of bribery experience on propensity to engage in protests — it is important to briefly summarise the effects of some of the control variables. The demographic variables of age and gender have a statistically significant overall effect on preferred action against corruption. However, only the effects of age are significant for the contrast between protesters and reporters. The urban-rural status has no effect on the model ( $X^2= 2.29$ ,  $df =4$ ,  $p= 0.6831$ ) and has been excluded from the results shown in **Table 1**. Formal education attainment has a strong overall effect on preferred action against corruption. Further to that, an increase in education increases the odds of preferring to report relative to any other option. However, the effect is not significant for the protest-reporting contrast.

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<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the rule of thumb in multinomial logistic regression is that the reference category should be the response category with the highest frequency.

*Table 1: Multinomial logistic regression predicting preferred action against corruption*

	<b>Acquiescents</b>	<b>Carefrees</b>	<b>Bribers</b>	<b>Protesters</b>
Experience of bribery	0.130 (0.07)	0.010 (0.11)	0.385*** (0.07)	0.454*** (0.12)
Corruption perceptions	-0.137*** (0.04)	0.149* (0.07)	0.052 (0.05)	-0.042 (0.09)
Organizational membership	-0.019 (0.02)	-0.123*** (0.03)	0.01 (0.02)	0.057 (0.03)
Lived poverty	-0.045 (0.03)	0.094 (0.05)	-0.043 (0.04)	0.009 (0.07)
Tolerance for corruption	-0.291*** (0.05)	-0.724*** (0.09)	-0.449*** (0.07)	-0.215 (0.12)
Personal living conditions	0.012 (0.03)	0.082 (0.05)	0.05 (0.04)	-0.052 (0.06)
Relative living conditions	0.028 (0.03)	-0.062 (0.05)	-0.003 0.04	0.181** 0.07
Institutional trust	-0.225*** (0.04)	-0.228*** (0.06)	-0.165*** (0.04)	-0.203** (0.08)
Education attainment	-0.135*** (0.02)	-0.111*** (0.03)	-0.087*** (0.02)	-0.011 (0.03)
Age	-0.002 (0.00)	0.006 (0.00)	0.001 (0.00)	-0.008 (0.00)
Female	0.259*** (0.05)	0.167 (0.09)	-0.052 (0.07)	0.086 (0.12)
Generalised trust	-0.03 (0.07)	0.401*** (0.1)	0.324*** (0.08)	0.374** (0.14)
Political interest	-0.129*** (0.02)	-0.035 (0.04)	0.02 (0.03)	0.205*** (0.06)
Internal political efficacy	0.044* (0.02)	-0.01 (0.02)	0.07 (0.03)	0.108* (0.05)
Intercept	-0.874 (0.137)	-2.054 (0.207)	-1.640 (0.175)	-2.419 (0.248)

Notes:

Reference category is 'report corruption'

\*= significant at 5%; \*\* significant at 1%; \*\*\* significant at 0.1%

**Note:** country fixed effects included in regression but omitted from the table

Although tolerance for corruption has a strong overall effect on reactions to allegations of corruption ( $X^2 = 111.02$ ,  $df. = 4$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), it has no significant effect on the preference for protest relative to reporting. Instead, admitting that corruption is acceptable or understandable has a strong positive effect on the relative probability of preferring to use a bribe or influential connections to address problems. Furthermore, as shown in Table 1, those who are most tolerant of corruption are also significantly more likely to say that nothing can be done about suspected acts of corruption or that they wouldn't worry as corruption can be solved without their involvement (i.e. carefree). It seems therefore that those who are most tolerant of corruption are unlikely to take part in anti-corruption initiatives. Instead, they are significantly more likely to draw upon clientelistic networks or simply offer bribes to address public goods problems. These results suggest two lessons. First, they are consistent with the idea that personal discontent with corruption underlies the willingness to engage in anti-corruption protests; those who are tolerant of corruption are unlikely to be aggrieved by it. Second, they show that tolerance for corruption may help explain the propensity to reject official channels of addressing state-related grievances (exit).

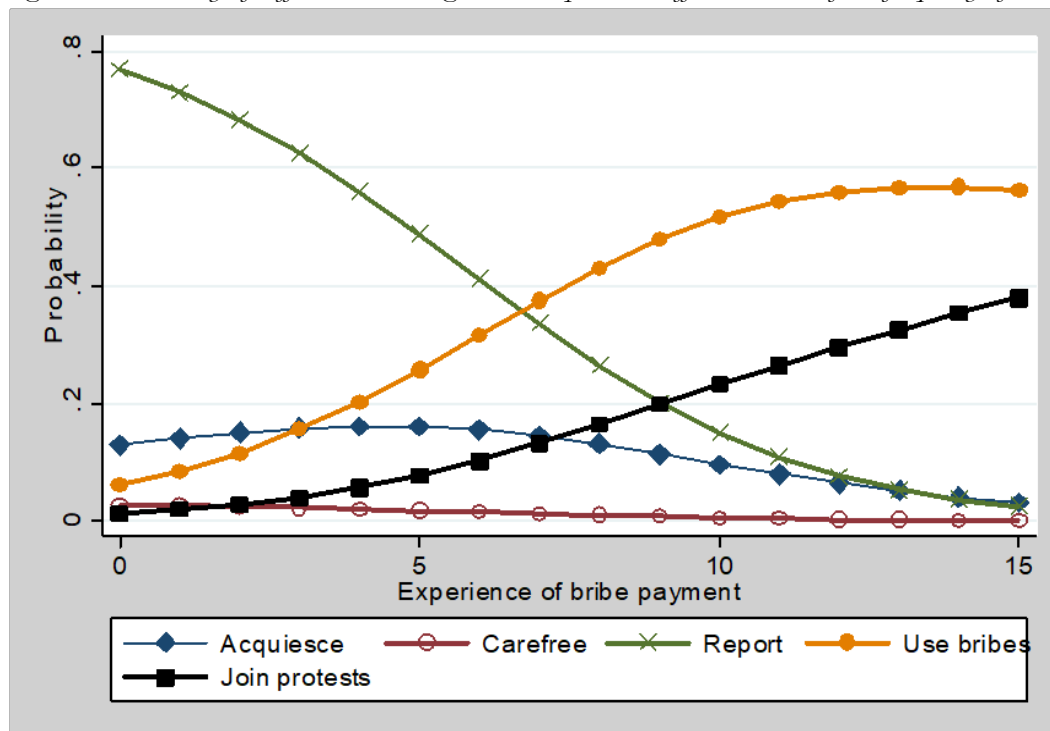
A unit increase in perceptions of corruption initially increases the preference for using bribery and influential connections rather than reporting corruption. But this effect disappears when more control variables are added. As shown in **Table 1**, a unit increase in trust increases the likelihood of preferring to report corruption rather than join protests or use influential people (i.e. clientelistic networks). The negative overall effect of institutional trust on relative willingness to join protests supports the well-established idea in the literature that those who have no confidence in state institutions and the rule of law tend to gravitate towards non-institutionalised methods of political participation.

Turning to the main results, the experience of bribery is likely to have a very strong effect on citizens' reactions to corruption. Holding other variables at their mean values, a positive change from having an average experience with bribery increases the relative probability of preferring to

join protests by 0.011 ( $p < 0.01$ ); the same change increases the relative probability of preferring to draw on influential connections by more than twice that amount (0.026,  $p < 0.001$ ). The fact that the average marginal effect of the experience of bribery on the preference for the use of bribes and influential connections is higher than that of the preference for protest should not come as a surprise. Indeed, as intimated in previous sections, there are grounds to expect the regular paying of bribes to reinforce the perception that individual solutions actually work. The implication of this finding is that regular bribers are more likely to choose to pay a bribe or approach influential people (e.g. local political leaders, business-people, traditional authorities, religious leaders, etc.) when they face problems in their communities and personal lives.

To capture the differential effects of the increase in the frequency of bribery, we plot predicted probabilities of each of the five reactions to allegations of corruption at specific values of the bribery index (see **Figure 2**). When no bribe has been paid in the past year (i.e. point zero on the graph), the probability of being willing to join protests is almost zero. In sharp contrast, the probability of preferring to report or acquiesce is highest for an individual with no bribery experience. The predicted probability of reporting or acquiescing declines steadily as the experience of bribery accumulates. It would seem therefore that the majority of those who prefer to report or say that nothing can be done did not have much, if any, direct experience with bribery, and that having this experience would increase their likelihood of choosing to either join protests or pay bribes as a response to corruption allegations.

Figure 2: Probability of different actions against corruption at different values of the frequency of bribe payment



Indeed, a respondent who has the highest experience of paying bribes is predicted to have a 40 per cent probability of preferring anti-corruption protests. On the other hand, the same individual has less than 5 per cent chance of preferring to report or say that nothing can be done about corruption. Although these results are instructive, a caveat is in order; the predicted estimates for the protest category are less reliable at higher values of bribery payment due to insufficient data. Overall, the analysis indicates that bribery increases the individual preference for using protests and influential connections (and bribery) to address corruption allegations while, at the same time, reducing the preference for other ways of addressing corruption. It is important to note that the relative probability of preferring to use every other action besides protesting declines at some point in the progression of bribery experience. The diminishing probabilities of preferring other forms of action against corruption indicate that protest is likely to be the *most preferred reaction* against corruption allegations for citizens with very high experience of corruption.

In summary, the results show that individuals with an increasing experience of bribery are less likely to report corruption allegations or say that nothing can be done about it. When such individuals suspect that corruption is taking place, they are more likely to initiate a protest or use their access to powerful people in the community to address the problem. In general, therefore, bribers are significantly more likely to resort to extra-institutional methods to address public

goods' problems. Importantly, the effect of bribery experience as a grievance seems to be independent of other socio-economic and political grievances, personal values and resource mobilisation variables. That is, the experience of bribery increases the potential for anti-corruption collective action in spite of the impact of other predictors of civic engagement.

#### *4.1. Evidence from round six survey*

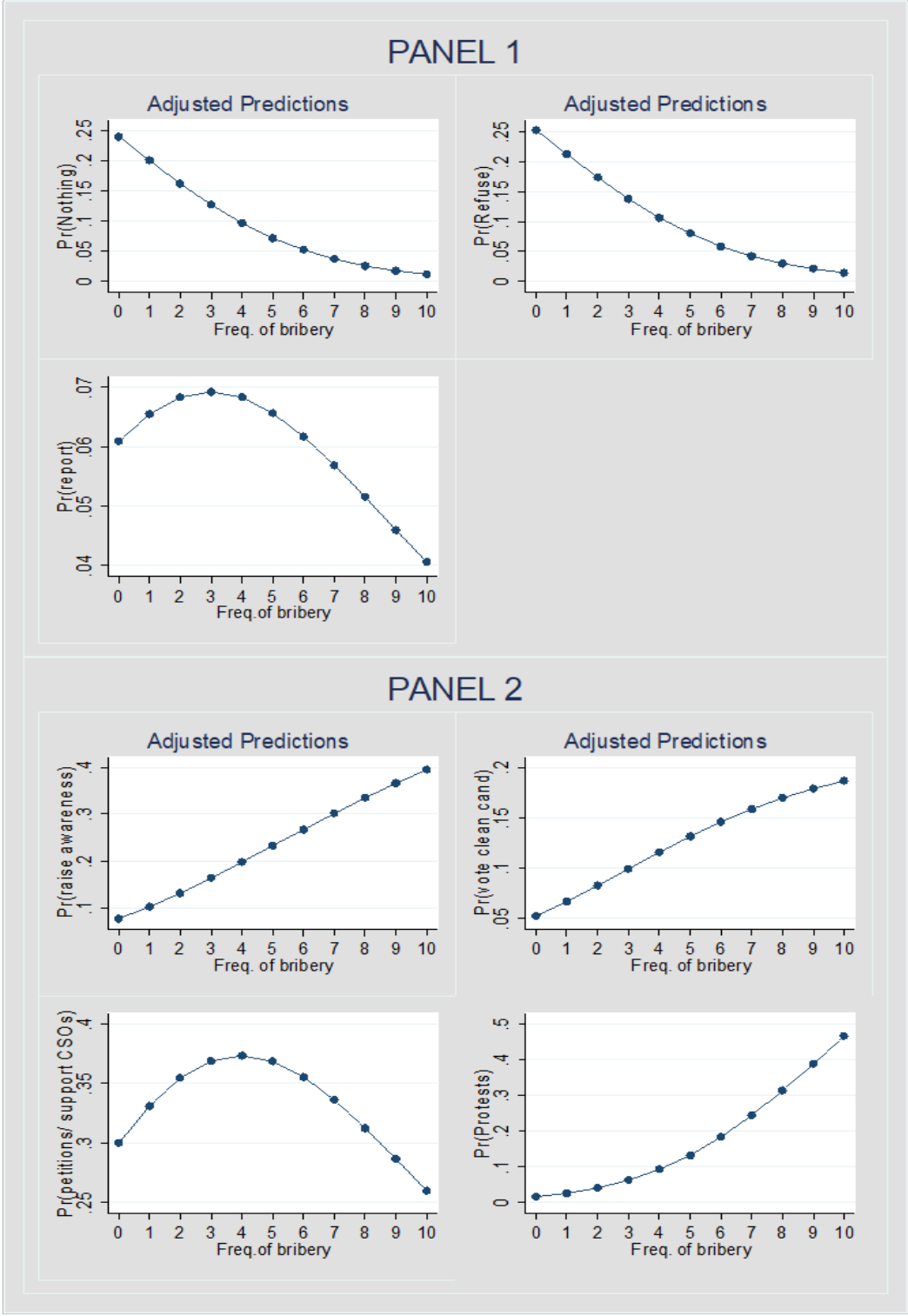
Regressing this seven-category variable against the variables<sup>2</sup> used in the models estimated in the previous section yields results that are broadly consistent with the main narrative in that section. Holding other variables at their mean values, the relative probability of supporting anti-corruption protests rises with the increasing frequency of paying a bribe. Furthermore, an increase in frequency of paying a bribe increases support for raising awareness or voting for clean political parties relative to reporting corruption. On the other hand, an increase in the experience of bribery decreases the relative probability of thinking that reporting corruption or refusing to pay bribes is the most effective thing citizens can do about corruption. Similarly, the likelihood of saying that there is nothing ordinary people can do declines as the experience of bribery accumulates. To get a more nuanced picture of the effect of the experience of bribery, we plot changes in the probability to prefer each of the seven anti-corruption tactics at different values of the experience of bribery variable. The two panels shown in **Figure 3** present the results of this procedure.

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<sup>2</sup> Round six does not have questions about corruption tolerance and generalised trust



Figure 3: Predicted probability of different actions against corruption at different points in the frequency of bribe payments (Round 6 data)



The results shown in panel 2 suggest that generally, the probability of selecting response categories ‘raise awareness’, ‘vote for clean candidates’ and ‘join protests’ rises as the experience of bribery increases. For the ‘sign petitions or support anti-corruption organisations’ option, the

relationship changes its positive trajectory to negative as bribery experiences accumulate. Apart from this strong non-linearity, those who do not have any direct experience with corruption have a higher probability of preferring this option compared to the other forms of civic engagement against corruption. These results indicate quite strongly that individuals with vast experience of paying bribes are less likely to see offering support for anti-corruption organisations or signing a petition as viable strategies against endemic graft.

Apart from acting as a robustness check, analysing round six data reveals more interesting nuances about the nature of the impact of direct exposure to corruption. The declining probability of refusing to pay a bribe as personal experience of bribery increases is highly consistent with the rising probability of using bribes and influential connections as the experience of bribery accumulates as reported in the previous section. The story that emerges from the analysis of these two data sets is that an individual with the highest personal experience of bribery is less likely to stop paying bribes. However, the same individual could also be much more willing to join protests staged in the name of anti-corruption.

#### *4.2. Bribery and participation in actual protests*

We estimate a fixed effects complimentary log-log regression model to ascertain the effect of the experience of bribery on propensity to take part in actual protests and demonstrations. Consistent with the results of the previous section, the perception of corruption has a non-significant effect on the odds of having taken part in past protests and demonstrations. The experience of bribery has a strong positive effect. Additionally, the quadratic term of the frequency of bribery is negative and statistically significant, indicating a concave relationship between bribery experience and the probability of taking part in protests (see **Table 2**).

Table 2: Complimentary log-log regression of protest participation

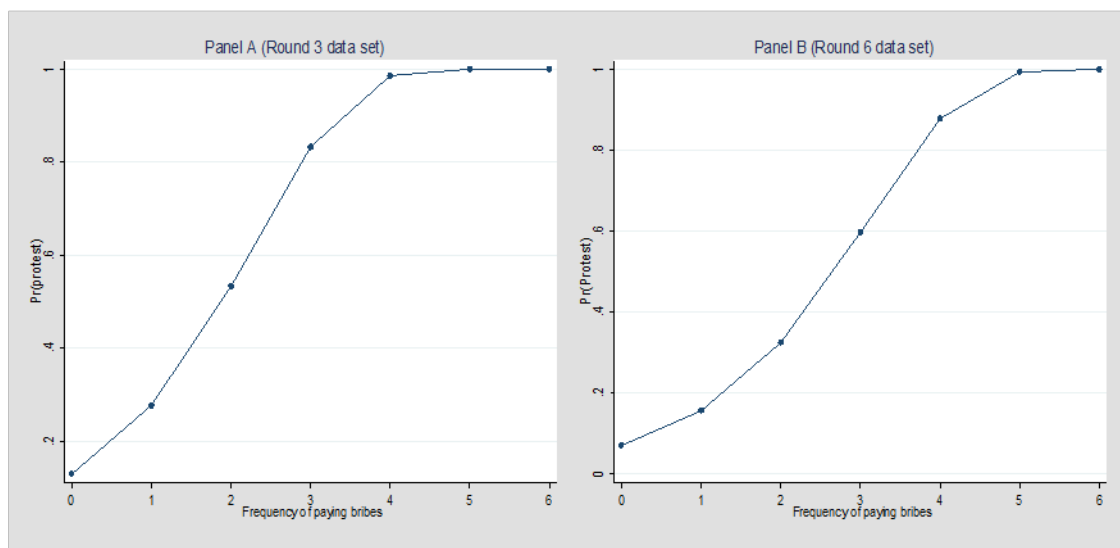
	Robust	Std. Err.	z	P>z	[95% Conf. Interval]	
	Coef.					
Experience of bribery	0.823	0.117	7.03	0.00	0.593	1.052
Quadratic term of bribery	-0.279	0.065	-4.31	0.00	-0.405	-0.152
Corruption perceptions	0.027	0.037	0.73	0.46	-0.045	0.099
Organizational membership	0.175	0.011	16.12	0.00	0.154	0.197
Lived poverty	0.060	0.026	2.29	0.02	0.009	0.112
Tolerance for corruption	-0.062	0.051	-1.23	0.22	-0.162	0.037
Persons living conditions	0.006	0.022	0.27	0.79	-0.038	0.05
Relative living conditions	-0.037	0.025	-1.5	0.14	-0.085	0.011
Institutional trust	-0.011	0.031	-0.36	0.72	-0.072	0.049
Education attainment	0.047	0.013	3.57	0.00	0.021	0.072
Age	-0.004	0.002	-2.07	0.04	-0.008	0.00
Female	-0.260	0.045	-5.74	0.00	-0.348	-0.171
Generalised trust	0.020	0.059	0.16	0.87	-0.106	0.126
Political interest	0.250	0.026	9.58	0.00	0.199	0.302
Internal political efficacy	-0.021	0.018	-1.17	0.24	-0.057	0.014
Rural	0.071	0.048	1.48	0.14	-0.023	0.166
Intercept	-2.281	0.141	-16.14	0.00	-2.556	-2.00

Notes: country fixed effects included in regression modelling but omitted from the table

The results indicate that increasing experience of bribery has a strong positive effect on the probability of taking part in protests. This is consistent with the interpretation that the experience of paying bribes is, indeed, a mobilising grievance as established in previous sections. Nevertheless, the strong quadratic effect qualifies the results somewhat; it seems that a much more regular encounter with bribery dampens the propensity to take part in protests and demonstrations. This sharply contradicts the findings of the study that Gingerich (2009) conducted in Bolivia where the accumulated experience of paying bribes intensified citizens' willingness to participate in protests.

It is worth pointing out that this strong effect of the bribery experience variable can also be detected when round six data are used. Importantly, the quadratic term of bribery is also significantly negative in the regression models based on round six data. (see **Figure 4**). This implies that the non-linear effect of bribery experience on propensity to join protests and demonstrations may not be an artefact of a specific data set.

*Figure 4: The differential impact of bribery experience on probability of protest participation in rounds three and six*



Although the multinomial regression model presented in the previous section and the logistic model of past participation in protests are not entirely comparable, it is remarkable that the effect of bribery comes out so significant in both. This is because collective action scholars often point to the discrepancies that arise when models that predict people’s intentions are compared with those on actual behaviour. In fact, studies conducted in Europe show that people who expressed support for protests do not always follow through with corresponding action. Klandermans and Stekelenburg (2014) for instance found that only two out of five Dutch citizens who supported protest action against the proliferation of nuclear weapons actually took part in the anti-nuclear protests. According to Zomeren et. al. (2008:510) the disjuncture between intentions and actual behaviour arises because “compared with intentions, behaviour is subject to interference from additional random or systematic factors”.

## Discussion

This paper examined the extent to which personal experiences of bribery influence the willingness of ordinary Africans to challenge corruption through protests and demonstrations. The findings demonstrate that on average, regular bribers prefer the use of protests to address corruption and that they do take part in actual protests and demonstrations. The generally positive effect of the experience of bribery survives various empirical conditions. It is detectable when the model is tested on a dataset that has more than three times the number of individuals. Further analysis of the data shows that an experience with bribery increases the probability of actually joining protests only up to a certain point, after which the effect of additional payments tapers off. This corresponds with the interpretation that individuals for whom corruption has become routine could be slightly less willing to participate in collective dissent. The results of the protest participation model should be cautiously interpreted since we do not know whether the protests that a respondent attended were about corruption or governance issues more broadly.

Seen from the grievance perspective, the highly consistent mobilising effect of the experience of bribery seems to stand in sharp contrast to Uslaner's (2008) assertion that petty corruption is not a source of discontent for ordinary people. As he notes, "the sort of corruption that engulfs ordinary citizens – petty corruption — is not as morally troubling as the grand thievery of the rich and powerful" (Uslaner 2008:244). "It is the high-level corruption— among government officials and business people— that makes ordinary people disaffected" and willing to challenge it (Uslaner 2008:123).

One important yet unexpected finding is that regular bribers are unlikely to see refusal to pay bribes as a solution to the problem of corruption and are much more likely to use bribes and influential connections to solve public administration problems. This finding casts some light on the idea that residents of highly corrupt societies, especially those who are regularly being involved in corruption, appreciate the 'problem-solving' function of bribery (see Persson, Rothstein & Teorell 2013, Heywood 2017). These individuals know that refusing to pay often means going without the public good or service that petty corruption or connections with influential individuals secures for them (see Hope 2017). What is more, as Persson, Teorell & Rothstein (2013:463) observe, "the amounts paid to venal officials are often surprisingly small compared to the sorts of relative, short-term gains realised by those who pay the bribes".

What previous studies have not revealed and, indeed what acts as a basis for optimism is the fact that regular bribers are *also* likely to see citizen-centred interventions as effective means of tackling corruption. Moreover, *if* presented with the choice between refusing to pay a bribe and taking part in anti-corruption protests and demonstrations, bribers are significantly more likely to prefer the latter. Taken together, these results imply that seeing corruption as a problem-solving device should not be interpreted as a sign of ‘resignation’ or cynicism. It does not imply that victims of corruption will shy away from using other means available to them to express their discontent. While most ordinary Africans with an experience of paying bribes are unlikely to resist demands for bribes or report incidences of corruption, they are much more likely to support citizens’ efforts to bring corruption under control. This study is the first to articulate this finding.

### **Declaration of interest statement**

Neither author has any potential conflicts of interest

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## Appendix

**Table A1: Predictor variables used in the study**

Variable	Exact wording	Variable construction
<b>Experience of bribery index</b>	<p>In the past year, how often (if ever) have you had to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour to government officials to: A) Get a Document or a permit? B) Get a child into school? C) Get a household service (like piped water, electricity or phone)? D) Get medicine or medical attention? E) Avoid a problem with the police (like passing a checkpoint or avoiding a fine or arrest)?</p> <p>0 = Never, 1 = Once or twice, 2 = A few times, 3 = Often</p>	<p>Maximum likelihood factor analysis with oblique rotation extracted one solution with a Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.78.</p>



<b>Corruption perception index</b>	<p>How many of the following people do you think are involved in corruption, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? A) The president and officials in his office? B) Members of Parliament? C) Elected local government councillors? D) National Government Officials? E) Local government officials? F) Police? G) Tax officials? H) Judges and magistrates?</p> <p>0 = None of them, 1 = Some of them, 2 = Most of them, 3= All of them</p>	<p>Maximum likelihood factor analysis with oblique rotation extracted one solution with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.91.</p>
<b>Lived Poverty Index (LPI)</b>	<p>Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or your family gone without: A) Enough food to eat? B) Enough clean water for home use? C) Medicines or medical treatment? D) Enough fuel to cook your food? E) A cash income?</p> <p>Never= 0, Just once or twice=1, Several times=2, many times=3, Always=4</p>	<p>Maximum likelihood factor analysis with oblique rotation extracted one solution with a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.77.</p>
<b>Relative living conditions</b>	<p>In general, how do you rate your living conditions compared with those of other countrymen?</p>	
<b>Education</b>	<p>What is the highest level of education you have completed?</p>	
<b>Organisational membership</b>	<p>Please tell me whether you are an official leader, an active member, an inactive member, or not a member? Member of voluntary association or community group.</p>	
<b>Corruption tolerance index</b>	<p>For each of the following, please indicate whether you think the act is not wrong at all, wrong but understandable, or wrong and punishable. A) A government official gives a</p>	<p>Composite index Scale Reliability =0.6512</p>

	<p>job to someone from his family who does not have adequate qualifications B) A government official demands a favour or an additional payment for some service that is part of his job? C) A public official decides to locate a development project in an area where his friends and supporters lived</p> <p>1=Not wrong at all, 2=Wrong but understandable, 3=wrong and punishable</p>	
<b>Organisational membership</b>	<p>Now I am going to read out a list of groups that people join or attend. For each one, could you tell me whether you are an official leader, an active member, an inactive member, or not a member?</p> <p>A) A religious group (e.g., church, mosque)?  B) A trade union or farmers association? C) A professional or business association? D) A community development or self-help association</p>	<p>Composite index</p> <p>Scale Reliability = 0.5602</p>
<b>Generalised trust</b>	<p>Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you must be very careful in dealing with people?</p> <p>1= Most people can be trusted. 0= You must be very careful</p>	
<b>Institutional trust index</b>	<p>How much do you trust each of the following, or haven't you heard enough about them to say? The president; Parliament; The National electoral commission; Tax department; The army; The police; Elected local government officials; Courts of law.</p> <p>0 = Not at all, 1 = Just a little, 2 = Somewhat, 3 = A lot</p>	<p>Maximum likelihood factor analysis with oblique rotation extracted one solution with a scale reliability of = 0.89</p>

<b>Political interest</b>	How interested would you say you are in public affairs?	
<b>News media use</b>	How often do you get news from the Radio?	
<b>Internal efficacy</b>	<p>Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?</p> <p>Politics and government sometimes seem so complicated that you can't really understand what's going on.</p> <p>1= Strongly Agree</p> <p>2= Agree</p> <p>3= Neither Agree Nor Disagree</p> <p>4=Disagree Strongly</p> <p>5= Disagree</p> <p>9= Don't know [DNR]</p>	

