

Vote Buying, Government Accountability, and Political Corruption: The Case of the Philippines

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ABSTRACT : Vote buying and political corruption have been permanent features of the Philippine political landscape. Despite laws that prohibit and punish vote-buying and corruption, these phenomena continue to exist in the Philippines. The implementation of the anti-corrupt practices act in the Philippines is only one of the mechanisms of the government to fight corruption. The study will examine how vote-buying and accountability affect corruption in the Philippines. It will primarily give emphasis on corruption as the effect of vote-buying and accountability using the data provided by the “Varieties of democracy” (V.Dem). The study used Multiple Regression Analysis to model the causal relationship between the explanatory variables; government accountability and vote-buying; and the response variable; political corruption. The results found are striking; there is no correlation between accountability and corruption. In the case of vote-buying and corruption, the study revealed that there is a statistically significant negative linear association between the two

KEYWORDS: *accountability, corruption, government, political landscape, vote-buying*

I. INTRODUCTION

Vote-buying is a well-known global phenomenon around the world. This phenomenon form part of the Philippines’ political landscape since colonial times. (Schaffer 2005)

Section 261(a)(1) of the Omnibus Election Code provides that a person is guilty of vote-buying if “he gives, offers or promises anything of value to any person, entity or community in order to induce the public to vote for or against a candidate”. (Election Code). This provision of the code expressly prohibits vote-buying in the Philippines, but despite the law, vote-buying still persists in the country. This practice is like a cancer cell that keeps on growing, it was strengthened because of the automation of elections where cheating becomes difficult.

Vote buying becomes institutionalized in the Philippine political landscape. Elite politicians use their influence, money, and government resources to entice voters to vote for them. In return, the beneficiary reciprocates by offering his support and personal services to the benefactor. A study revealed that vote-buying and clientelism may induce corruption because the winning candidate who spent more money to buy votes will likely to recover his expenditures during his tenure. (Kramon 2013)

According to Julio Teehankee, “institutional and procedural defects prevent the electoral politics of the Philippines from becoming meaningful to effective and efficient governance. He also argued that while the nation’s elections are rather open, the issue of the lack of real and political alternatives still exists.”(Teehankee p.187)

Also, corruption is a widespread global phenomenon despite mechanisms to make politicians accountable to the people, corruption is still rampant. Political accountability includes an exchange of responsibilities between the rulers and the ruled. In other words, accountability is a mutual relationship between the officials and the citizens. Moreover, Schmitter notes that removal from office of key officials like the president or prime minister and loss of vote confidence are some positive indicators of political accountability. (Schmitter 2007)

Political leaders may be investigated and be held responsible for their actions. Accountability is very important for good governance. Political leaders are expected to fulfill their promise to the electorates after they are elected because they owe their position to the electorate. Adsera(2003) adds that citizens can play an important role in making their rulers accountable through elections. The fear of losing in the next election can compel the leaders to answer to the voter’s interest. (Adsera par.4).

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter discusses the theory and model that this study uses in determining the relationship between vote-buying and government accountability to corruption.

Robert Klitgaard’s Corruption Equation

Political corruption means that a political leader uses his power or government resources to enrich himself or for his own private gain. (World Bank 1997)

Combating corruption is known to be a very difficult and sensitive issue that many national political leaders who tend to advance such efforts in principle are hesitant to do in practice. Robert Klitgaard (1998) asserted that corruption arises according to three variables; first, monopoly, second, discretion, and third, accountability. He asserts that corruption equals monopoly *plus* discretion *minus* accountability (C=M+D-A). (Klitgaard 1998). Thus, to reduce corruption monopoly and discretion must be reduced and increase accountability.

The formula suggests that corruption may arise when an official is given sole authority to decide without control. Here, Klitgaard claims that monopoly increases the incidence of corruption. It also claims that discretion can cause corruption and finally it claims that accountability reduces corruption, hence more accountability will reduce the incidence of corruption. However, Klitgaard also considered that weak civil society participation, the party system, and other socio-economic, political, and legal causes may lead to corruption. It is also interesting to note that Klitgaard finds culture as one factor that encourages corruption. He also included bribery, embezzlement, extortion, nepotism, graft, and campaign contributions as some forms of corruption.

Additionally, Klitgaard (1998) and Ackerman (1999) enumerated four factors that promote corruption; monopoly of power, lack of accountability for every decision made; lack of transparency, and extensive margin of discretion.

From this corruption equation model, this study will use only a part of the corruption equation. In particular, political corruption is a function of vote-buying and is negatively related to government accountability. Hence, political corruption (C) increases when there is a prevailing incidence of vote-buying during election times, however, reduces when there is existing government accountability.

To better illustrate this relationship, a visual representation of this framework is presented below.

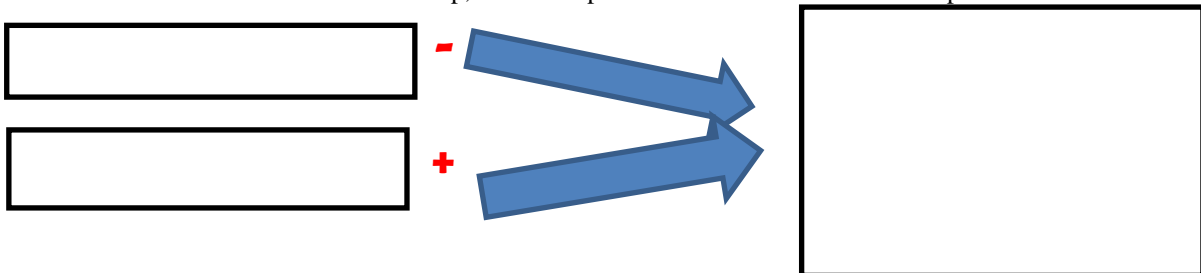


Figure 1. Relationship of Government Accountability and Vote Buying to Political Corruption

This figure reflects that the incidence of vote-buying has a positive relationship with political corruption whereas government accountability is negatively related to political corruption.

III. PRESENTATION OF DATA AND ANALYSIS

This Chapter provides the presentation of the data collected as well as the analysis guided by the questions provided in the first part of this paper.

3. A Trend of the Election Vote Buying in the Philippines [1907-2015]

Data shows that vote-buying is relatively high. During the years 1907 and 1909, the Philippine legislature was established and many Filipinos aspire to political participation. The 2007 legislative and local election shows that vote-buying is also high. Vote-buying increased during the 2010 presidential election.

<i>Vote Buying</i>	
Mean	-0.900294118
Standard Error	0.198834162

Median	-1.215
Mode	-0.54
Standard Deviation	1.159392436
Sample Variance	1.34419082
Kurtosis	0.432404834
Skewness	0.848945311
Range	4.61
Minimum	-2.71
Maximum	1.9
Sum	-30.61
Count	34

Table 1. B

Descriptive Statistics of Election Vote Buying in the Philippines from 1907-to 2010

Table 1. B reflects the central tendency as well as the measures of the range of variability of the raw data values of election vote-buying in the Philippines from 1907-to 2010. Based on the said table, the average score of vote-buying incidence is **-0.900294118** which seems to imply that there is a negative 0.9 index of vote-buying in the country.

However, the standard deviation of the data values is **1.159392436** which signifies a minimal dispersion of the raw values of vote-buying during the said period of time.

3.B Trend of the Election Government Accountability in the Philippines [1907-2013]

Table 2. B

Descriptive Statistics of Government Accountability in the Philippines during 1907-2013

<i>Accountability</i>	
Mean	0.529705882
Standard Error	0.067801594
Median	0.535
Mode	0.06
Standard Deviation	0.395347835
Sample Variance	0.156299911
Kurtosis	-1.596524207
Skewness	0.083050769
Range	1.12
Minimum	0.01
Maximum	1.13
Sum	18.01
Count	34

Table 2. B reflects the central tendency as well as the measures of the range of variability of the raw data values of election vote-buying in the Philippines from 1907-to 2013.

Based on the results reflected in the table, the average score of government accountability is 0.529705882 which means that there is a 0.53 index of government accountability in the country.

However, the standard deviation of the data values is 0.395347835 which signifies a minimal dispersion of the raw values of vote-buying during the said period.

SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VOTE BUYING AND POLITICAL CORRUPTION

This section presents the correlation results and multiple linear regression analysis results between political corruption and vote-buying in the Philippines covering the period of 1907-to 2015.

Table 3. A

Correlation Result of the Relationship between Political Corruption and Vote Buying

Association	R-value	P-value
<i>Vote Buying and Political Corruption</i>	-0.61637	0.001652373

Based on Table 3. there is a negative moderate linear association between vote-buying and political corruption (-0.61637). This linear association is perceived to be statistically significant ($p\text{-value}=0.001652373 < 0.05$) hence an increase in vote-buying incidence in the Philippines can be accompanied by a decrease in political corruption. This is contradictory to the key argument of Kliitgard's corruption equation. This can be explained by the vote-buying case in the Philippines. In Orbeta (2018) he reported that although vote-buying is rampant in the Philippines, it is usually practiced at the local levels, and despite the laws that prohibit illegal practices during the election, no candidate received punishment or penalty for violating the anti-vote buying law, additionally, few incidents of vote-buying were also reported to the Commission on Election, thus the data on vote-buying is low. (Orbeta, 2018)

Table 3. B

Regression Analysis Result of the Relationship between Political Corruption and Vote Buying

Relationship	Coefficient	P-Value	Standard Error
<i>Vote Buying and Political Corruption</i>	-0.051729014	0.00009	0.011520578

Table 3. b depicts the regression analysis results of the relationship between political corruption and vote-buying. It is shown that the causal relationship between political corruption and vote-buying is statistically significant ($p\text{-value} = 0.00009 < 0.05$). Moreover, this implies that an increase of one percent in vote-buying incidence in the Philippines causes a decline of -0.051729014 percent in political corruption. This is opposite to the key argument of Kliitgard's corruption equation which argues that these two are positively related. A possible explanation is an r-value which is only (0.40) which means that only 40% of the data was explained by the model. The remaining 60% is generally attributed to unaccounted factors.

SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIP OF GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY TO POLITICAL CORRUPTION

This section presents the correlation results and multiple linear regression analysis results between political corruption and government accountability in the Philippines covering the period 1907-to 2013.

Table 4. A

Correlation Result of the Relationship between Political Corruption and Government Accountability

Association	R-value	P-value
<i>Government Accountability and Political Corruption</i>	-0.13417	0.830133374

Table 4.A. illustrates that government accountability is negatively (*little to very weak*) correlated [$r=-0.13417$] with political corruption in the Philippines capturing the period provided in this study.

This is in support of Kliitgard's Corruption model arguing that there is a negative association between corruption and accountability. However, this perceived linear association is not statistically significant hence it can be argued that this correlation can either be by chance or the data used may not be sufficient to prove the statistically significant linear association of the said two variables.

Table 4. B*Regression Analysis Result of the Relationship between Political Corruption and Government Accountability*

Relationship	P-Value	Standard Error
<i>Government Accountability and Political Corruption</i>	0.26185	0.033785113

Table 4. B shows the regression analysis result of political corruption and government accountability. It can be derived from the result that the relationship between the said variables is not statistically significant despite that there is an association that is captured in the previous table [however not statistically significant].

This outcome does not align with Kliitgard's corruption model which claims that accountability is negatively related to corruption. However, this can be explained by the following reasons; (a) the data values that were utilized in this study may not be sufficient to support the theory; (b) the conceptualization of the variables used to test the said corruption model is not similar to what this study has undertaken. While the theory is generally acceptable, In the Philippine setting, one or more independent variables need to be identified to better understand the corruption index.

IV. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Taking into consideration the significant arguments of the Kliitgard's Corruption model concerning the variables involved in this study, the outcome of this paper does not want to argue on the inapplicability as well as inaccuracy of the said model in the case of the Philippines. Instead, this study would only contend that there might be other mediating or intervening variables that are not significantly and appropriately treated in the statistical examination of the relationships of the variables that affect the outcome.

In the case of the association as well as the relationship of political corruption to vote-buying, it can be noticed that there is a statistically significant negative linear association and relationship between the two. It is also argued in this paper that this outcome contradicts the argument of Kliitgard's Corruption model. The reason for such a result may be because of the low r-value which is only 40%. It means that only 40% of the data was explained by the model. On the other hand, in terms of the association as well as the relationship of political corruption to government accountability, despite that there is a negative association between the two, this is not statistically significant. A similar result occurs in the determination of their relationship. While it seems logical that accountability should always be significantly and negatively related to corruption as also argued by Kliitgard's Corruption model, this study acknowledges the fact that there might be incongruences to the conceptualization of variables used in the study compared to the variables represented in the model, an error in terms of data collection or insufficiency of the data to stand for a statistically significant relationship.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The corruption formula of Klitgaard Corruption = Monopoly + Discretion – Accountability explains that corruption prevails when an individual has the “monopoly of power over a product or service and has the discretion to decide how much to receive, and where accountability and transparency are weak” (Klitgaard, 1998).

The study revealed that the correlation between accountability and corruption does not exist. Such a result diverges from Lederman's (2011) belief that once corruption is prevalent in a given community, from a local to a national scale, the accountability of those who are in the political seats increases concerning the degree of malpractices. With these diverging facts, the data may not be sufficient enough to establish a statistically significant negative association between accountability and corruption. Further research which would use larger data is hereby recommended to validate the result.

Although most literature suggests that vote-buying is a form of corruption and corruption is a manifestation of the ills of democracy and vote-buying is contributory to that, the result of the study revealed that in the case of the Philippines, the increase in vote-buying decreases corruption. This contradicts the key Arguments of Klitgaard's Corruption model: That the higher the vote-buying, the higher the corruption. In the Philippines case, it is undeniable that vote-buying is a part of every election, however, a report said that vote-buying in the Philippines is hard to prove. The commission on Election even admits that the commission cannot institute a case against the offenders for lack of evidence. (Orbeta 2018) Hence, if the political candidate will not get a conviction, then he is not guilty of vote-buying. This will then decrease the incidence of corruption in the Philippines since according to Klitgaard, bribery is a form of corruption, Vote buying can be attributed to bribery since giving and receiving gifts are one of the legal meanings of bribery.

Moreover, the researcher offers two possible solutions; a. Increase the sample size or number of observations to increase the strength of evidence to support the theory. Transformation of variables is recommended so that the transformed variables may fit a linear model.

Additionally, this study can serve as the basis for policy formulation. The government should also be strict in implementing the anti-graft and corrupt practices act. Under the Omnibus election Code, vote-buying and vote-selling are election offenses and violators may be imprisoned for 1-6 years. The omnibus election code should also be repealed especially the penalty of 1-6 years. The provision on prohibited practices during the election should also be revisited so that candidates who buy votes will be apprehended. Voter education should also be conducted by the commission on election not only to educate the voters but to remind them that vote-selling is an offense, and the campaigns against vote-buying should be intensified.

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