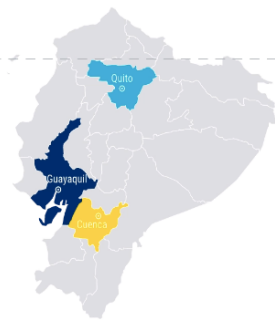


# UNDERSTANDING CORRUPTION TOLERANCE

## A BEHAVIORAL FRAMEWORK BASED ON

### ECUADOR'S CASE STUDY

Linea Ecuatorial 0°



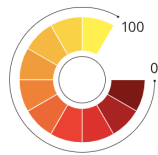
#### CONTEXT

Corruption exhibits cross-border contagion, particularly in developing countries, and is influenced by cultural variations in what is considered acceptable behavior. This research examines corruption tolerance across various environments and cities in Ecuador, recognizing the role of local context and individual factors like beliefs and social norms.

#### CORRUPTION TOLERANCE

Corruption tolerance is defined as *'an individual's moral approval of, or willing participation in, a corrupt event'* (Pozsgai Alvarez, 2022, p. 382).

#### CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX



THE CPI USES A SCALE FROM 0 TO 100

100 is very clean and 0 is highly corrupt

#### ECUADOR

Score **34/100** Rank **115/180**  
Score change **-2 Since 2022**

Score changes 2012 - 2023



#### INTRODUCTION

Despite extensive anti-corruption efforts, corruption remains deeply entrenched in many societies, especially in developing nations like Ecuador.

Traditional approaches, such as rational choice theory, fall short in explaining why individuals tolerate or engage in bribery, as they overlook the socio-psychological and environmental factors influencing these behaviors.

This research addresses this gap by proposing a behavioral framework that explores how cognitive processes, social norms, and situational factors contribute to corruption tolerance, aiming to provide a more effective foundation for anti-corruption initiatives.

#### SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

This study aims to construct a behavioral framework based on the **Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB)** and the **Theory of Neutralization (TN)**. Its purpose is to explain the socio-psychological factors and mechanisms shaping corruption tolerance towards bribery.

#### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

##### Primary research question:

What is the interplay between socio-psychological factors (TPB) and cognitive mechanisms (TN) in shaping corruption tolerance towards bribery?

##### Secondary research questions:

1. To what extent do the components of the Theory of Planned Behavior predict individuals' corruption tolerance across individual, academic, and occupational environments?
2. To what extent do individuals employ neutralization techniques to rationalize their corruption tolerance?
3. What variations exist in the application of neutralization techniques across individual, academic, and occupational environments, as well as different shades of bribery?

#### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The TPB proves "suitable to analyze corruption because it allows for the integration of macro situational processes that facilitate corruption with the micro psychological processes of individual decision-making to explain how corrupt behavior is motivated" (Bicchieri & Ganegoda, 2017, p. 181).

In parallel, grounded in the TN, individuals may rationalize criminal activities to soften guilt and to protect individuals from moral conflict, cognitive dissonance, humiliation, regret, self-awareness, loss of self-esteem, and public stigma (Hauser, 2019; Sykes & Matza, 1957).

#### RESEARCH DESIGN

A causal research design is adopted to establish cause-and-effect relationships, with retesting aimed at enhancing the reliability and generalizability of established theories.

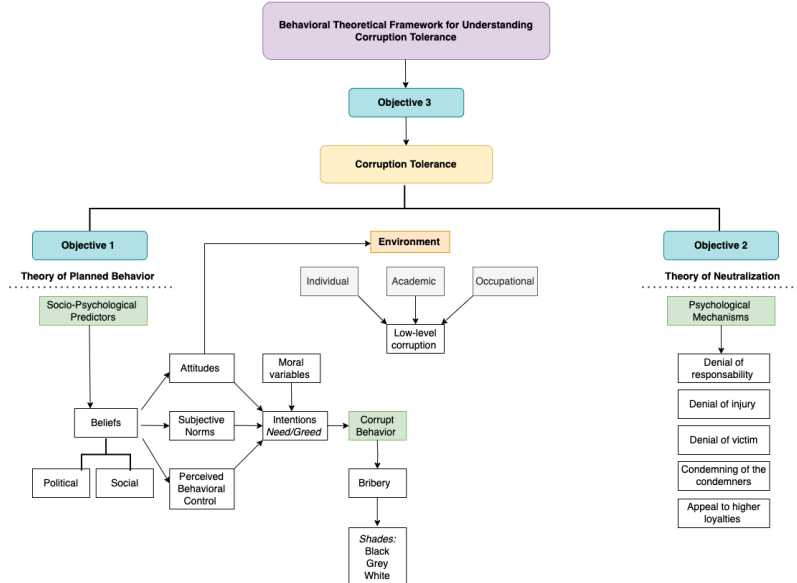
**Study Population:** Investigating early corruption tolerance patterns among individuals aged 18-29 in Cuenca, Guayaquil, and Quito (Ecuador, South America).

**Sampling:** Random sampling with 1,188 participants.

**Data Collection:** Surveys and vignettes.

**Data Analysis:** Multiple Regression Analysis is employed for both surveys and vignettes, with control variables utilized to mitigate bias. Pilot surveys and interviews are conducted to ensure validity.

#### RESEARCH OVERVIEW



#### CONCLUSION AND INNOVATION

This research investigates socio-psychological factors influencing tolerance for bribery, applying insights from the TPB and TN. By validating our model with primary data and examining various neutralization techniques, this study advances understanding of bribery tolerance as a dynamic process shaped by interrelated factors, rather than single constructs. Our integrated approach highlights how environmental influences and attitudes, especially through the TPB lens, shape tolerance toward corruption. Addressing gaps in anti-corruption strategies, these findings support the development of evidence-based interventions, educational programs, and training to foster meaningful societal change.

- Bicchieri, C., & Ganegoda, D. (2017). Determinants of corruption: A sociopsychological analysis. In *Thinking about Bribery: Neuroscience, Moral Cognition and the Psychology of Bribery* (pp. 179–205). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316450765.008>
- Hauser, C. (2019). Fighting Against Corruption: Does Anti-corruption Training Make Any Difference? *Journal of Business Ethics*, 159(1), 281–299. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-018-3808-3>
- Pozsgai Alvarez, J. (2022). Corruption tolerance as a process of moral, social, and political cognition: evidence from Latin America. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 77(4), 381–404. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10611-021-09995-6>
- Sykes, G. M., & Matza, D. (1957). Techniques of neutralization: A Theory of Delinquency. *American Sociological Review*, 22(6), 664–670. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2089195>

Ariana Bravo  
Junior Researcher / Doctoral Fellow  
E. Ariana.Bravo@matamoros.ugent.be  
DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINOLOGY  
Institute of International Research on Criminal Policy (IRCP)  
Supervisors  
Prof. Dr. Christophe Vandeweyer (UGent, Belgium)  
Prof. Dr. Jelle Janssens (UGent, Belgium)  
Prof. Dr. Hofer Geestdoorn (ESPOL, Ecuador)