

Name of the student:	Aygul Salmanova
Title of the thesis:	Understanding Corruption Tolerance: Does Personality Matter?
Reviewer:	Kinga Sekerdej

1. KNOWLEDGE AND CONNECTION TO THE FIELD

(relevance of the research question, research objective, literature review):

This paper explores the relation between individual personality traits and the acceptance of corruption. It has a clear-set question: do personality traits relate to tolerating corruption? The posed hypotheses are tested by Pearson's correlation and multiple linear regression on World Value Survey database, taking into consideration the Big Five variables and 3 questions referring to possible unethical personal gains through cheating the state institutions (not paying for public transport, undeserved government benefits and accepting bribes), which the author clusters as permissiveness of corruption.

2. ANALYSIS

(methodology, argument, theoretical backing, appropriate work with sources):

The paper is well written, it engages with existing literature and identifies gaps which it intends to fill, appropriately using data and methods. Moreover, the author needed to draw from different research traditions: at least from political science and psychology, which is not an easy task.

The argument is persuasive and the methods appropriate. However, I have doubts regarding the research design and reporting:

1. The dataset: the author chose Germany and the Netherlands as the WVS subset for analysis, on the basis of availability, but also because of the consolidated democratic institutions in both of those countries (p.6). The author doesn't consider the variance within countries and important contextual factors. This might be of crucial meaning in Germany, where the Eastern and Western parts for decades had very different state institutions. Corruption tells us a lot about the relation of individual vs state and also about public trust. Since the mean of the sample constituted people over 50 years old, the experiences they had differed and depended on which Germany they lived in before 1990. However, when the results show differences between the 2 countries, the author draws a far-fetched conclusion that maybe genetic and biological factors should be considered (p.42), at the same time failing to take into account straightforward contextual differences.
2. The theoretical underpinning: the author measures "corruption permissiveness" by employing 3 questions, which are supposed to show 'the other side of the coin', namely who is willing to justify corruption (p.20). I think that an important factor, not accounted for was that 2 of the questions referred to a situation any citizen could choose to be in or find oneself in (avoiding paying for public transport and claiming undeserved public benefits) and they were asked that way (with a direct 'you'), whereas the third question referred only to bribes in public offices. 'Someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties' – is clearly a third person question and not every interviewee might relate (simply because not having this function). So clustering them together as justifying corrupt acts might be problematic. Adding to that the fact that the Cronbach alpha was low (p.31), the question is whether these items really measured what they intended to measure: corruption permissiveness.
3. The analysis: There are some doubts regarding the data analysis: a) validity and reliability of

the variable intended to measure 'corruption permissiveness', c) it's not clear from the text how the 'robustness check' in the paper really tests the robustness of the results, it isn't very informative, d) the use of dummy variables mentioned on page 32 is not clearly explained.

3. CONCLUSIONS

(persuasiveness, link between data and conclusions, achievement of research objectives):

The comments above do not devalue the research done for this thesis. The argument is well stated and compelling, the gaps in state of the art shown and some shortcomings of the research design are transparently acknowledged. The research question is clear and the paper leads to answers. Because of methodological shortcomings it wouldn't be a publishable paper at this stage, but it is a very good MA thesis.

4. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE

(appropriate language, adherence to academic standards, citation style, layout):

The structure is very good, the text has only minor typos, it is well referenced and adheres to academic standards. A minor point is phrasing the hypotheses: they should be falsifiable, hence written in present tense and with higher precision.

5. SUMMARY ASSESSMENT

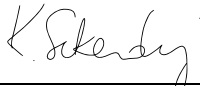
(strong and weak point of the dissertation, other issues)

Strong points:

- Clearly stated research problem
- State of the art
- Structure

Weak points:

- Research design and reporting results

Grade (A-F):	A
Date:	Signature:
22.06.2021	

classification scheme

Percentile	Prague		Krakow		Leiden		Barcelona	
	Range	%	Score	%	Range	%	Range	%
A (91-100)	91-100 %	8,5%	5	6,7%	8,5-10	5,3%	9-10	5,5 %
B (81-90)	81-90 %	16,3%	4,5	11,7%	7,5-8,4	16,4%	8-8,9	11,0 %
C (71-80)	71-80 %	16,3%	4	20%	6,5-7,4	36,2%	7-7,9	18,4 %
D (61-70)	61-70 %	24%	3,5	28,3%			6-6,9	35,2 %
E (51-60)	51-60 %	34,9%	3	33,4 %	6-6,4	42,1 %	5-5,9	30,1 %

Assessment criteria:

Excellent (A): 'Outstanding performance with only minor errors';

Very good (B): 'Above the average standard but with some errors';

Good (C): 'Generally sound work but with a number of notable errors';

Satisfactory (D): 'Fair but with significant shortcomings';

Sufficient (E): 'Performance meets the minimum criteria';

Fail: 'Some/considerable more work required before the credit can be awarded'.