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Service to demands and corruption tolerance: brazilian voters' perception of “rouba, mas faz” policy

Servicio de las demandas y tolerancia a la corrupción: percepción de los votantes brasileños sobre la política de “rouba, mas faz”

Atendimento às demandas e tolerância à corrupção: percepção de eleitores brasileiros à política do “rouba, mas faz”

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Abstract

Purpose: The research aimed to verify the influence of meeting public demands on the perception of tolerance of Brazilian voters towards the “*rouba, mas faz*” policy. Although a social unison of rejection of corruption in politics is perceived, there is a possibility that voters relax this disapproval in the face of the results that managers offer to communities.

Methodology: Study of quantitative approach, as for the procedures, a survey was used, with a questionnaire and study of scenarios, of tolerance to “*rouba, mas faz*”, as a research instrument. To analyze the data, descriptive statistics and presentation in percentages were used for the answers to assertions and scenarios.

Results: The results indicate that Brazilians demand honest politicians, although for almost 25% of the population every politician is corrupt, without distinction; for 80% of respondents the main cause of problems in Brazilian public management is political corruption; approximately 70% of voters do not use transparency portals to decide their vote, although 80% claim to research the candidates' history before making their decision.

Contributions of the Study: Aspects related to the median voter theory were perceived, since, although Brazilian voters demonstrate intolerance to corruption, the profile with the average characteristics of the population tends to vote for that candidate who promises to meet their needs. In addition, in general terms, 7% of the sample would re-elect a very corrupt politician, as long as he is very productive, while 24% would tolerate corruption, as long as it occurs on a small scale and is accompanied by works and benefits to society, implying that there is, in general terms, to a certain degree, the influence of meeting public demands on voters' tolerance of the “*rouba, mas faz*” policy in Brazil.

Keywords: *Rouba, mas faz*; Corruption; Policy.

Resumen

Objetivo: La investigación tuvo como objetivo verificar la influencia de la satisfacción de las demandas públicas sobre la percepción de tolerancia de los electores brasileños hacia la política de “*rouba, mas faz*”. Si bien se percibe un unísono social de rechazo a la corrupción en la política, existe la posibilidad de que los votantes relajen esta desaprobación ante los resultados que ofrecen los directivos a las comunidades.

Metodología: Estudio de enfoque cuantitativo, en cuanto a los procedimientos se utilizó como instrumento de investigación la encuesta, con cuestionario y estudio de escenarios, de tolerancia

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al “*rouba, mas faz*”. Se utilizó estadística descriptiva y presentación en porcentajes para el análisis de datos, para las respuestas a aseveraciones y escenarios.

Resultados: Los resultados indican que los brasileños exigen políticos honestos, aunque para casi el 25% de la población todos los políticos son corruptos, sin distinción; para el 80% de los encuestados la principal causa de los problemas en la gestión pública brasileña es la corrupción política; Aproximadamente el 70% de los electores no utiliza los portales de transparencia para decidir su voto, aunque el 80% afirma investigar el historial de los candidatos antes de tomar su decisión.

Contribuciones del Estudio: Se notaron aspectos relacionados con la teoría del votante medio, ya que, aunque los votantes brasileños demuestran intolerancia a la corrupción, el perfil con las características medias de la población tiende a votar por aquel candidato que promete satisfacer sus necesidades. Además, en términos generales, el 7% de la muestra reelegiría a un político muy corrupto, siempre que fuera muy productivo, mientras que el 24% toleraría la corrupción, siempre que se dé en pequeña escala y vaya acompañada de obras. y beneficios para la sociedad, lo que implica que existe, en términos generales, hasta cierto punto, la influencia de satisfacer las demandas públicas en la tolerancia de los votantes a la política de “*rouba, mas faz*” en Brasil.

Palabras clave: *Rouba, mas faz*; Corrupción; Política.

Resumo

Objetivo: A pesquisa teve como objetivo verificar a influência do atendimento às demandas públicas na percepção de tolerância de eleitores brasileiros à política do “*rouba, mas faz*”. Embora se perceba um unísono social de rejeição à corrupção na política, existe a possibilidade de os eleitores relaxarem essa reprovação diante dos resultados que os gestores oferecem às comunidades.

Metodologia: Estudo de abordagem quantitativa, quanto aos procedimentos utilizou-se um *survey*, com questionário e estudo de cenários, de tolerância ao “*rouba, mas faz*”, como instrumento de pesquisa. Para análise dos dados foram utilizadas estatísticas descritivas e apresentação em percentuais, para as respostas das assertivas e dos cenários.

Resultados: Os resultados apontam que o brasileiro demanda políticos honestos, embora para quase 25% da população todo político seja corrupto, sem distinção; para 80% dos respondentes a principal causa dos problemas da gestão pública brasileira é a corrupção política; aproximadamente 70% dos eleitores não se utilizam de portais de transparência para decidir seu voto, embora 80% afirmem pesquisar o histórico dos candidatos antes de sua decisão.

Contribuições do Estudo: Foram percebidos aspectos relacionados com a teoria do eleitor mediano, uma vez que, apesar dos eleitores brasileiros demonstrarem intolerância a corrupção, o perfil com as características médias da população tende a votar naquele candidato que promete atender suas necessidades. Além disso, em linhas gerais, 7% da amostra reelegeria um político muito corrupto, desde que muito produtivo, enquanto 24% tolerariam a corrupção, desde que ocorra em pequena escala e venha acompanhada de obras e benefícios à sociedade, implicando

que existe, em certo grau, influência do atendimento às demandas públicas na tolerância dos eleitores à política do “rouba, mas faz” no Brasil.

Palavras-chave: Rouba, mas faz; Corrupção; Política.

1 Introduction

Although corruption is a social problem to be tackled, efforts are needed to understand each community's relationship with the politicians they choose to govern. A fundamental part of this relationship is to know whether there is actually a repulsion to political corruption, as seems to be common sense, or whether there is a certain degree of tolerance of society towards bad politicians, who can continue to be accepted as long as they meet the demands of the governed communities, even if they are corrupt.

Abade (2019) explains that corruption consists of the improper exercise of public power for private gain or, in other words, the abuse of public authority for private gain. It also relates to the illicit use of state power for private gain, causing direct or indirect damage to the treasury and, consequently, to society as a whole.

According to Bonifácio (2013), corruption is a global phenomenon with a varied incidence, and its practice is generally more widespread and more systematically rooted in underdeveloped or developing countries than in the last ones. It is natural that the breadth of the phenomenon highlights it among academics and that many studies have been carried out on the subject in various areas of knowledge, although there is no consensus among the results so far (Winters & Weitz-Shapiro, 2010; 2013; Maragno & Borba, 2017; Alves, 2018).

Illicit or immoral practices, however, go beyond the concept of corruption, which is contained in a broader modeling, being described as a type of occupational fraud (Association of Certified Fraud Examiners, 2020). For Petrucelli (2012), fraudulent actions are first and foremost a people problem, where processes and systems are only part of the environment in which fraud occurs, with agents playing a central role in this context. Therefore, in order to understand fraud, it would first be necessary to know the motivations and interests of the people or, more specifically, the agents interested in the flow of value about an entity.

Cressey (1953) developed a theoretical approach to the subject, known as the Fraud Triangle. In this approach, the fraud is conditioned by the joint existence of three dimensions: pressure, opportunity and rationalization. Pressure corresponds to problems such as the agent's fear of losing their current occupation, achieving or maintaining a certain standard of living or the existence of personal problems. Opportunity refers to the existence of the necessary knowledge and the possession of usable information, taking advantage of weaknesses in control systems. And finally, rationalization is the process of rationalizing, of mitigating the seriousness of the conduct, transfiguring the act as justifiable, acceptable or unimportant in that context.

Even with the relevance of Cressey's Fraud Triangle, studies on the relationships among fraudulent agents and organizations remain current and relevant, as recurring frauds on the world stage call into question the efficiency of control structures, with impacts on companies, governments and society, and shed light on various variables, such as financial, economic and social pressures. Examples of this include the fraud at Enron, Freddie Mac and Worldcom in the 2000s; the subprime crisis; and Bernard Madoff's Ponzi scheme in 2008 (Tomasic, 2011; Trompeter et. al. 2012). In Brazil, cases involving the companies Petrobras, Odebrecht and

others in the construction sector make up recent cases of fraudulent systems both internal and external to organizations.

The growing number of cases of fraud around the world, however, has encouraged studies that seek to understand the causes and consequences of this phenomenon in various types of organizations. There is a relatively large number of studies investigating individual behavior and opinions in relation to corruption in its various forms. One of the possible approaches, already explored by Cotta (2008), Bonifácio (2013) and Pereira & Melo (2015), deals with the political proposal to minimize the perception or importance of political agents' corrupt behavior by justifying the execution of works and other public goods and services offered during an administration.

Linked to national press, the term "Steal, but do it" refers to politicians who enjoy popularity, because they are seen as executors of works or because they carry out good governments, but who have the characteristic of being corrupt. The term was first linked to Adhemar de Barros (1901-1969), a federal interventor indicated by Getúlio Vargas, twice governor of São Paulo state, as well as holding the position of state deputy (Cotta, 2008), and describes a pattern, according to Pereira and Melo (2015), that links entrepreneurship and corruption, since politicians build a reputation as public managers and, in parallel, accumulate private wealth through corruption.

This is possible because, according to Castro (1997), the majority of voters do not choose to vote for purely ideological reasons. Thus, even citizens with higher levels of socio-economic status, more informed about politics and with good levels of education, are not able to completely abolish clientelist political relations. Thus, although important, socio-economic and demographic factors are not enough to understand the motivations behind voter behavior.

Given this scenario, and considering the possibility of corruption tolerance through acceptance of the "Steal, but do it" policy, this research aims to answer the following question: **what influence does meeting public demands have on Brazilian voters' perception of tolerance of the "Steal, but do it" policy?**

In order to answer this question, a survey was carried out, consisting of situations that are close to the "Steal, but do it" policy, to verify voters' perception of tolerance to corruption in Brazil.

It is hoped that corruption study and society's perceptions of this phenomenon will highlight common sense on the subject, resulting in possible solutions not previously considered in studies on the subject. Likewise, it is hoped to achieve the social function of the research, by providing information that will enable social reflection and, ultimately, subsidize mechanisms to understand and beat corruption in Brazil.

2 Theoretical Reference

2.1 Public Choice Theory and Electoral Incentives in Governments

Public Choice or Public Choice Theory (PCT), which emerged in the 20th century, has led to a number of changes in the conception of democratic processes and decision-making in the political arena (Buchanan, 2000). This theory can be understood as an application, in the political area, of instruments used in research in Economic Sciences that involve collective decision-making (Cruz, 2015).

Authors also point to it as an important branch of economics that studies decision-making by government leaders and contributes to understand government actions and reactions

to the incentives to which they are subject. The object of study can vary, but it usually moves among the government actions, electoral processes or the analysis of a jurisdiction's legal system. It is therefore a broad and interdisciplinary theory (Mueller, 1997).

One of the main theoretical underpinnings is that public managers, when weighing up their incentives to make collective decisions about public goods and services, rather than being guided only by the public interest, will actually tend to make the most beneficial decision for their own individual interests, to the detriment of the most beneficial decision for the community and social welfare.

Therefore, the premise that government political and economic decisions are guided exclusively by the public interest is questioned, and a criticism is made of the romantic view that the political agent is an altruistic servant of the collective interest, when, in fact, the behavior of these agents is potentially driven by the maximization of their private well-being.

Although public policy makers may have some concern for the collective interest, their main motivation tends to be their individual interest (Shaw, 2005). It can therefore be seen that Public Choice Theory uses an individualistic perspective to explain the actions of those involved in public and collective decisions. Modern public finance theory seems to agree with this conception, even prompting criticism of previously well-established theories, such as the classic theory of fiscal federalism (Oates, 1972; 2008), which had the benevolence of the manager and the maximization of collective well-being called into question under criticism based on PCT.

Although it's about the managers' behavior, it was also based on it that relevant considerations about the voters' behavior could be pointed out, with the median voter theorem being one of the main instruments of it in examining collective decisions, gaining notoriety from the studies of Downs (1957).

Thus, candidates formulate policies with the aim of winning elections, rather than winning elections in order to formulate policies, i.e. the political agent wishes to maximize their chance of being elected by choosing a position that reflects the median of the voter preferences distribution (Downs, 1957).

The median voter theorem is based on the fact that, in federal systems, the local level tends to reflect society's preferences, since the population, represented by the median voter, has greater knowledge about the benefits of public spending (Rodrigues, 2010). Therefore, the median voter would have the average socio-economic characteristics of the local population and, therefore, the demands arising from this profile would be those captured by the manager when defining public policies.

In this reasoning, it is possible that public managers and political agents are nothing more than individuals who have their own interests, which coexist (but are not necessarily confused) with the society's interest. So, when there is a conflict between the private interest of the agent and the interest of the community, there is a chance - and this is what it defends - that the agent's private interest will stand out, to the detriment of the collective interest.

With the private interest taking precedence over the public interest, therefore, a favorable environment is created for conduct that violates ethical or morally accepted conduct, giving rise to immoral, illegal or corrupt actions. Observed in several countries, including Brazil, these actions gain prominence when involved in the social and political dimensions, where the consequences usually go beyond specific damage to small groups of individuals, extensively affecting society.

As for this corruption, on the other hand, although common sense naturally treats it as totally reprehensible, not only by Brazilian society, but also internationally, there are theoretical strands that "normalize corruption" (Rothstein & Varraich, 2017; Jancsics, 2019), or see it as

an instrument capable of giving government management more dynamism, mitigating, for example, the dysfunctions caused by excessive bureaucracy.

The "normalization of corruption", the first aspect, is explained by the public agent's perception that all other agents are probably corrupt, because in a society where corruption is the expected behavior, there will be no actors with incentives to impose punishment regimes, and therefore no one will be held responsible for the corrupt act (Rothstein & Varrach, 2017; Jancsics, 2019).

In the second strand, corruption would be able to drive the state gears, so that, through the acceptance of bribes, illegal relaxation of supervision and other fraudulent attitudes, public policies and works are carried out more efficiently (Alves, 2018). This "Grease on Wheels" theory then precepts that corruption can be beneficial in some everyday cases, by alleviating the distortions caused by the malfunctioning of institutions, implying that inefficient bureaucracy is an obstacle to the development of economic activities, which is why a "grease" on the institutional gears can help to circumvent operational problems.

Despite the existence of theories for and against corruption, and it not being the scope of this work to assess how positive or negative corruption is for the state, it is undeniable that fraud, corruption and mismanagement persist in most governments around the world, this being a real problem that, for Petrucelli and Peters (2017), spreads more easily in cases of laxer internal controls or conflicting political management, as it implies the opportunity to flank control and monitoring systems in order to increase personal gain.

Petrucelli and Peters (2017) also point out that, although they are similar, corruption, which is one of the types of occupational fraud, is not synonymous with mismanagement - the essential difference lies in the agent's intention. While in occupational fraud there is the agent's intention to benefit from the consequences of those actions, in mismanagement, the individual's actions do not have the intention of achieving their own benefit, but are carried out in a deficient, incomplete or imperfect manner.

There is indeed great difficulty in proving the subjective intention of the agent, and this is one of the biggest obstacles in separating corruption and mismanagement for the purposes of scientific production and organizational controls. Petrucelli (2012) points out that there is no single method that meets all the heterogeneous and peculiar demands of each organization, and the uniqueness not only of each entity, but also of the fraudsters, is a highly complex factor in devising public and private control systems.

In international research associated with the subject of corruption (Winters & Weitz-Shapiro, 2013; Petrucelli & Peters, 2017; Kubbe & Engelbert, 2018), it is possible to observe that the authors point to incremental forms of control for the corruption that plagues organizations and governments. However, another strand, that of Rothstein (2009), goes deeper, and is more skeptical about corruption, addressing a different way of fighting corruption than those commonly used, that is, in a non-incremental way. For him, something really impactful needs to happen, coming hierarchically from the top down (from the top to the bottom), and which puts an end to the bad behavior of agents, or at least reduces the social acceptance of corrupt practices.

One way or another, the problem of political and organizational corruption does not seem to be solved simply by analyzing public officials alone. It also seems necessary to understand the ethical parameters of decision-makers, voters and society as a whole, as well as the relationship among this ethical context and policies that apparently violate commonly accepted moral principles, such as the "steal, but do" policy.

2.2 Ethical Blindness and the Politics of "Steal but Do"

For philosopher Vladimir Jankélévitch (2008), man has ethical and moral principles, values and guidelines, but these are not permanently guiding his actions. For the author, man momentarily and constantly violates his own moral limits - a kind of "moral anesthesia" - where moral values lose strength or relevance in the face of some incentive or benefit that is in the agent's interest. It's as if, in the face of that benefit, there was an "ethical blindness", which would allow the individual to act without feeling like a transgressor or violator of their own moral limits.

Ethical blindness is a fundamental concept for understanding fraud in general, including corruption crimes, and occurs when people make decisions that are contrary to their values and principles, not realizing the clear dimension of the acts and their implications at the time of the conduct. Two main factors give rise to ethical blindness: a narrow or distorted perception of reality; and the pressures suffered by the individual. It is also possible to relate ethical blindness not only to the conduct of the agent, but to society's acceptance of this conduct, as a kind of "tolerance of corruption".

As Filgueiras (2009) points out, 66% of Brazilians totally agree that in order to reduce corruption in Brazil, new laws are needed, with greater and tougher penalties. In other words, for two-thirds of the Brazilian population, the problem of corruption could be solved with a "top-down" approach, restricting corrupt behavior by reducing the cost-benefit ratio of acting corruptly.

On the other hand, 22% of respondents (Filgueiras, 2009) agree that if a person is in need, it is not wrong to accept particular benefits from a politician in exchange for a vote. This kind of contradiction, although it doesn't seem to involve the whole of Brazilian society, shows that, for a large part of the population, Brazil's problem is public and political corruption, but it doesn't seem to consider that the ethical factor of people's daily conduct can have a direct impact on the actions of the community's managers.

To illustrate the importance given by people to the corruption issue, a survey carried out by IPSOS Foundation, What Worries the World (2016), shows the main concerns of respondents in 25 different countries, through the following question: "Of the 17 items below, which three topics on the list worry your country the most today?". According to the results, unemployment ranks first in the world's concerns. For Brazil, health is the biggest cause for concern. Corruption, on the other hand, ranks 2nd in the world and 3rd in Brazil, according to Table 1.

Table 1

The 5 biggest concerns in Brazil and the world

World concerns		Brazil's concerns	
Unemployment	38%	Health	50%
Political and Financial Corruption	33%	Crime and Violence	48%
Poverty and Social Inequality	33%	Political and Financial Corruption	45%
Crime and Violence	30%	Unemployment	43%
Health	22%	Education	30%

Source: IPSOS Public Affairs (2016).

The results show that, both in the world and in Brazil, corruption is one of society's main concerns. However, moral decay was identified by only 6% of Brazilian interviewees as one of

the most worrying factors, demonstrating the contrast between concern about corruption and concern about the moral decay of the population.

A reflection of the way Brazilian society interprets and reacts to the phenomenon of fraud and corruption, with the idea of ethical blindness, is the policy of "Steal, but do it". The first historically identified variant - "If it's stolen, it's built" - was identified in the speech by deputy Carmelo D' Agostinho in November 1953, when he made a series of accusations against Adhemar de Barros (Cotta, 2008).

For Cotta (2008), Adhemar preached defending the interests of excluded minorities in order to gain popular support. His image as a bold and dynamic manager, however, was accompanied by accusations of corruption in his governments, mainly through the collection of bribes and the systematic embezzlement of public funds. While, on the one hand, there were actions and results in public management, on the other there were illegal or immoral acts of embezzlement and misappropriation of resources, which put the administrator's personal image in check.

Unable to detach the results of his administration from his image as a corrupt politician, the Adhemar de Barros phenomenon was synthesized by the popular idea of "he steals, but he does", in an apparent attempt to mitigate his fraudulent and corrupt conduct in public administration, when compared to the benefits that the works carried out during his administration brought to society. In addition, the idea can be interpreted from the perspective that it would be "better" to have an administrator who carries out works, even if he practices corrupt conduct, than a manager who is upright and honest, but who fails to deliver results to his voters and the community in general.

Although it appeared more than 60 years ago, the idea of "Steal, but do it" does not seem to have ceased to exist in contemporary politics. Another important politician on the national scene who became popular with the discourse of permissiveness to acts of corruption, given that his governments were perceived as satisfactory, was Paulo Maluf, who was notable for always being re-elected in this way. The expression initially attributed to Adhemar can be applied to many other politicians in the country, who essentially follow the same policy (Bonifácio, 2013).

In order to better understand the scenario of the population's interpretation and acceptance of the actions of public officials and the existence and tolerance of the "Steal, but do it" policy, this survey includes responses from Brazilian society itself on questions related to this issue, seeking to capture the respondents' opinion on this contradiction between a politician who is effectively corrupt and his ability to produce results, meeting the public demands imposed on him by the local community.

3 Methodological Procedures

In order to answer the study's central problem, descriptive and quantitative research was carried out. With regard to the population, the universe of this research was made up of Brazilian voters, who totaled approximately 147.3 million people eligible to vote, according to the Superior Electoral Court (TSE, 2018). Due to the limitations of working with the universe, a sample was defined based on a non-probabilistic method, according to the following sample calculation, made from the platform *Survey Monkey*.

$$TA = \frac{z^2 \times p (1 - p) / e^2}{1 + (z^2 \times p (1 - p) / e^2 N)}$$

Where:

TA = is the sample size of the survey; z = is the degree of confidence in standard deviations (95%);

p = is a constant equal to 0.5; N = is the size of the survey universe; e = margin of error.

In order to obtain the sample size, the universe size was considered to be 147.3 million voters, with a margin of error of 5% and a 95% confidence level. According to the sample calculation, the sample size for the survey to obtain statistically relevant results was 385 respondents.

As for the procedures, the instrument used for data collection was the Survey, prepared by an electronic form, sent by e-mail and social networks of the participants, who were not identified, observing the requirements contained in Resolution 510/2016 of the Research Ethics Committees/National Research Ethics Commission (CEP/CONEP), applied in July 2019, with a total of 389 responses obtained, but only 385 valid ones.

With the aim of answering the research problem, we looked at the expression "Steal, but do" in order to interpret the possibility of "do" being more important than "steal", indicating an inclination on the part of the respondents to tolerate corruption.

The questionnaire was formulated with contributions from Bonifácio's study (2013), and the 15 (fifteen) statements developed sought to capture the sample's perception of the issue. For the answers, 5 (five) were dichotomous (yes or no), and 10 used a 5-point Likert scale, with a degree of agreement, in an attempt to capture the profile of the respondents and the degree of tolerance to the "Steal, but do" policy, as shown in Table 2:

Table 2

Questionnaire on the perceived tolerance of "steal but do it"

Assertions	Answers
I believe that every politician is corrupt.	Yes or No
I believe that the more transparent their accounts are, the less corrupt the politician is.	Yes or No
I research the candidates' backgrounds before deciding my vote.	Yes or No
I use transparency portals to analyze the accounting and financial information of politicians' management before deciding my vote.	Yes or No
I believe that the main cause of Brazil's public management problems is political corruption.	Yes or No
Whether a politician is honest or corrupt makes no difference to my vote.	5 points
Better to have public works carried out even with proven corruption than no works and no corruption.	5 points
I prefer a politician who carries out the work he has promised to a politician who is very concerned about the transparency of public accounts.	5 points
My vote can't change the corruption in politics. That's why I prefer a politician who does the work he promised, even if he is corrupt.	5 points
I don't see any problem in re-electing a corrupt politician, as long as he has contributed to the construction of many projects, such as schools and hospitals.	5 points
As long as he shows good results in improving the lives of the population, a very corrupt politician can get my vote.	5 points
It makes no difference whether a politician steals or not, the important thing is that he does the things that the population needs. ¹	5 points
It's better to have a politician who does a lot of work, even if he steals a lot of the money, than a politician who does little work and steals a small part of the money.	5 points

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It's better to have a politician who does a lot of work, even if he steals a lot of the money, than a politician who doesn't do any work but is honest.	5 points
A good politician is known for his works, not for his honesty.	5 points

Source: *Research data (2020); 1 Bonifácio (2013).*

To further support the research, the data collection also used a scenario study, presenting three hypothetical scenarios, where one of the political profiles would have to be chosen by the voter, indicating the politician perceived as the "best" among the proposed options in terms of results and ethics (works and corruption), as follows:

Table 3

Scenarios: Tolerance of "steal but do"

Scenario 1	Scenario 2	Scenario 3
Politician 1 – There are a lot of news about him and many confirmed cases of corruption in his administration, but he has done a lot of work in the city.	Politician 2 - There are few news and a few corruption cases in his administration, but he has done little work in the city.	Politician 3 - There are no records of corruption in his administration, but he has not carried out any work in the city.

Source: *survey data (2020).*

The aim was to compare the tendency of the answers to the questionnaire and the profile of the candidate normally chosen from among those presented, revealing the electoral preferences of the respondents, and showing alignments or divergences between the candidate the voter idealizes and the one they would actually choose in the circumstances presented.

To analyze the data, descriptive statistics were used to show the profile of the respondents, and percentages were presented for the answers to the statements (dichotomous and likert scale), and, finally, the "steal, but do" tolerance scenarios".

4 Analysis of results

In order to better understand the composition of the sample, we sought to describe the profile of the voters, with data on age and level of education, as shown in Table 4. Subsequently, the survey also presented five statements with dichotomous answers to address voters' opinions on politics, voting and corruption, as shown in Table 5.

Table 4

Profile of respondents

Age	Frequency
From 16 and 25 years old	75 (19.5%)
From 26 and 50 years old	237 (61.6%)
From 51 and 70 years old	72 (18.7%)
Over 70	1 (0.2%)
Total	385 (100%)
Level of Education	Frequency
Elementary School	2 (0.5%)
High School	42 (10.9%)
Higher Education	135 (35.1%)

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Postgraduate	206 (53.5%)
Total	385 (100%)

Source: Research data (2020).

The results show that the profile that responded most to the questionnaire is made up of adult citizens who vote compulsorily (61.60%). In addition, more than half of the responses (53.50%) were from post-graduate students, followed by 35.1% from people with higher education and, finally, just over 10% with secondary and primary education. This indicates an educational level that is considered high, given that most of the Brazilian electorate has completed high school (TSE, 2018).

Table 5

Dichotomous assertions about the perception of tolerance towards "stealing but doing"

Assertive	Yes	No
I believe that every politician is corrupt	88 (23%)	297 (77%)
I believe that the more transparent their accounts are, the less corrupt the politician is.	339 (88%)	46 (12%)
I research the candidates' backgrounds before deciding my vote.	304 (79%)	81 (21%)
I use transparency portals to analyze the accounting and financial information of politicians' management before deciding my vote.	122 (32%)	263 (68%)
I believe that the main cause of Brazil's public management problems is political corruption.	312 (81%)	73 (19%)

Source: Survey data (2020).

The perception of part of the Brazilian population that "every politician is corrupt" should be highlighted. For 23% of respondents, the entire political class is permeated by corruption, and it is possible to generalize that within the class there is no agent who is not corrupt. This type of opinion could be interpreted as discrediting elected representatives, but this section of society transfers responsibility for its own unethical culture, tolerated and perpetrated in the social environment, to these political agents. In this way, the idea that the people's political representatives "always" behave corruptly can ease the duty to act ethically in the daily lives of this part of society.

Following the analysis, 88% of respondents believe that the more transparent their accounts are, the less corrupt the politician is. In addition, 79% of the sample said that they research the background of candidates before deciding to vote. These figures contrast with the 32% of respondents who say they use transparency portals to decide their vote, indicating a general perception that transparent information is important, although not everyone actually accesses the reports and data provided.

For 81% of respondents, the main cause of public management problems in Brazil is political corruption. This demonstrates, once again, the tendency for ethical behavior to be transferred from society in general to its representative political class. In this way, although it is the result of a complex combination of factors, it is not clear whether society is a reflection of the corrupt political class, or whether, on the other hand, the political class is a caricature of the morally shoddy behavior of the society that elected it.

Once some of the respondents' opinions on politics, voting and corruption had been revealed, we proceeded to collect information more focused on the "Steal, but do it" policy. Voters' perceptions of this phenomenon do not contradict the results in Table 5, although part

of society is tolerant of this relationship among voters and elected officials, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Likert answers on the perception of tolerance to "Steal, but do it"

Assertions	Strongly Disagree	I disagree	Somewhat agree	I agree	Totally agree
	%				
Whether a politician is honest or corrupt makes no difference to my vote.	76%	15%	2%	3%	4%
It's better to have public works carried out even with proven corruption than no works and no corruption at all.	52%	26%	18%	3%	1%
I prefer a politician who carries out the works he has promised to a politician who cares a lot about the transparency of public accounts.	34%	31%	23%	10%	2%
My vote can't change corruption in politics. That's why I prefer a politician who does the work he has promised, even if he is corrupt.	60%	29%	8%	2%	1%
I don't see any problem in re-electing a corrupt politician, as long as he has contributed to the construction of many projects, such as schools and hospitals.	62%	25%	11%	1%	1%
As long as he shows good results in improving the lives of the population, a very corrupt politician can get my vote.	63%	24%	10%	2%	1%
It makes no difference whether a politician steals or not, the important thing is that he does the things that the population needs. 1	61%	28%	8%	2%	1%
It's better to have a politician who does a lot of work, even if he steals a lot of the money, than a politician who does little work and steals a small part of the money.	66%	25%	6%	2%	1%
It's better to have a politician who does a lot of work, even if he steals a lot of the money, than a politician who doesn't do any work but is honest.	58%	30%	9%	2%	1%
A good politician is known for his works, not for his honesty.	52%	31%	14%	2%	1%

Source: *Research data (2020); 1 Bonifácio (2013).*

It was expected, given the common sense that guides collective morality, that the answers would follow the feeling of repulsion towards political corruption. In this reasoning, 91% of respondents disagreed or totally disagreed that being honest or corrupt makes no difference to their choice of vote, while only 3% agreed and another 4% totally agreed with this statement. Once again, it is reaffirmed that being honest seems to be one of the main characteristics sought by voters, although for 23% of voters, there is already an assumption that every politician is corrupt, a contradiction in ideas.

In a broad sense, 22% of respondents agree that it is better to have public works, even with proven corruption, than no works at all and no corruption. Public works, in particular, have

a strong electoral appeal, as they are usually large structures, visible to the voter, and are usually used during election periods as a concrete action or result of the public manager on behalf of the local population. However, it is important to bear in mind that these projects also have large budgets that provide an opportunity for the misappropriation of public funds within the politics of "steal, but make do".

When comparing the results of Table 6 and the use of public transparency by voters in Table 5, although 68% of respondents say they do not use transparency portals to analyze information before deciding their vote, 65% disagree or totally disagree with the statement "I prefer a politician who carries out the works he has promised to a politician who is very concerned about the transparency of public accounts". In this way, although they attach a certain importance to the transparency of public accounts, voters tend not to make the effort to search for this information, with a certain degree of contradiction in the answers, and reinforcing the idea of transferring ethical responsibility to elected politicians or, at least, to the control bodies, reducing the culture of social control by citizens.

As a result, the voter loses strength in their democratic practice, voting, and tends to strengthen the political agent who will prioritize their own interests, described according to public choice theory (Buchanan, 2000), as a maximizer of private gains, being an agent prone to fraud and corruption, who acting against their ethical and moral principles and values, falls into ethical blindness, whether for reasons such as distortion of reality or various pressures.

This ethical blindness can also be theoretically related to voters, in their acceptance or tolerance of corruption, even if indirectly or partially. In other words, this implication is visible when a candidate predisposed to the "Steal, but do it" policy seeks out the voter indicated according to the assumptions of the median voter theorem (Downs, 1957), the one with the average socio-economic characteristics of the local population, and this candidate formulates policies with the main aim of winning the election, promising to meet the demands of these voters, but subsequently acting according to their own interests.

This implies that, theoretically, the profile of the average voter will be used by the candidate to perpetuate corruption, either directly or indirectly, and that both politicians and voters seem ethically blind. Although the Brazilian population points to political and financial corruption as one of its biggest concerns, according to the IPSOS Foundation study, What Worries the World (2016), the results of this survey show that when asked about the ability of voting to change corruption in politics, the vast majority (89%) disagree that voting is incapable of changing this context.

Thus, for the majority of respondents, a possible way out of the adverse political scenario is to vote. Without social control and access to data from transparency portals, however, the quality of the voter, in line with the median voter theorem, may be impaired, since without an information base it becomes more difficult to make the best decision.

For 87% of respondents, a corrupt politician would not receive their vote, even if he or she had contributed to the construction and realization of many works, such as schools and hospitals. This response tends towards intolerance of corruption in Brazil, and it is possible to see the common sense that permeates public opinion, although this opinion is not always reflected in the results of elections. On the other hand, for the remaining 13%, it is possible for a corrupt politician to receive their vote, as long as they carry out works, which shows an explicit tolerance for the policy of steal, but do.

Regarding the proportion of "steal" and "do" dimensions, one of the questions posed a scenario of "lots of works and lots of corruption", while another showed a context of "no works and no corruption". The answers were proportionally similar, with 66% totally disagreeing with

the statement: "It's better to have a politician who does a lot of work, even if he steals a lot of the money, than a politician who does little work and steals a small part of the money", while 58% totally disagreed with the statement: "It's better to have a politician who does a lot of work, even if he steals a lot of the money, than a politician who doesn't do any work but is honest".

For the statement "a good politician is known for his works, not his honesty", 52% totally disagreed, 31% disagreed and 14% slightly agreed, 2% agreed and 1% totally agreed. For the majority of respondents, therefore, what makes a "good politician" is not necessarily their work, but the honesty factor carries relevant weight, although, once again, the bias that all politicians are corrupt stands out for more than 23% of those interviewed in this survey.

In general, the majority of respondents were against the "Steal, but do it" policy. This position in surveys is expected and constant, as it calls into question the respondents' moral foundations. On the other hand, from 10% and 15% of the sample explicitly showed some degree of tolerance for this policy. Although this is an indication, the interviewees' answers do not necessarily correspond to the reality of the elections, and this is related to the possible discrepancy between moral sense and (actual) action, which has already been addressed throughout this work.

Finally, to complement the questions put to the interviewees, 3 scenarios were proposed, in which the voter had to choose which political profile they would prefer to re-elect, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Scenarios: Voters' choice

Scenarios	Choose	
	Frequency	%
Politician 1 – There are a lot of news and many confirmed cases of corruption in his administration, but he has done a lot of work in the city.	28	7
Politician 2 - There are few news and some cases of corruption in his administration, but he has done little work in the city.	91	24
Politician 3 - There are no reports or cases of corruption in his administration, but he has not carried out any work in the city.	266	69

Source: Research data (2020).

In the choice of scenarios, the respondents' intolerance of corruption was clear, since 69% would prefer to re-elect a politician who has done nothing in the way of works but is honest, while only 7% would choose a politician characterized as "Steal, but do it", and it is important to note that approximately a quarter of the participants (24%) would re-elect a politician with some corruption cases but who has done few works, implying a partial tolerance of corruption, as long as demands are met reasonably.

Looking in a little more detail at the results of the scenarios for choosing politicians, Table 8 shows the preferences according to the characteristics of the respondents.

Table 8

Choice of politician according to respondents' profile

Profile of respondents	Cenários		
	Politics 1	Politics 2	Politics 3
Age			
From 16 and 25 years old	5 (18%)	27 (30%)	43 (16%)
From 26 and 50 years old	20 (71%)	52 (57%)	165 (62%)
From 51 and 70 years old	3 (11%)	11 (12%)	58 (22%)

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Over 70	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)
Total	28 (100%)	91 (100%)	266 (100%)
Level of Education			
Elementary School	1 (4%)	0 (0%)	1 (1%)
High School	4 (14%)	15 (16%)	23 (9%)
Higher Education	12 (43%)	28 (31%)	95 (35%)
Postgraduate	11 (39%)	48 (53%)	147 (55%)
Total	28 (100%)	91 (100%)	266 (100%)

Source: Research data (2020).

Looking at Table 8, and considering the average profile of the sample, postgraduates aged from 26 and 50, it can be seen that despite age and level of education, corruption finds loopholes to make itself tolerable in society. It should be noted that of the respondents with higher education or postgraduate degrees, 23 would vote for Politician 1 and 76 for Politician 2. A possible explanation for these results could be the "normalization of corruption" in contemporary societies (Rothstein & Varraich, 2017; Jancsics, 2019), which despite a higher level of education do not see incentives for punishment regimes, let alone accountability for corrupt acts, making both corruption and tolerance of corruption the expected behavior.

5 Final considerations

The main objective of this study was to verify the influence of meeting public demands on Brazilian voters' perception of tolerance for "steal but do it" politics. Through a questionnaire mostly made up of situations that were close to the "Steal, but do it" policy, it was possible to verify a trend among the Brazilian population on the subject.

Although the majority (69% of respondents) were against the "Steal, but do it" policy, as shown in Table 4, it is possible to see that from 20% and 25% of respondents show some degree of acceptance of this policy. An example of this is that 24% of respondents agree to some degree that it is "better to have public works carried out, even with proven corruption, than no works and no corruption".

When social preference was compared from meeting demands and transparency of public accounts, meeting demands won on all occasions. Thus, it can be seen that transparency of public accounts is still not perceived as the main means of social control of politicians, and that it is preferable to have a manager who is able to offer public goods and services, even if he does not disclose his accounts to society. Although the corrupt management of political agents is a preponderant factor in the Brazilian public management scenario, voters still don't seem to use transparency portals to exercise their social control.

Thus, the main findings were: i) Brazilians demand honest politicians, although for almost 25% of the population every politician is corrupt; ii) for 80% of those interviewed the main cause of public management problems in Brazil is political corruption; iii) theoretically, politicians with no history of corruption tend to be more accepted than politicians who take a lot of trouble to meet public demands; iv) approximately 70% of voters do not use transparency portals to decide their vote, although 80% claim to research candidates' backgrounds before making their decision.

This implies a contradiction on the part of the voter, who, by claiming to research the candidate's record, would possibly be demonstrating knowledge about the demands met, or works carried out, as well as the cases of corruption in which the candidate could be involved. On the other hand, the non-use of transparency portals, admitted by most of the sample, implies

a possible transfer of ethical responsibility from the voter to the political agent alone, or possibly to the technical control bodies.

This transfer of ethical responsibility ends up weakening the democratic power of the voter in the vote, strengthening the political agent who, according to Public Choice Theory, will tend to act motivated to maximize his own interests, leading to ethical blindness, and potentially causing mismanagement or corruption in government, with the agent violating his moral limits in the face of private benefits.

It is also worth highlighting aspects that relate to the theory of the average voter, where despite Brazilian voters showing intolerance of corruption, we have a broad national political scenario marked by this type of phenomenon, pointing to situations where the candidate will seek to formulate policies almost exclusively with the aim of winning the elections, seeking to meet the demands of voters who reflect the average characteristics of the population. Therefore, voters who are not tolerant of corruption will tend to vote for the candidate who will meet their needs, although this does not mean that once elected the political agent will fulfill the promised public policies.

Finally, with regard to the scenarios proposed in the survey, the majority of respondents (69%) would choose to re-elect politician 3, whose profile would be that of having no record or process of corruption in his administration, but also without any work carried out. In addition, 7% of respondents show a high level of tolerance for corruption, as long as it is accompanied by works and results in their administration, and 24% show partial tolerance, as long as it is on a small scale.

Thus, it can be concluded that there is a broad intolerance of corruption on the part of voters, who say they prefer honest politicians, even if they do not meet public demands, to corrupt politicians who do meet demands, described as "Steal but do" politicians. Despite this, there was evidence of the influence of meeting public demands on voter tolerance of "steal but do it" politics in Brazil.

A limitation of the research is the sample used, in which only the perception of the respondents is used, and also that the results shown here cannot be used to generalize the population of Brazilian voters.

For future work on the subject, we suggest a nationwide survey. Since some states of the federation are possibly more influenced by the "Steal, but do it" policy than others, a large-scale survey segregating respondents by state could highlight possible inclinations of certain federal entities or regions towards this "Steal, but do it" policy.

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