

**TRUST IN LEGAL INSTITUTIONS:  
AN EXAMINATION OF THE PHILIPPINES**

by

Julianne Regalado

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Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Ivan Y. Sun, Ph.D.  
Professor in charge of thesis on behalf of the Advisory Committee

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Jennifer Earl, Ph.D.  
Chair of the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Debra Hess Norris  
Interim Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Louis F. Rossi, Ph.D.  
Vice Provost for Graduate and Professional Education and  
Dean of the Graduate College

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## **ABSTRACT**

While studies have examined the correlates related to institutional trust across Asian countries, research has yet to analyze the public attitudes toward two major social control institutions in the Philippines: the police and courts. This study fills this gap in the literature by exploring the connections between social trust, institutional performance, media exposure and consumption, and trust in the police and courts. Using recent survey data from the Asian Barometer Survey, regression models were employed to assess and compare whether these factors are predictive of police and court trustworthiness. Results reveal the importance of social trust and institutional performance in predicting Filipinos' trust in the police and courts. However, media exposure and consumption were found to be largely ineffective in shaping police and court trust. Given the unique historical and political context of the Philippines, these findings contribute to existing literature and provide implications for future research and policy.

## **Chapter 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Existing literature on public perceptions of legal authorities has highlighted the importance of examining trust in these institutions. Trust in legal institutions, such as the police and courts, helps maintain the legitimacy and effectiveness of the criminal justice system and subsequently enhances people's willingness to cooperate with regulatory agencies (Tyler, 2001). Existing research has identified the determinants of trust in the police and the courts across various global contexts (Cao & Dai, 2006; Cao et al., 2015; Jackson & Bradford, 2009; Johnson & Bartels, 2010; Reisig & Parks, 2000; Sun et al., 2016, 2019; Wu, 2014; Wu et al., 2012). Although many studies have analyzed public attitudes toward legal authorities in full democracies and authoritarian regimes, very few studies have assessed public perceptions of the police and courts in "flawed democracies," such as the Philippines, where notable weaknesses in governance, participation, and political culture are observed (Putzel, 1999)

This study explores relevant factors that predict Filipinos' trust in the police and the courts. Despite being one of the earliest democracies in Asia, the Philippines has gradually moved away from a democracy since the 1960s. In the last decade, two authoritarian politicians, Rodrigo Duterte and Ferdinand Marcos, Jr, have assumed the presidency. The Duterte administration, in particular, has received critical domestic and

international attention due to its controversial anti-drug campaigns and numerous extrajudicial killings (Lasco, 2018). The current president, Ferdinand Marcos, Jr, who is the son of past dictator Ferdinand Marcos, Sr., has expressed his intention to continue Duterte's anti-drug policies, raising concerns for the future of the Philippine's domestic governance (Rudd & Endresen, 2022). Under these broad sociopolitical developments in the Philippines, it is theoretically and practically significant to assess public views of two key social control institutions: the police and courts.

This study contributes to the criminal justice literature in several ways. First, although the past three decades have witnessed the burgeoning of studies on public assessments of the police and, to a lesser extent, the courts globally, the Philippines has been absent in this line of inquiry. Except for one recent study (Zhang et al., 2021), past research has yet to investigate factors related to Filipinos' views of their legal authorities. This study's findings are likely to enrich our understanding of factors underlying public attitudes toward legal authorities in a society where democratic principles of accountability, transparency, and human rights are compromised.

Second, past studies have focused on public attitudes toward either the police or courts, with less than a handful of studies considering both institutions simultaneously (Cao et al., 2015; Inoguchi, 2017; Lai et al., 2010; Wu, 2014). Available information, albeit limited, reveals that Filipinos' perceptions of the police and courts could be different due primarily to widespread police corruption and abusive behavior. By including both institutions' trustworthiness as evaluative items, this study can comparatively assess Filipinos' general attitudinal patterns toward the police and courts



and identify whether such trust evaluations are connected to similar or distinctive factors. Finally, following existing theoretical frameworks, this study incorporates three groups of predictors into the data analysis. This study deepens our understanding of the relative explanatory power of significant factors.

Using recent survey data from the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS), this study examines whether social trust, institutional performance, and media exposure and consumption are linked to Filipinos' trustworthiness of legal authorities. This research project is designed to address two research questions:

1. What are the general patterns of Filipinos' trust in the police and courts?
2. Are variables reflecting social trust, institutional performance, and media exposure and consumption correlated to Filipinos' trust in the police and courts?

## **Chapter 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Government-Citizen Relations in the Philippines**

Since the Philippines' earliest political history, public confidence in legal authorities has undergone various changes. After World War II, the Republic of the Philippines became an independent nation from the U.S. and began to maintain its own democratic governance. Nevertheless, since the presidential election of Ferdinand Marcos, Sr. in 1965, the country gradually shifted toward an authoritarian regime (Cao & Dai, 2006). Re-elected in 1969, Marcos's campaigns were indicated to be fraudulent, where politicians and voters were revealed to be bought and corrupted (Thompson, 2018). His second term was accompanied by civil unrest, and in 1972, Marcos declared martial law. This period resulted in extreme political suppression, economic instability, and widespread corruption (Thompson, 2018). Tensions between the public and the government intensified, resulting in civil protests and international pressure to change the existing political system. With martial law ending in 1981 and the presidential election re-instated, it was not until the assassination of oppositional leader Benigno Aquino, Jr. in 1983 that an uprising among citizens began. As public support eroded, Marcos was forced out of his position and fled the country (Kuntz & Thompson, 2009). This erosion in public trust would also be found in subsequent democratic presidents, such as Joseph

Estrada and Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, both of whom were accused of corruptive acts and misusing public funds (Curato, 2017; Fuller, 2000). Despite being one of Asia's oldest democracies, the democratic process of the Philippines has been fragile, where elite dominance, institutional weakness, and widespread abuse by public officials have persisted (Dressel, 2011; Putzel, 1999).

In the Philippines, it is evident that several procedural dimensions have eroded, including the actors involved in upholding and enforcing the rule of law, such as the police. Decades of institutional neglect and corruption have bred widespread police misconduct during the 20th century (Hapel & Jansen, 2017). Under Marcos' regime, the Philippine Constabulary-Integrated National Police (PC-INP) was formed through centralizing local and municipal police under the Armed Forces. The PC-INP was responsible for thousands of deaths and disappearances among residents (Hapel & Jansen, 2017). In 1991, attempts towards a decentralized police structure led to the creation of the Philippine National Police (PNP) (Sidel, 1999). However, local political families and elites maintained control of law enforcement, eroding any bureaucratic autonomy and tarnishing the professional image of the police (Sidel, 1999). As the Philippines's political past continues to shape police relations with the public, this puts into question their institutional legitimacy.

Only a few studies have empirically researched Filipinos' ratings of law enforcement. Cao and Dai (2006) found that the Philippines has lower confidence in the police compared to South Korea and Taiwan. When focusing solely on the Philippines, however, over half of the respondents reported having greater confidence in the police

(Cao & Dai, 2006). This latter finding is also reflected in a recent article by Zhang and colleagues (2021), where the researchers reported that the mean levels of confidence in police increased from 2.43 to 2.62 between 2002 and 2014. The limited evidence calls for more research examining Filipinos' trust in the police.

Compared to the police, the courts were historically viewed more positively. It was noted that the Philippine Supreme Court represented the most important political institution of the public (Tate & Haynie, 1993). Filipinos viewed the Supreme Court with great respect and legitimacy before the martial law era (Deinla, 2014). However, the judicial system has generally been considered inefficient, involving widespread corruption and political interference post-Marcos. Marcos's presidency was even suggested to potentially influence the Supreme Court's decision-making autonomy. In Tate and Haynie's article (1993), they found that the onset of martial law decreased the performance of social control (e.g., the number of cases of criminal procedure rights violation) but did not impact the performance of conflict resolution (e.g., the number of cases involving civil suits). In other words, fear of coercion from Marcos's administration may have resulted in some judges altering their decision-making on certain cases. More recently, high-level corruption cases, typically those against previous leaders, were also noted to be rarely prosecuted by the Court (Dressel, 2011). The critically flawed Philippines judicial system possesses implications for government-citizen relations and evaluations.

Compared to the policing literature, the Philippines courts received even rarer empirical attention. In one comparative study (Inoguchi, 2017), the author found that the

Philippines had higher levels of confidence in the courts than in other Asian countries, such as Korea, Taiwan, and Indonesia, and European countries, such as France, Italy, Spain, and Portugal. Since no other study has examined the perceptions of the courts in the Philippines, there is a need to fill this knowledge gap, considering that it may relate to the type of governance present.

In recent years, the Philippines has received critical domestic and international attention for its recent presidential leadership. From 2016 to 2022, Rodrigo Duterte served as president. During his term, the government carried out controversial anti-drug campaigns, referred to as the “war on drugs,” resulting in extra-judicial killings, violence, and disappearances (Lasco, 2018). It has also been well documented that Philippine law enforcement was linked to perpetuating such violence, as well as involvement in corrupt acts (Curato, 2017; Hapal & Jensen, 2017; Jensen & Hapal, 2018; Lasco, 2018; Maxwell, 2019; Thompson, 2018). As for the courts, there was some indication that these institutions acted independently from Duterte. In fact, Duterte made intimidation attempts and threatened to declare martial law if the courts were against his anti-drug operation (Jerusalem & Ramos, 2016). While it is likely that public perceptions of the courts may differ from the police in the Philippines today, conducting this study to confirm these differences is necessary.

It is also important to consider the current presidency of Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. As the son of Ferdinand Marcos, Sr., Filipinos’ trust in their legal authorities is likely to decline. Ruud and Endresen (2022) suggested that Filipinos were often reminded of Marcos, Sr.'s regime, leading to political, cultural, and social anxieties within the country.

A recent study found that those with lower support for Marcos, Sr. and his martial law policies were less likely to support and vote for Marcos, Jr. (Dulay et al., 2023). This historical context may continue shaping public trust in both the police and courts in the country.

### Correlates of Public Trust of Legal Institutions

Many studies in both Western and non-Western societies have examined the correlates of public trust in the police and courts. Among literature in Asia, growing research in this area has largely focused on East Asian societies such as China (e.g., Han et al., 2017; Lai et al., 2010; Sun et al., 2019; Wu & Sun, 2009), Taiwan (e.g., Cao & Dai, 2006; Cao et al., 2015; Sun et al., 2016; Wu et al., 2012), and South Korea (e.g., Hwang et al., 2005; Kwak & McNeeley, 2017; Park et al., 2021). However, empirical studies on Filipinos' attitudes toward legal authorities remain limited (see Cao & Dai, 2006; Inoguchi, 2017; Lasco, 2018; Zhang et al., 2021), especially in comparing public trust in the police and the courts. This study considers three frameworks (social trust, institutional performance, and media exposure) utilized in past studies to evaluate trust in the police and courts.

### **Social Trust**

Social or interpersonal trust is proposed to be a key contributor to institutional trust. More specifically, individuals with high levels of social trust are equally trusting of others and political institutions (Keele, 2007; Rahn & Rundolph, 2005). It is also noted that

social trust and political trust have a reciprocal relationship, while each is conceptually distinct (Brehm & Rahn, 1997). Prior literature has identified two types of social trust: general trust and particularized trust (Freitag & Traunmüller, 2009). General trust is about one's relational distance from another and involves trust with those outside of one's immediate social circle. Trust with intimate or familiar others, such as family, friends, and relatives, is a function of particularized trust (Freitag & Traunmüller, 2009). Ultimately, the ability to trust others signals a society's level of cohesion and cooperation, which is integral for democratic societies (Keele, 2007). Social trust is also significant in the literature on social capital, where civic engagement and interpersonal trust are reciprocally related to government confidence (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Keele, 2007; Rahn & Rundolph, 2005).

Existing research has confirmed the connection between social trust and evaluations of police. For instance, U.S. and U.K. literature found that social trust is positively connected to trust in the police (Jackson & Sunshine, 2007; MacDonald & Stokes, 2006). For instance, Jackson and Sunshine (2007) reported that greater perceptions of social cohesion and social trust increased satisfaction with police effectiveness in addressing crime and police engagement with the local community. These patterns are also supported within Asian contexts (Han et al., 2017; Sun et al., 2019; Wu, 2014; Wu et al., 2012). For example, using survey data from China, Sun and colleagues (2019) revealed that social trust was significantly related to Chinese residents' trust in both county and town police.

Similar patterns are also found when examining the relationship between social trust and confidence in the courts. In their study, Brehm and Rahn (1997) demonstrated that higher interpersonal trust increased confidence across the U.S. Executive Branch, Congress, and the Supreme Court. Cao and colleagues' (2015) cross-national study also revealed similar findings, showing that particularized trust significantly predicted confidence in courts across the U.S., Taiwan, and Turkey. Wu's (2014) study illustrated a similar relationship between social trust and trust in the police and courts when comparing China and Taiwan. This study includes both general and particularized trust to assess their relationships with police and court trustworthiness.

### **Institutional Performance**

The institutional performance perspective describes how public satisfaction with legal institutions depends on their perceived performance (Citrin & Green, 1986; Hetherington, 1998). This linkage is evident within police evaluation literature, where performance is tightly related to confidence in law enforcement (Jackson & Bradford, 2009; Reisig & Parks, 2000; Sun et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2012). As forms of institutional performance, Wu and colleagues (2012) found that the responsiveness of the government and easiness of receiving police help increased trust in police officers in China and Taiwan. In South Korea, police effectiveness was reported to be positively related to confidence in the police (Park et al., 2021). Other international studies have also indicated that perceived public safety was tightly linked to police trust (Jackson & Bradford, 2009; Jackson & Sunshine, 2007; Sun et al., 2019; Wu, 2014). In contrast,



government corruption, as an indicator of institutional integrity and performance, was found to be inversely related to trust in the police (Wu et al., 2012; Wu & Sun, 2009).

The current literature contains minimal evidence linking institutional performance to public trust in the courts. Wu (2014) revealed that citizens' sense of safety was positively related to trust in Chinese courts, while government corruption was associated with lower trust in courts in both China and Taiwan. While not implicitly conceptualized as institutional performance, these findings are in line with patterns found in police-related performance research. To expand the trust literature, this study assesses the connections between multiple performance indicators reflecting the government's helpfulness, responsiveness, sense of safety, corruption, and people's trustworthy views of the police and courts.

### **Media Exposure and Consumption**

Media exposure demonstrates a complex association when it comes to evaluations of legal authorities. Previous studies identified factors, such as the content, type of media, and frequency of media exposure, as important to consider (Sun et al., 2016; Wu, 2014). When it comes to media content, the media malaise theory (Robinson, 1976) posits how the consumption of negative television news media impacts citizens' political engagement and commitment. It also assumes that such exposure increases legal cynicism and distrust in government authorities. Sun and colleagues (2016) found that negative reports on police were negatively predictive of trust and satisfaction with police. Similarly, news reports on police misconduct reduced public satisfaction with the police

(Kaminski & Jefferis, 1998). While the media content matters, the media type also plays an important role.

Research has shown that different media types produce varying trust in legal institutions. Johnson and Bartels (2010) demonstrated that exposure to sensational media (i.e., political radio and cable news) lowered trust in the U.S. Supreme Court, whereas sober media (i.e., newspapers and network news) had no impact. While foreign news consumption decreased trust in both the police and courts in Taiwan, television, newspaper, and internet exposure had no significant effect (Wu, 2014). Interestingly, Zhang and colleagues (2021) reported that internet use was negatively related to confidence in Philippine police. Though less explored in current studies, further examination of the impact of the Internet must be considered.

The frequency of media exposure is also likely to affect trust in the police and courts. According to Norris's virtuous circle theory (2000), frequent media use can result in greater civic engagement and government trust. In other words, those who are politically interested, engaged, and trusting will likely watch more news on politics, learn more about the government, and thus, produce greater trust and engagement in this virtuous cycle. Contrary to this assumption, evidence from Zhang and colleagues (2021) demonstrates that Filipinos who frequently use the Internet lowered levels of trust in the police. It is unclear whether the same pattern can be found in people's trust in the courts, warranting further research.

## Current Study

This study attempts to fill gaps in the literature on public evaluations of the police and courts within a non-Western context. Although recent scholarly attention has been paid to the political climate of the Philippines, very little is known about the factors shaping people's assessments of police and court trust in the country. This study explores the general patterns of public trust in the police and courts in the Philippines and examines the relationships between three groups of predictors and Filipinos' trust in legal authorities. The following study hypotheses are formulated and tested:

H1a: Filipinos' social trust is positively related to their trust in the police.

H1b: Filipinos' social trust is positively connected to trust in the courts.

H2a: Filipinos' positive evaluations of institutional performance (e.g., police help, government responsiveness, and sense of safety) tend to raise their trust in the police, whereas their negative assessments of institutional performance (e.g., corruption) tend to lower their trust in the police.

H2b: Filipinos' positive evaluations of institutional performance (e.g., police help, government responsiveness, and sense of safety) tend to raise their trust in the courts, whereas their negative assessments of institutional performance (e.g., corruption) tend to lower their trust in the courts.

H3a: Filipinos with greater media exposure and consumption are likely to have lower trust in the police.

H3b: Filipinos with greater media exposure and consumption are likely to have lower trust in the courts.

## **Chapter 3**

### **METHODS**

#### Data and Sample

This study uses data from the fifth wave of the Asian Barometer Survey (ABS) (2018-2021). The ABS is one of the largest cross-national survey projects focusing on public opinion topics related to political values, economic conditions, democracy, and governance. The project was co-directed by Professors Fu Hu and Yun-han Chu and received major funding support from Taiwan's Ministry of Education, Academia Sinica, and National Taiwan University. The ABS is housed in the Center for East Asia Democratic Studies at National Taiwan University. Since its launch in 2001, the survey has now been administered to 17 countries and regions across East, Southeast, and South Asia, including Bangladesh, Cambodia, mainland China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam. A national research team normally conducts face-to-face survey interviews with each country's residents.

This paper focuses on the ABS data collected from the Philippines in 2018, the most recent available ABS data. The survey instrument contains various questions concerning people's attitudes toward political institutions, political participation, opinions on democracy, and views on economic growth and globalization. It also includes

questions related to perceptions of family, traditions and norms, citizenship, the internet, and social media. To ensure construct validity, theoretical concepts were composed of several items. The wording of questions was determined by the comprehensibility and effectiveness of each item, which were tested in the previous waves of the ABS.

Philippine survey data were collected using stratified multistage probability sampling techniques. First, four areas of the country (i.e., the National Capital Region, Balance Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao) were chosen as data collection sites. Among these regions, a total of 20 sampling units of provinces were identified. Second, the sampling of 62 municipalities was performed within each group. The same procedure was conducted within each sampling spot among the municipalities. Respondents were selected randomly from each spot, for a sample size of 1,200 (300 from each region). Census-based population weights were also employed to ensure representative figures. All respondents were 18 or older and resided in one of the four regions mentioned. Lastly, cases with missing values were dropped from the analysis, leading to a final sample size of 1,043 respondents.

## Measures

### **Dependent Variables**

Two measures, *trust in the police* and *trust in the courts*, are constructed as dependent variables. Respondents were asked to indicate how much trust they have in the police and the courts. The responses categories were: “distrust fully” (1), “distrust a lot” (2), “distrust somewhat” (3), “trust somewhat” (4) “trust a lot” (5), and “trust fully” (6).

The original response categories were used to display percentage distributions in the later section. However, preliminary analysis revealed that both ordinal-level outcome variables violated the proportional odds assumption. Therefore, both variables were recoded into dummy variables with 0 representing “distrust” (i.e., distrust fully, distrust a lot, and distrust somewhat) and 1 signaling “trust” (i.e., trust fully, trust a lot, and trust somewhat) in the regression analysis.

### **Independent Variables**

The independent variables are classified into three groups: social trust, institutional performance, and media exposure and consumption. Social trust comprises of four single-item variables: *general trust*, *trust in relatives*, *trust in neighbors*, and *trust in others*. In measuring *general trust*, respondents were asked the question, “General speaking, would you say you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the statement that ‘most people are trustworthy?’” (1= “strongly disagree”; 4= “strongly agree”). *Trust in relatives* and *trust in neighbors* were both measured by asking how much trust respondents have in relatives and neighbors, respectively. Responses included: “distrust fully” (1), “distrust a lot” (2), “distrust somewhat” (3), “trust somewhat” (4) “trust a lot” (5), and “trust fully” (6). Similarly, *trust in others* involved asking respondents to report how much trust they had in other people they interact with (1= “distrust fully”; 6= “trust fully”). To keep interpretations for the analysis straightforward, all four variables were recoded into dichotomous variables for the analysis (0= “distrust”; 1= “trust”).

Institutional performance includes four single-item measures: *police help*, *government responsiveness*, *sense of safety*, and *corruption*. Respondents were asked for *police help*: “As far as you know, how easy or difficult is it to obtain help from the police when you need it?” The response categories were: “difficult” (0) and “easy” (1). *Government responsiveness* involves asking respondents how well they think the government responds to what people want. Responses included: “not responsive at all” (0) and “responsive” (1). To capture the *sense of safety*, respondents were asked how safe is living in their city/town/village (0= “unsafe”; 1= “safe”). *Corruption* was measured by the question “How widespread do you think corruption and bribe-taking are in the national government?”: “hardly anyone is involved” (1), “not a lot of officials are corrupt” (2), “most officials” (3), and “almost everyone is corrupt” (4). This variable was later recoded to express dichotomous outcomes to ensure ease in reporting results (0= “not all or hardly anyone”; 1= “most or almost everyone”).

The media exposure and consumption group consists of three single-item variables, *internet use*, *follows political news*, and *reliance on traditional media*. *Internet use* was captured by asking respondents how often they use the internet, whether through a computer, tablet, or smartphone. Responses were: “never” (1), “hardly ever” (2), “a few times a year” (3), “at least once a month” (4), “at least once a week” (5), “less than half hour a day” (6), “half to one hour a day” (7), “several hours a day” (8), and “connect all the time” (9). These were later recoded into “once a month or less” (0) and “at least once a week or more” (1). For the variable *follows political news*, respondents were asked how often they followed news about politics and government: “practically never” (1), “not

even once” (2), “once or twice” (3), “several times” (4), “everyday” (5). To keep interpretation simplified, this was also recoded into dichotomous outcomes: “once or twice a week or less” (0), “several times a week or more” (1). *Reliance on traditional media* uses the question “Which one is the most important channel for you to find information about politics and government?” The response categories comprised of: “television” (1), “newspaper (print and online)” (2), “internet and social media” (3), “radio” (4), and “other channel” (5). To reference traditional media sources in the Philippines (see Arceo 2017; Newman et al., 2023), this measure was recoded into a dummy variable with 0 representing “internet and social media” and “other channel,” and 1 representing “television,” “newspaper (print and online),” and “radio.”

### **Control Variables**

The analysis treated several sociodemographic characteristics as control variables, including the respondent’s sex, age, household income, educational attainment, and residence type. Sex, education, and residence type are coded as dummy variables, with 1 representing female, completed secondary/high school education, and urban residence, respectively. Age is measured in years. Household income is captured using an ordinal variable (1= Fifth Quintile, less than P 5,500; 5= First Quintile, P 40,001 and above).

Table 1 reports the descriptive statistics of all variables used in the analysis. About 49% of the total respondents are female and have a mean age of 42 years old. Respondents have an average lower level of income of P 5,501 to P 10,000 (about \$97 to \$178) or are in the Fourth Quintile (mean= 2.28). Finally, 55% live in an urban area, and



at least 58% of respondents have received at least a completed secondary/high school education. Possible multicollinearity problems were examined by analyzing independent and control variables' variance inflation factors (VIFs) (Fisher & Mason, 1981). All VIFs were below two (both means=1.22), and thus, no multicollinearity was detected.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics**

	Mean	SD	Range
<i>Dependent variables</i>			
Trust in the police	.80	.40	0-1
Trust in the courts	.81	.39	0-1
<i>Independent variables</i>			
<i>Social trust</i>			
General trust	.61	.49	0-1
Trust in relatives	.90	.30	0-1
Trust in neighbors	.76	.43	0-1
Trust in others	.64	.48	0-1
<i>Institutional performance</i>			
Police help	.69	.46	0-1
Gov't responsiveness	.62	.49	0-1
Sense of safety	.86	.35	0-1
Corruption	.49	.50	0-1
<i>Media exposure and consumption</i>			
Internet use	.55	.50	0-1
Follows political news	.51	.50	0-1
Reliance on traditional media	.90	.30	0-1
<i>Control variables</i>			
Female	.49	.50	0-1
Age	42.40	15.87	18-85
Household income	2.28	1.11	1-5
Complete secondary/HS	.58	.49	0-1
Urban	.55	.50	0-1

## Analytical Plan

The analysis proceeds in two steps to assess Filipinos' trust in their legal institutions. To answer the first research question (i.e., what are the general patterns of Filipinos' trust in the police and courts), percentage distributions using the original 6-category responses of *trust in the police* and *trust in the courts* are reported to display the general patterns of institutional trustworthiness.

Regression analysis was used to address the second research question about whether variables reflecting social trust, institutional performance, and media exposure and consumption are correlated to Filipinos' trust in police and courts. As both dependent variables were recoded into dichotomous measures, binary logistic regression was utilized to evaluate the relationships between explanatory variables and institutional trust. All logistic regression models were estimated using StataSE 16.1.

## Chapter 4

### RESULTS

#### Percentage Distributions of Police and Court Trustworthiness

The first research question addresses the general pattern of Filipinos' police and court trustworthiness. Table 2 reports the percent distributions for *trust in the police* and *trust in the courts*, using the original response categories. As depicted in the table, two general patterns emerge. First, Filipino respondents expressed generally favorable ratings of police and court trustworthiness. As demonstrated in the column of (3)+(4)+(5), about 80% of the respondents stated that they trust the police and courts "somewhat," "a lot," or "fully." Nonetheless, when the category "somewhat" was removed from the analysis, the favorable ratings (i.e., "trust a lot" and "trust fully") dropped noticeably to 36.5% for the police and 31.9% for the courts. In other words, as seen in the column (5)+(6), only one-third of the respondents trust a lot or fully of the police and courts. Second, the results indicate general similarities between respondents' trust in the police and trust in the courts. Although the respondents rendered a higher mean to the police (4.23) than to the courts (4.18), the mean difference is not significant. More respondents rated the courts as "trust somewhat" but few fell into the categories of "trust a lot" and "trust fully," resulting in a slightly lower evaluation of the courts than the police.

**Table 2. Percent Distribution for Trust in Legal Institutions**

	Distrust fully (1)	Distrust a lot (2)	Distrust somewhat (3)	Trust somewhat (4)	Trust a lot (5)	Trust fully (6)	(5)+(6)	Mean
Trust in police	3.5	5.8	10.7	43.5	17.8	18.7	36.5	4.23
Trust in courts	2.8	4.9	11.4	49	16	15.9	31.9	4.18

## Regression Analyses of Police and Court Trustworthiness

The second research question considers whether variables reflecting social trust, institutional performance, and media exposure and consumption are predictive of Filipinos' trust in the police and courts. Table 3 presents the binary logistic regression results on respondents' trust in these two legal institutions. The results in the first model indicate all four variables reflecting social trust significantly predicted the odds of trusting the police. Having general trust, trust in relatives, trust in neighbors, and trust in others known personally increased the odds of police trust by roughly 70 to 100%, net of all other factors. Therefore, these findings support hypothesis H1a.

Further, three of the four institutional performance variables significantly predicted the odds of police trustworthiness, largely confirming the hypotheses H2a. For every one-unit increase in the ease of receiving police help, the odds of trust in the police increase by 138%, net of all other variables (OR= 2.38,  $p<.001$ ). Government responsiveness raises the odds of police trust by 43% (OR=1.43  $p<.05$ ), whereas witnessing greater government corruption or bribe-taking decreases the odds of trusting police by 31%, net of all controls (OR=.69,  $p<.05$ ).

None of the media variables were significantly related to the odds of having police trust. Thus, H3a is not supported. Additionally, one control variable, urban residence, was significantly related to trust in police, lowering the odds of police trust by 35% (OR=.65,  $p<.05$ ) compared to those living in rural areas.

Switching to the model of the courts, three of the four variables reflecting social trust significantly predicted the odds of trusting the courts. Similar to the police trust

model, having general trust, trust in neighbors, and trust in others known personally enhanced the odds of trust in the police by roughly 65 to 90%, holding all other factors constant. These findings are largely consistent with the study hypotheses H1a.

Concerning institutional performance variables, one variable was significantly associated with the odds of court trustworthiness, providing marginal support for H2b. Receiving help from the police increased the odds of trust in the courts by 104%, net of all controls (OR=2.04,  $p<001$ ). Only one media variable was significantly related to the odds of court trust. For every unit increase in internet use, the odds of trusting the courts decreased by 38%, holding all controls constant (OR=.62,  $p<.05$ ). Overall, these findings provide weak support to H3b. Finally, age was significantly related to trust in the court. With every one-year increase in age, people's trust in court decreases by 2% (OR=.98,  $p<.001$ ).

**Table 3. Binary Logistic Regression Predicting Trust in Legal Institutions**

	Trust in the police		Trust in the courts	
	Odds Ratio	SE	Odds Ratio	SE
<i>Social trust</i>				
General trust	1.71**	.31	1.63**	.30
Trust in relatives	1.89*	.49	1.13	.30
Trust in neighbors	1.96***	.41	1.79**	.38
Trust in others	1.91***	.37	1.83**	.36
<i>Institutional performance</i>				
Police help	2.38***	.43	2.04***	.36
Gov't responsiveness	1.43*	.25	1.27	.22
Sense of safety	1.04	.24	1.25	.29
Corruption	.69*	.12	.83	.14
<i>Media exposure and consumption</i>				
Internet use	.75	.17	.62*	.14
Follows political news	.99	.18	.76	.13
Reliance on traditional media	1.05	.30	1.33	.37
<i>Control variables</i>				
Female	1.26	.22	1.32	.23
Age	.99	.01	.98***	.01
Household income	.89	.08	1.03	.09
Complete secondary/HS	1.26	.24	1.05	.20
Urban	.65*	.13	.85	.16
<i>Pseudo R</i> <sup>2</sup>		.17		.12

$p < .05^*$ ,  $p < .01^{**}$ ,  $p < .001^{***}$

## **Chapter 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

The fragile democracy of the Philippines provides a unique context for understanding the correlates of trust in the police and courts. However, no studies to date have examined and compared public perceptions of the police and courts in the Philippines. With only a few evaluating the correlates of Filipinos' trust in the police (see Cao & Dai, 2006; Zhang et al., 2021) and only one assessing factors related to confidence in the Philippines court system (see Inoguchi, 2017), this study contributes to the existing criminal justice literature on public perceptions of legal authorities in a society where the sociopolitical landscape exhibits a weakened democratic governance.

Similar to the general attitudinal patterns found in other democracies, most Philippine respondents expressed favorable opinions on police and court trustworthiness, but only one-third strongly endorsed trust in the police and courts (e.g., trust a lot and trust fully). This finding echoes the rise of critical citizens since the 1990s, showing emergent cynical attitudes toward democratic governance (Norris, 1999). This paper uses survey data collected during the Duterte Administration, plagued by extra-judicial killings and corruption scandals, and potentially contributes to somewhat reserved support for legal authorities in the Philippines. In 2022, Marcos, Jr. was elected as president of the Philippines, a year in which data has yet to be collected. Concerns about



Marcos, Jr. continuing Duterte's plans today create implications for public evaluation research. Given the Marcos family history and the potential continuances of authoritarianism, future studies must consider how Filipinos' trust in legal institutions may shift under his presidency and afterward.

The analyses on the correlates of police and court trustworthiness reveal several important findings. First, the study confirms the importance of social trust in predicting Filipinos' trust in the police and courts. All four social trust variables (general trust, trust in relatives, trust in neighbors, and trust in others known personally) were all correlated to police trust, whereas general trust, trust in neighbors, and trust in others known personally were only linked to court trust. These findings are consistent with past studies examining the effect of social trust and evaluations of the police (Jackson & Sunshine, 2007; Han et al., 2017; Sun et al., 2019; Wu, 2014; Wu et al., 2012) and literature examining the impacts of generalized and particularized trust in courts across (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Cao et al 2015; Wu, 2014).

Overall, this underscores the important role social trust plays in cultivating institutional trust in the Philippines. Building on social trust theory, the level of social trust can be extended to Filipinos' assessments of trust in political institutions (Brehm & Rahn, 1997). The heavy cultural emphasis on family and kin in the Philippines is likely to signal their level of cooperation and civic engagement (Putzel, 1999). As a result, such cohesion can shape Filipinos' perceptions of the police and courts even in the sociopolitical context of the country.

Second, governmental institution's performance is also linked to police and court trustworthiness in the Philippines. Specifically, the ability to receive help from the police promoted public trust in the police and courts. Consistent with patterns found in police performance literature, such findings may be related to police visibility. The Philippine National Police (PNP) operates both on a national and local level and has the widest interaction with the public (Sidel, 1999). In turn, their actions are closely examined by Filipinos as they are perceived as a function of the justice system.

Interestingly, experiencing the responsiveness of the government and witnessing widespread corruption or bribe-taking impacts public trust in the police, but not on trust in the courts. It is possible that these two factors may not directly affect court trust in the Philippines compared to other performance indicators, but rather, involves a more complex relationship involving the direct functions of the police. Nonetheless, such results from the police trust model affirm the connections seen in prior police evaluation research (Wu & Sun, 2009; Wu et al., 2012; Park et al., 2021), as well as the corruption trends in the Philippines. Corruption indicators (i.e., TI Corruption Perception Indexes and World Bank Governance Indicators) have been used to assess the public perceptions of public sector corruption in the Philippines. Past literature has shown, though poor to start with, that these measures have consistently scored the Philippines at the lower end of these indexes over the past two decades, indicating greater perceptions of corruption (Dressel, 2003; Tidwell, 2016). Decades of corruption undermined the integrity of the police and can provide an explanation for the link between government performance and trust in the police.

Contrary to expectations, results also show that a sense of safety produced a null effect on both trust in the police and courts. Prior research has shown a strong association between perceived safety and institutional trust (Jackson & Bradford, 2009; Jackson & Sunshine, 2007; Sun et al., 2019; Wu, 2014). However, given the strong sense of community, it is likely that other informal control behaviors could be taking place in these settings. Future studies should consider whether Filipinos are likely to engage in individual or communal precautionary actions and whether these may shape their perceptions of safety and risk.

Third, unexpectedly, media exposure and consumption are largely ineffective in impacting Filipinos' trust in legal authorities. Internet use is the only media variable found to negatively impact Filipinos' trust in the courts, with no effect on trust in the police. While this relationship was not found in any Philippine court literature, this is reflected in the findings by Zhang and colleagues' (2021) study, where frequent internet use reduced Filipino residents' police trust. Unlike assumptions from Norris's virtuous cycle theory (2000), internet use may facilitate more critical residents who are distrustful of authority figures. The Internet may provide greater information on the court system than traditional media sources, and thus, impacts how Filipinos may view this system.

The insignificant results from following the news on politics and relying on traditional media platforms (i.e., radio, television, and newspaper) can also be attributed to the current media landscape, where attacks on Philippine media and journalism have occurred. Under both the Duterte and Marcos, Jr. administrations, there have been numerous “red tagging” cases, where certain journalists and major news organizations

were demonized by the government (Newman et al., 2023). While there is a potential link between press violation and media trust, a recent report conducted on the Philippines media demonstrates that such trust varies by different media organizations. Specifically, Newman and colleagues (2023) noted that long-established media companies, such as GMA Network and the Philippine Daily Inquirer, often have higher levels of trust, whereas independent outlets known to be critical of those in powerful positions are often distrusted by supporters of politicians. The complexity between trust and media bias can complicate the media-institutional evaluation relationship, where partisanship can shape how the public receives messages.

Lastly, age and urban residency matter in predicting public trust in the police and courts in the Philippines. Older age diminishes trust in the courts, while living in an urban area reduces trust in the police. As this is less articulated in Philippine literature, these findings add to the existing evidence analyzing the effects of demographic characteristics on attitudes toward legal institutions (Lai et al., 2010; Wang & Sun, 2020; Wu, 2014; Wu et al., 2012). Older Filipinos are likely to be more cynical of the courts, given the historical trajectory of the Philippine government. With the sociopolitical changes over the last several decades, those who may be witnessing these changes have declining institutional trust. Additionally, the noticeable variations in urbanization and socioeconomic development in the Philippines are also likely to impact the gap between urban and rural residencies. Filipinos living in urban areas most often have access to educational resources, public services, and political information. In line with evidence

from Zhang and colleagues (2021), better-informed and educated residents are more critical of the police given the wealth of information they are exposed to.

Altogether, it is evident that certain hypotheses are better at explaining Filipinos' evaluations of the police and courts. Both models show the significant impact social trust has on shaping institutional trust in the Philippines relative to all other characteristics. Specifically, having general trust, trust in neighbors, and trust in others known personally were all related to trust in both the police and courts. These findings are reflected in other studies conducted in China and Taiwan, where indicators reflecting social trust (i.e., generalized trust, particularized trust, interpersonal trust, and trust in neighbors) are associated with police trustworthiness (see Han et al., 2017; Sun et al., 2016; Wang & Sun, 2020; Wu et al., 2012). As mentioned earlier, the cultural emphasis on ties with informal social networks indicates the level of civic engagement, and thus, the ability to trust their legal institutions.

It is additionally evident that factors related to institutional performance were predictive of Filipinos' trust in the police relative to their trust in the courts. While the effect of receiving help from police was consistent with both outcomes, poor government performance, such as non-responsiveness of the government and corruption, were additionally shaping police trust. This is in line with one comparative study on China and Taiwan, where the researchers reported a link between ease of receiving police help, government responsiveness, corruption, and trust in the police (Wu et al., 2012). Prior to the Duterte administration, resident-police relations were consistently strained (Hapel & Jansen, 2017; Sidel, 1999). The weakened democratic processes, along with inadequate

administration and corruption, continue to shape public relations and their perceptions toward law enforcement. In line with past literature and expectations, the institutional performance explanation can be useful in explaining the performance-police trust link even within the political context of the Philippines.

Finally, media exposure and consumption had the least support in predicting police and court trust. Only internet use had a positive impact on trust in the courts. Given the limited literature examining the effects of media on the Philippine court system, this finding mirrors prior studies examining such relationship in other contexts, such as the U.S. and Taiwan (Johnson & Bartels, 2010; Wu, 2014). It is plausible that the Internet provides greater information on the court system, facilitating critical thinking abilities, as stated earlier. However, future research should also consider the nuances of the type of media used and content provided, given the precarity of the Philippines journalism.

Given the exploratory nature of this study, several limitations should be mentioned. As such, the cross-sectional nature of the ABS data hinders the ability to determine the causal relationships of the study variables. Future research may consider analyzing longitudinal data or various waves of the ABS data to strengthen conclusions about the relationships between social trust, institutional performance, media exposure, and institutional trust. Further, secondary data is used for the analysis, which limits me to the items used in the ABS data. This also means that the items used downplay the complexity of the measured concepts. For instance, trust in the police and trust in courts were measured using a single item. Although these measures appear to have good

validity, current research has distinguished the differences between trust and other related concepts, such as confidence, satisfaction, and legitimacy (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Cao et al., 2015; Jackson & Bradford, 2009; Reisig & Parks, 2000; Sun et al., 2019; Tyler, 2001; Wu et al., 2012). Additionally, the measure of trust in the courts does not distinguish between types of court systems, including special courts that deal with instances of corruption in the Philippines. Similar issues can also be seen with the measures of traditional media, government responsiveness, and help from the police, which did not tap into the frequency and magnitude of these conditions. Future research should consider different measures to capture the nuances of certain variables and how these shape institutional trust.

In sum, these findings have important policy implications. Public trust in legal authorities is not a straightforward concept but a multi-dimensional one, encompassing multiple factors on both communal and institutional levels. Policies aimed at increasing social trust, such as fostering community ties through events and collaboration, would be useful in cultivating institutional trust. Law enforcement in the Philippines should improve their performance and implement meaningful policies to help enhance the responsiveness and integrity of the government. These efforts to build up a fair and just police force can impact perceptions of the police and the court system, given the linkage of police performance. To enhance Filipinos' trust in legal authorities and ensure the stability of the Philippines, it is necessary to prevent the severe police measures and anti-drug campaigns that were prevalent during Duterte's term in office.

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