

Willingness to Complain about National Government and Noisy Neighbors in Four Countries

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Abstract: We administered a national government political ideology scale, a personal political ideology scale, a scale to measure the right to complain about noisy neighbors, and the right to complain about one's national government, to samples of university students recruited in India, the Philippines, United States, and Vietnam. We hypothesized that across all four countries attitude scores on willingness to complain would be higher on complaints about noisy neighbors than complaints about one's national government. Our results showed this to be false for all but the Vietnamese sample. We also hypothesized that willingness to complain scores about one's government would be highest in the United States relative to the other three countries. We found that the United States was second highest, perhaps because data were collected in a conservative area of the country. We hypothesized that across all four countries there would be a positive correlation between discrepancy scores and willingness to complain about one's national government. This hypothesis was disconfirmed, possibly because discrepancy scores were quite low and not widely dispersed. Our analysis of gender differences in willingness to complain about either noisy neighbors or one's national government revealed no significant differences across all four countries. Discussion focused on understanding the results.

Key terms: complaining, national government, political ideology, India, Philippines, Vietnam, United States

Complaining is ubiquitous. We humans frequently complain about almost anything – the weather, faulty products, selfish politicians, noisy

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neighbors, obnoxious persons we encounter in the workplace, careless drivers, unfair laws. One frequency estimate is one complaint per minute in a normal conversation (Bradberry, 2016). According to Bowen (2007) about 10 percent of those who quit their jobs do so because they could not tolerate listening to complaints.

That said, the right to complain or criticize the government is taken quite seriously in many countries. Alhugbani (2025), Kowalewski (2019), Yupanqui-Lorenzo et al. (2025) and Lala and Priluck (2011) noted that some individuals are afraid to complain about perceived institutional or government wrongdoings. Guslyakova and Guslyakova (2019) argued that anxiety inhibits persons from complaining, perhaps from fear of reprisal. One source has ranked virtually all of the world's countries on freedom of the press (data from 2024) and freedom of expression, the right for citizens to speak freely, without fear of reprisal (data from 2023). To simplify, we have combined the ranking from the two scores from each of the four countries included in the present study to reach an average ranking. Lower numbers indicate greater freedom of speech/press. The United States has a rank score of 41, the Philippines has a rank score of 116, India ranks 151, and Vietnam ranks 161 (Countries with Freedom of Speech, 2025).

The consequences of complaining about too much noise from one's neighbor would likely be minimal. You might lose the friendship of your neighbor, but that pales beside the possibility of losing your job or your freedom if your national government is intolerant of criticism. On the other hand, your neighbor is someone who you might see or interact with so frequently that you might be reluctant to complain about him or her, afraid that a complaint could lead to long-term anxiety and the implied threat of reprisal.

Our study is grounded in Reactance Theory (Brehm & Brehm, 1981; see Rosenberg & Siegel, 2016, & Stendl et al., 2015, for more recent reviews). This theory suggests that when people are threatened with the loss of freedom they react by increasing the value of that freedom. Furthermore, reactance to a threat is only as great as the perceived importance of the freedom being threatened. Thus, a threat of loss of freedom issued from one's government is likely to generate more reactance than the threat of having to put up with noisy neighbors. Reactance is also greater when the perceived threat carries implications for future losses of freedom. If a government threatens to imprison members of one organization that has criticized that government, there is an implied threat that it might do likewise with other organizations that have criticized the government. On the other hand, if one's national government is not perceived as threatening, then the potential threat attached to a complaint about a noisy neighbor might be perceived as more salient.

Numerous studies have tended to support the theory. For example, greater perceived freedom threat following the viewing of a video advocating COVID-19 guidelines was related to greater reactance, which was then linked to lower intention to comply with the COVID-19 guidelines (McGuire & Ball, 2022). In a similar study, individuals in both the United States and Saudi Arabia also showed reactance when confronted with a message advocating compliance with advice relating to COVID-19 and they also indicated a reduced intent to comply (Alhugbani, 2025). In another study Iranian Canadians showed greater reactance than European Canadians when faced with fictitious social media censorship from the government. The authors argued that most of the Iranians in their sample had been born in Iran and had actually experienced social media censorship, thus heightened sensitivity to it (Ng et al., 2019).

Culture also plays a role in how threats to freedom loss are met with reactance. Some cultures emphasize individualism (independent attitudes and values, individual uniqueness) whereas others emphasize collectivism (interdependent attitudes and values, group harmony) (Cheng et al. 2020; Triandis, 2001; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). Research shows that threats to individual freedom result in minimal reactance in collectivistic countries as compared to individualistic countries, but greater reactance if the threat is directed toward the entire culture (Jonas et al., 2009). Kim et al. (2017) showed an assertive message about recycling (i.e., “you must,” “you should”) to Americans (a very individualistic culture) and South Koreans (a very collectivistic culture). Americans showed more reactance, probably because the language contained an implied threat that recycling might become law if one fails to recycle.

Most of the major countries of the world have been ranked on a scale that measures individualism versus collectivism, with a high number indicating a country where individualism is prevalent. The United States tends to be very individualistic with a score of 91. India scores 48, the Philippines scores 32, and Vietnam, with a score of 20, is very collectivist.

In the present study we focused on the willingness to complain directed toward one’s own national government in four countries with widely different rankings on freedom to criticize in print and in speech. We also aimed to compare the freedom to complain or criticize government with the freedom to complain about noisy neighbors as a control condition. We also took into consideration national differences in individualism/collectivism.

We devised a “discrepancy score.” Our discrepancy score is the absolute numerical difference between a measure of one’s personal political ideology (PPI) and a measure of the perception of one’s national government political ideology (NPI; Kroh, 2007). A high discrepancy

score suggests much dissatisfaction with the national government, and thus, more motivation to complain about it.

Furthermore, we will explore the possibility of gender differences in the willingness to complain. Some studies have found that females are more likely to complain than males (Keng et al., 1995; Kowalski, 1993; Mat et al., 2020; Volkov et al., 2005). Other studies have found no significant gender differences (Heung & Lam, 2003; Ndubisi & Ling, 2007). The author of a study that aimed to find individual differences in complainants did not list gender as an important variable, presumably because gender was found to be unimportant (Moyer, 1984). We note that most of these studies addressed complaints about consumer products. A 2023 poll (Pew Research Center) found that many Americans are dissatisfied with their national government, and that women were more dissatisfied than men about the number of women in high political office. However, poll results are not exactly the same thing as willingness to actually complain about one's national government. As far as we know, there are no studies limited solely to willingness to complain about noisy neighbors, and no studies comparing the willingness to complain about noisy neighbors with the willingness to complain about one's government.

Based on our review we hypothesized as follows:

- 1) Across all four countries attitude scores on willingness to complain will be higher on complaints about noise than complaints about one's national government, based on our review of reactance theory and the implied threat of governmental reprisal.
- 2) Willingness to complain scores about one's government will be highest in the United States, because it is both individualistic and enjoys high freedom to complain about the national government, relative to the other three countries.
- 3) Across all four countries there will be a positive correlation between discrepancy scores and willingness to complain about one's national government.
- 4) We make no prediction about gender differences in willingness to complain about either noisy neighbors or one's national government.

METHOD

Participants

The participants were selected from students at four large universities in India, the Philippines, the United States, and Vietnam. There was a diverse sample of 137 university students from India, with participants aged between 19 and 35 years ($M = 19.85$; $SD = 2.36$). Among them, 84 were female (61.3%) and 53 were male (38.7%). The academic distribution was predominantly undergraduate students (92%), with a smaller representation of postgraduate students (4.4%) and Ph.D. scholars

(3.6%). Notably, 11.7% of the respondents indicated that at least one family member was actively involved in politics, whether at the state or central level, highlighting a potential connection between familial political engagement and the students' perspectives. The Philippines sample consisted of 148 Filipinos residing in the country at the time of data collection with ages between 18 and 64 ($M = 26.00$; $SD = 10.56$). The sample consisted of 91 females (61.5%), and 52 males (35.1%), with four who preferred not to say (2.7%). The majority of the participants were undergraduates, consisting of 50% college ($n = 74$) and 35.1% high school ($n = 52$). There were also participants who were in graduate school (18; 12.2%) and those who listed vocational (2; 1.4%), and others (2; 1.4%) in terms of their educational background. The sample from the United States consisted of 138 university students from the southeastern United States. Participants were between 18 and 47 years of age ($M = 20.75$; $SD = 3.98$). The sample consisted of 23 males and 114 females, with one person preferring not to say. The ethnic breakdown was 44.2% Black, 39.9% White, 12.3% Other, 2.2% preferring not to answer and 1.4% Asian. The academic distribution of this sample was all undergraduates consisting of 35.5% Sophomores, 25.4% juniors, 22.4% Freshman, 14.5% Seniors, and 2.2% preferring not to answer. The Vietnamese sample consisted of 125 university students between the ages of 18 and 21 years ($M = 19.4$; $SD = 0.9$). This sample included 62 females and 63 males, all of whom were undergraduate students.

Measures

The *Complaint Attitude Scale* contains six items, using a Likert scale, with 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. High scores indicate a positive attitude toward complaining. Sample items include “The right to complain should be promoted so that students are aware of their rights” and “I believe that university students should assert their rights by complaining.” Confirmatory factor analysis confirmed a unidimensional model with acceptable fit indices and an alpha of .89 (Yupanqui-Lorenzo et al., 2025).

We modified this scale to create two related six-item scales, one to measure attitude toward willingness to complain about noisy neighbors (Willing to Complain Noise; CN), and the other to measure attitude toward willingness to complain about one's national government (Willing to Complain Government; CG). Sample items include “I believe that citizens (or university students) should assert their rights by complaining about neighbors if they make too much noise (or “complaining about the national government”). Other sample items include “I believe that complaints can bring about positive changes with noisy neighbors (or, positive changes in my national government”). Alpha for CN in the present study for the

Indian sample was .86, alpha for CN in the Philippines sample was .85, alpha for CN in the United States sample was .83, and the CN alpha for Vietnam was .85. Alpha for CG in the Indian sample was .78, alpha for CG in the Philippines sample was .83, alpha for CG in the United States sample was .87, and the CG alpha for Vietnam was .74.

We used a one-item Likert-type measure of personal political ideology (PPI) that reads: “How would you describe your personal overall political ideology,” that is anchored by 1 = “completely liberal,” and 11 = “completely conservative” (Kroh, 2007). Huynh et al. (2022) validated this measure by showing that conservatives tended to report stronger admiration for a favorite celebrity, as predicted. We used a one-item measure of national government political ideology (NPI) that reads: “How would you describe the current overall political ideology in your country?” We used the same scale as described above. Our interest is in what we are labeling “Discrepancy score.” A discrepancy score for the purpose of the present study is the absolute numerical difference between a participant’s PPI score and NPI score. Scores can range from 0 to 10. A score of zero indicates that a participant’s personal political ideology aligns perfectly with that of his or her perceived national government political ideology. Such a score suggests one who has few complaints about one’s national government. A discrepancy score of 10, on the other hand, suggests one who is completely at odds politically with his or her national government, and might be dissatisfied enough to complain.

Procedure

First, we obtained permission to conduct the present study from the proper authorities in each of the universities included in the study. Then we recruited students from each participant country to respond to each of the scales we used in random order to reduce the likelihood of a systematic order effect. The survey was administered through Qualtrics in the United States and the Philippines; in India and Vietnam, it was administered in classes.

RESULTS

India: A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare attitude scores regarding the willingness to complain about one’s national government versus the willingness to complain about noisy neighbors ($N = 137$). Participants reported a significantly higher willingness to complain about their national government ($M = 22.45$, $SD = 3.93$) than about noisy neighbors ($M = 21.24$, $SD = 4.18$), with $t(136) = 3.62$ and $p < .001$. The mean difference was 1.20, with a 95% confidence interval of [0.55, 1.86]. Additionally, a Pearson correlation analysis revealed a moderate positive association between the willingness to complain about noisy neighbors and

the willingness to complain about the national government, $r(135) = .53$, $p < .001$.

Philippines: A paired-samples t -test was conducted to compare Filipino participants' willingness to complain about one's national government and willingness to complain about noisy neighbors ($n = 148$). Results indicated that participants reported a significantly higher willingness to complain about their national government ($M = 26.41$, $SD = 3.11$) than about noisy neighbors ($M = 24.47$, $SD = 3.46$), $t(147) = 6.69$, $p < .001$. The mean difference was 1.94 with a 95% confidence interval of [1.37, 2.51]. The effect size was moderate, Cohen's $d = .55$. Moreover, a Pearson correlation analysis revealed a moderately positive association between Filipino participants' willingness to complain about noisy neighbors and their willingness to complain about the national government, $r(148) = .43$, $p < .001$.

United States: A paired-samples t -test was conducted to compare the attitude scores regarding the willingness to complain about one's national government versus the willingness to complain about noisy neighbors ($N = 138$). The United States participants reported a significantly higher willingness to complain about their national government ($M = 23.85$, $SD = 4.54$) than about noisy neighbors ($M = 22.05$, $SD = 3.86$), $t(137) = 4.50$, $p < .001$. The mean difference was 1.80 with a 95% CI [1.01, 2.59]. The effect size was moderate, Cohen's $d = .38$. Further, a Pearson correlation analysis revealed a moderately positive association between the willingness to complain about noisy neighbors and the willingness to complain about the national government, $r(138) = .39$, $p < .001$.

Vietnam: A paired-samples t -test was conducted to compare willingness to complain about one's national government and noisy neighbors ($N = 125$). Participants reported a significantly higher willingness to complain about noisy neighbors ($M = 23.18$, $SD = 4.03$) than about their national government ($M = 16.84$, $SD = 4.77$), $t(124) = -14.72$, $p < .001$. The mean difference was -6.34 with a 95% CI [-7.19, -5.49]. The effect size was large, Cohen's $d = 1.10$. A Pearson correlation analysis revealed a moderately positive association between willingness to complain about noisy neighbors and willingness to complain about the national government, $r(125) = .41$, $p < .01$.

Table one shows the descriptive statistics for each of the variables in our study.

Table One. Means, standard deviations and ranges and alphas for each variable in the study.

Measure	Mean (SD)	Sample size	Range	alpha
India				
Discrepancy score	1.96 (1.97)	137	10	

Willing to Complain Noise (CN)	21.24 (4.18)	137	24	.86
Willing to Complain Gov (CG)	22.45 (3.93)	137	20	.78
Philippines				
Discrepancy score	3.26 (2.62)	148	10	
Willing to Complain Noise (CN)	24.47 (3.46)	148	22	.85
Willing to Complain Gov (CG)	26.41(3.11)	148	12	.83
United States				
Discrepancy score	2.48 (2.59)	138	10	
Willing to Complain Noise (CN)	22.05 (3.86)	138	20	.83
Willing to Complain Gov (CG)	23.85 (4.54)	138	21	.87
Vietnam				
Discrepancy score	1.12 (2.41)	125	10	
Willing to Complain Noise (CN)	23.18 (4.03)	125	24	.85
Willing to Complain Gov (CG)	16.84 (4.77)	125	24	.74

Our first hypothesis is that across all four countries attitude scores on willingness to complain will be higher on complaints about noise than complaints about one's national government. This hypothesis was significantly confirmed for only the Vietnamese sample. For the other three countries the hypothesis was disconfirmed.

Our second hypothesis is that willingness to complain scores about one's government will be highest in the United States, as compared to the other countries sampled. Willingness to complain about one's own government was highest in the Philippines, and second highest in the United States.

Table two shows the pattern of correlations among study variables in each country.

Table Two. Zero-order correlations among study variables for All Four countries

	1	2	3
India			
Discrepancy score (1)	—	-.01	-.05

Willing to Complain Noise (2)		–	.53**
Willing to Complain Gov (3)			–
Philippines			
Discrepancy score (1)	–	-.04	.12
Willing to Complain Noise (2)		–	.43**
Willing to Complain Gov (3)			–
United States			
Discrepancy score (1)	–	-.02	.11
Willing to Complain Noise (2)		–	.39**
Willing to Complain Gov (3)			–
Vietnam			
Discrepancy score (1)	–	.08	.12
Willing to Complain Noise (2)		–	.41**
Willing to Complain Gov (3)			–

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table Three. Comparison of Countries on Willingness to Complain about Noisy Neighbors (CN) and National Government (CG)

Variables	India (N=137)		Philippines (N=148)		United States (N=138)		Vietnam (N=125)		<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD			
CN	21.24	4.12	24.47	3.46	22.05	3.86	23.18	4.03	18.73	.001	.09
CG	22.45	3.93	26.41	3.11	23.85	4.55	16.84	4.77	128.48	.000	.42

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine differences in CN across India, the Philippines, Vietnam, and the United States. The results indicated a statistically significant effect of country on CN, $F(3, 544) = 18.73$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .09$, suggesting a moderate effect size. Games–Howell post hoc comparisons revealed that participants from the Philippines scored significantly higher than those from India ($p < .001$), Vietnam ($p = .029$), and the United States ($p < .001$). Additionally, participants from Vietnam scored significantly higher than those from India ($p = .001$). However, no significant differences were found between

India and the United States ($p = .335$) or between Vietnam and the United States ($p = .096$).

A separate one-way ANOVA was conducted for CG, which also showed a statistically significant effect of country, $F(3, 544) = 128.48$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .42$, indicating a large effect size. Games–Howell post hoc comparisons indicated that all pairwise differences were statistically significant. Specifically, participants from the Philippines scored significantly higher than those from India ($p < .001$), Vietnam ($p < .001$), and the United States ($p < .001$). Participants from the United States scored significantly higher than those from India ($p = .033$) but significantly lower than those from the Philippines ($p < .001$). Furthermore, Vietnam had significantly lower CG scores than India, the Philippines, and the United States (all $p < .001$). These findings highlight substantial cross-country variation in CG, with particularly low scores observed in Vietnam and the highest scores in the Philippines.

Our third hypothesis is that across all four countries there will be a positive correlation between scores on the discrepancy measure (between one's personal ideology and one's perceived national government ideology) and scores on the willingness to complain about one's national government. This hypothesis was disconfirmed. The Philippines ($r = .12$), United States ($r = .11$), and Vietnam ($r = .12$) all had positive correlation coefficients, but all were nonsignificant.

Our fourth hypothesis was open-ended. Independent samples t -tests were conducted in all four countries to examine gender differences in CG and CN scores: As seen below, no significant gender differences in either CG or CN were evident in any of the four countries.

India: For CG, the results indicated no significant difference between females ($M = 22.62$, $SD = 3.81$, $n = 84$) and males ($M = 22.17$, $SD = 4.14$, $n = 53$), $t(135) = 0.65$, $p = .517$. Similarly, for CN, no significant gender difference was observed between females ($M = 21.15$, $SD = 3.46$, $n = 84$) and males ($M = 21.38$, $SD = 5.02$, $n = 53$), $t(135) = -0.31$, $p = .759$. These findings suggest that gender did not significantly influence CG or CN scores in India.

Philippines: Among Filipino participants, there was no significant difference in CG scores between males ($M = 26.63$, $SD = 3.17$, $n = 52$) and females ($M = 26.47$, $SD = 2.90$, $n = 91$), $t(141) = 0.31$, $p = .757$. Similarly, there was no significant difference in CN scores between males ($M = 24.92$, $SD = 3.11$, $n = 52$) and females ($M = 24.38$, $SD = 3.54$, $n = 91$), $t(141) = 0.91$, $p = .363$. These findings indicate that gender differences were not observed in willingness to complain about the national government or noisy neighbors among Filipino participants.

United States: For CG, the results indicated no significant differences between females ($M = 23.87$, $SD = 4.67$, $n = 114$) and males ($M = 23.48$,

$SD = 3.82, n = 23$), $t(135) = -0.38, p = .708$. For CN, no significant difference was found between females ($M = 21.93, SD = 3.80, n = 114$) and males ($M = 22.39, SD = 4.11, n = 23$), $t(135) = -0.52, p = .708$. This result suggests there was no gender difference for the CG and CN scores in the United States.

Vietnam: For CG, the results indicated no significant difference between females ($M = 17.02, SD = 4.69, n = 62$) and males ($M = 16.66, SD = 4.86, n = 63$), $t(123) = 0.42, p = .676$. Similarly, for CN, no significant gender difference was observed between females ($M = 23.29, SD = 3.94, n = 62$) and males ($M = 23.07, SD = 4.10, n = 63$), $t(123) = 0.31, p = .759$. These findings show that gender did not significantly influence CG or CN scores in the Vietnamese sample.

DISCUSSION

The Vietnamese sample was the only one to support our first hypothesis. We suggest that behaviors people exhibit when complaining will be influenced by how immediate and successful they believe their complaint will be. Complaining about noisy neighbors (which occurs frequently) happens on a direct personal level. Therefore, people will perceive it as being relatively safe to make a complaint since it is significantly easier and more likely to be successful for them to do so. In contrast, complaints directed to the national government are viewed as being more distant, less likely to be successful, and the possible consequences of making complaints against the national government may discourage them from doing so. Cultural context may also contribute to how willing people are to complain. In collectivist cultures such as Vietnam, maintaining social harmony and avoiding direct confrontation with an authority figure is an essential social principle and as a result people are probably more likely to express dissatisfaction in situations that are socially acceptable and have limited scope (e.g., complaining about neighbors) versus situations that are broader and institutional in nature (e.g., complaining about the government). This difference may account for the lower willingness to complain about the government. Another possible reason for this is that, according to reactance theory, demonstrating many of the same factors discussed previously (e.g., perceived threats towards one's freedom) will not necessarily produce a willingness for individuals to express disagreement with an authority figure. For example, while individuals may perceive their voice to be limited by the laws placed on them, they may still be unwilling to make a complaint about the government due to the perceived risk of potential consequences associated with making a complaint to the national government.

Our second hypothesis, that willingness to complain scores about one's government would be highest in the United States, was disconfirmed. The

United States sample was second highest behind the Filipino sample. The United States sample was collected from a university located in a very conservative region of the country (Kirkland, 2024). We speculate that United States scores would have been higher had they been collected from a more politically liberal region. Also, participants may have felt that complaining to the government would not actually lead to any positive substantive changes (Pew Research Center, 2024).

Among Indian participants, willingness to complain (CN) was significantly lower than in the Philippines and Vietnam, but comparable to the United States. This suggests relatively restrained interpersonal complaint behavior, aligning with the moderate levels seen in the United States rather than the higher levels in the Philippines. For CG, however, a clearer pattern emerges. Indian participants reported significantly lower willingness to complain about their government compared to both the Philippines and the United States, while still scoring higher than Vietnam. Given the large effect size for CG ($\eta^2 = .42$), from a political ideology perspective, these findings can be understood in light of India's hybrid civic culture. Although India is a democratic system with constitutionally protected rights to free expression, everyday political behavior is often influenced by norms of respect for authority, institutional trust, and perceived efficacy of voicing complaints. Citizens may not uniformly see direct complaint or confrontation as the most effective or appropriate means of engaging with the state. Instead, political participation may take alternative forms, such as voting, community networks, and mediated state–citizen interactions (Mishra & Attri, 2020; Nath & Verma, 2025).

Additionally, ideological diversity within India—ranging from strong support for state authority to more liberal, rights-based orientations—may produce an averaging effect in aggregate data, resulting in moderate CG scores rather than extreme positions. The lack of significant difference between India and the United States for CN, but the presence of a significant gap for CG, further suggests that the restraint observed in India is more pronounced in the political domain than in interpersonal situations. Another important consideration is perceived risk and efficacy. Even within a democratic framework, if individuals believe that complaining about government is unlikely to produce change—or could entail social or bureaucratic costs—they may be less inclined to do so. This pragmatic dimension, shaped by political ideology and lived experience, may help explain why Indian respondents occupy a middle position: more willing than those in a highly centralized system like Vietnam, but less expressive than respondents in contexts where public criticism is more culturally normalized. The Indian results do not suggest a lack of political awareness or democratic values, but rather a balanced approach to complaining—shaped by diverse beliefs, respect for authority, and practical judgments

about when and how to express disagreement (Nath & Verma, 2025; Norris, 2011).

Filipinos' relatively higher willingness to complain may be understood in relation to broader patterns of sociopolitical dissatisfaction and perceived governance challenges. Contemporary Philippine society has been shaped by persistent concerns related to corruption, human rights issues associated with the Duterte administration's anti-drug campaign, and perceptions of weak governance under the current administration. These conditions may contribute to a context in which political dissatisfaction is both salient and personally consequential.

Recent political developments further provide context for these findings. Ongoing political fragmentation, including tensions between major political actors and alliances, may have contributed to increased public scrutiny and engagement in political discourse (Credendo, 2025). High-profile developments, such as legal proceedings involving former political leaders, have also intensified public debate and may have contributed to heightened awareness of governance issues. While these factors do not directly measure complaint behavior, they may create a sociopolitical environment in which expressions of criticism toward the government become more salient and socially acceptable.

Public dissatisfaction is further reflected in national survey data indicating relatively low approval and trust ratings for the current administration, suggesting a gap between government performance and public expectations (Credendo, 2025; Pew Research Center, 2023; Pulse Asia Research, Inc., 2025). However, it is important to note that such measures capture attitudes toward governance rather than actual complaint behavior. Thus, the present findings contribute by extending this line of research to behavioral tendencies, specifically willingness to complain.

In contrast to the United States, where dissatisfaction with government is often embedded within highly polarized and partisan political dynamics (Pew Research Center, 2023), political evaluations in the Philippines may be more closely linked to immediate economic conditions and everyday lived experiences. In contexts where a substantial proportion of the population faces economic vulnerability, governance issues may be experienced in relation to basic needs, such as food security and cost of living (Credendo, 2025). As a result, dissatisfaction with government may take on a more immediate and practical significance, which may, in turn, be associated with a greater willingness to express criticism.

Additionally, public reactions to governance issues in the Philippines may be shaped by the salience of corruption-related concerns. Reports of alleged misuse of public funds and infrastructure-related controversies may reinforce perceptions of governance failure. In such contexts, corruption may be perceived not only as procedural misconduct but also

as directly affecting access to essential services, which may intensify public sensitivity to political issues.

Finally, the Philippines' historical experience with collective political action, particularly through People Power movements, may contribute to a cultural understanding that public dissent is a legitimate means of political expression. This historical context may reduce perceived barriers to criticizing authority and contribute to the normalization of expressing dissatisfaction toward the government. Taken together, the convergence of political dynamics, economic conditions, corruption salience, and historical context may help explain the relatively higher willingness of Filipinos to report a willingness to complain about their national government in the present study. We note that the sample from the Philippines had the highest discrepancy scores, which is consistent with the high scores on willingness to complain about their national government.

Our third hypothesis, namely that across all four countries there will be a positive correlation between discrepancy scores and willingness to complain about one's national government was disconfirmed. Table one shows that discrepancy scores ranged from 3.26 to 1.12, much lower than we anticipated, accompanied by low standard deviations. All other things being equal truncated scores result in relatively low correlation coefficients. Perhaps samples with higher discrepancy scores and greater diversity would have resulted in statistically significant correlation coefficients. What these low discrepancy scores do indicate is that, with the possible exception of the Philippines, participants in our study perceived their own political ideology to be largely in tune with the political ideology of their country. An alternative explanation is that many people who are dissatisfied with the policies of their national government are unwilling or afraid to complain about it.

Our fourth prediction about gender differences in willingness to complain about either noisy neighbors or one's national government, was really an observation. Based on conflicting and limited previous research we were reluctant to predict a gender difference. We found no evidence for gender differences on either CG or CN in any of the four countries we sampled. Some studies have found that females are more likely to complain than males (Keng et al., 1995; Kowalski, 1993; Mat et al., 2020; Volkov et al., 2005). Other studies have found no significant gender differences (Heung & Lam, 2003; Ndubisi & Ling, 2007). We believe that gender differences in complaining may depend largely on what persons are complaining about. For example, if females do most of the grocery shopping, they might be more inclined to complain about poor quality produce or high prices.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Our self-report data suffer from the usual hazards associated with the use of self-report. Participants may be motivated to give answers that they think we expect them to give, and we have no way to check on the validity of their answers. We also recognize that freedom of speech and freedom to criticize/complain are not exactly the same thing. As noted above, poll results showing discontent are not exactly the same thing as willingness to actually complain about one's national government. Most of the studies we cited in the introduction focused on complaints about consumer products or universities, not dissatisfaction with one's national government. The sample from the Philippines was somewhat older than the other three samples. Is it possible that the age difference accounted for some of the relatively high scores obtained by Filipinos on willingness to complain about their national government? To check on this *ad hoc* hypothesis, we removed the 20 oldest participants from the Philippines sample and recomputed the mean score on willingness to complain about the national government. The result was a mean score of 26.72 ($SD = 3.05$), actually slightly higher than the original value of 26.41.

Beyond age differences, the samples also varied in several ways that may have influenced the results. For instance, the Philippine sample included a broader educational range, whereas the other samples were primarily undergraduate. Gender distributions also differed (e.g., predominantly female in the United States), and sociocultural contexts varied, including regional political characteristics and levels of collectivism and perceived freedom of expression. These differences may have shaped perceived risks, norms, and willingness to complain, and thus cross-country comparisons should be interpreted with caution.

Finally, we recognize that our samples do not necessarily represent the values of each country as a whole.

In conclusion, we view our study as a beginning point for further studies examining the willingness to complain about one's national government, using larger and more representative samples, and controlling for extraneous variables.

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