

GROUP LOYALTY
AND UNETHICAL BEHAVIOUR

**An Analysis
of the Tolerance
of Corruption in the
Public Administration**

RESEARCH REPORT



Institute
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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the role of group loyalty in relation to corruption tolerance in public administration, relying on the theoretical assumption that corruption tolerance is higher when colleagues share the same group identity, while out-group colleagues are more likely to be punished. The findings are important for understanding the relationship between internal corruption and trust in public institutions. The data collection was carried out through a semi-field experiment where the subjects of the study are employees of the public administration. For the accomplishment of the experiment, the participants were divided into two groups, the experimental group and the control group. They were presented with a scenario that introduced a case of favoritism and corruption. The data collection phase included the periods before the experiment, during the experiment and after the experiment, assessing the knowledge of the participants on the rules of integrity, ethical behavior, the group role in relation to corruption tolerance. The results showed that among public administration employees, loyalty to the group influences tolerance to corruption. The key factors that contribute to tolerance of corruption are the belief that the group (i) is an extension of the professional family; (ii) is a source of professional success; (iii) develops the feeling as a leader of this group. This knowledge is important for the development of strategies to fight corruption in public institutions.

1. PRESENTATION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study focused on the role of group loyalty in relation to corruption tolerance, based on the theoretical assumption that corruption tolerance is higher when colleagues share the same group identity. To achieve the purpose of the study, a semi-field experiment was developed to measure and analyze (i) the relationship between group loyalty and tolerance to corruption in public administration and (ii) assess the reasons that lead individuals to accept or not accept the current state of corruption in work environments. The experiment was carried out with employees from various public administration institutions including: the Parliament of Albania, the Information and Data Protection Commissioner, the High Council of Prosecution, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Finance and Economy, the Ministry of Culture, the Department of Public Administration, the General Directorate of Taxation, and the Institute of Public Health. Standard experimental procedures were followed to guarantee complete anonymity and confidentiality. About 63 subjects participated in the experiment.

To achieve the purpose of the study, various measurements and analyzes were carried out, including in the **first phase** (i) the measurement of the individual's awareness and agreement with the rules of ethics and integrity, (ii) the measurement of the degree of tolerance towards unethical behavior and corrupt acts. The **second phase** of the analysis focused on measuring the relationship between the importance given by public administration employees to integrity and the degree of tolerance to corruption, while the **third phase** included analyzing and processing the data collected from the post-experiment questionnaires where was measured the role of group loyalty versus tolerance of corrupt acts. The findings of the study offered important implications for understanding the relationship between internal corruption and trust in public institutions.

1.1 GROUP LOYALTY AND TOLERANCE OF CORRUPTION

The notion of group loyalty has its roots in social identity theory¹. According to the theory, people tend to perceive or categorize themselves and others through categories such as *ethnicity, language, religion, gender, ideology, or other forms of group division*, and exhibit strong psychological motivations to uphold their group membership. Turner and his colleagues have described this motivation as the need of group members "to distinguish their groups in a positive light compared to other groups in order to develop a positive social identity"². By joining these social groups, individuals have some psychological benefits, such as status, honor, prestige or increased self-image³. This creates group loyalty, that is, preferential treatment of in-group members over out-group members⁴.

Recent evidence from social psychologists and experimental economists in the field of behavioral ethics suggests that, although most people self-report that they value honesty and punish the unethical behavior of others⁵, the evidence suggests otherwise. The discrepancy between attitudes and behavior,

1 Tajfel, H., J. C. Turner. 1979. "An integrative theory of intergroup conflict", *The social psychology of intergroup relations* 33; Tajfel, H. 1981. *Human groups and social categories: Studies in social psychology*, Kembrixh: Cambridge University Press.

2 Turner, J. C., et al. 1987. *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory*. Basil Blackwell, f. 42.

3 Akerlof, G. A., R. E. Kranton. 2000. "Economics and identity." *Quarterly journal of Economics*.

4 Tajfel, H. 1981. *Human groups and social categories: Studies in social psychology*.

5 Aquino, K, A. Reed II. 2002. "The self-importance of moral identity", *Journal of personality and social psychology*.

known as “ethical dissonance”⁶, is often the result of group loyalty. Other studies⁷ show that loyalty to the group increases the willingness to forgive violations of social norms rather than punish them. On the other hand, there are authors who prove that these effects are more evident in competitive environments⁸. Other studies suggest that loyalty to the group leads to a willingness to forgive unethical behavior of group members, since punishing a group member can have negative consequences for both the offender and the punisher by disrupting group cohesion.⁹

6 Barkan et al. (2012).

7 Bernhard, Fehr and Fischbacher (2006); Gino et al. 2009; Wright et al. 2013

8 Hildreth, Gino and Bazerman (2016)

9 Bernhard et al. 2006; Wright et al. 2013.

2. EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

It has been established that the application of the experiment is the right method when studying the phenomenon of corruption or unethical behavior. In order to have a deeper view of corrupt behavior, researchers had to use experiments, since the subject of the study is hidden from the eyes of the researcher¹⁰. Therefore, to combat this phenomenon, social science researchers have begun to use alternative approaches to collect empirical data on corruption through experimentation¹¹. The model of the experiment used in this study is based on the assumption that there is a positive relationship between group loyalty and tolerance to corruption among colleagues working in public administration. In this study, the concept of loyalty refers to the priority that individuals give to loyalty towards colleagues over ethical consideration.

2.1 EXPERIMENT ADMINISTRATION

The participants in the experiment were employees of the public administration. They were randomly divided into two equal groups and placed in two different halls. The separation between the two groups was carried out to enable the creation of experimental conditions for both groups. The control group serves to validate the comparison between the two groups and to highlight the difference.

The experiment was conducted in three phases. The first phase involves the completion of the same questionnaire by both groups; the second phase involves conveying information through a text to both groups. In this phase, the same text was used for both the experimental and control groups. The third phase involves completing the questionnaire after reading the material (stimulant) for both groups. Before starting each phase of the experiment, both groups were communicated in detail the steps they had to follow. The transition from one phase of the experiment to another was accompanied by a 10-minute break, but without the right to leave the hall and without the right to communicate with the other participants in the experiment. During the development of the experiment, the use of the telephone was not allowed, nor was communication between the participants in the experiment. The three phases of the experiment were conducted at the same time and in the same way for both groups. What differentiates the experimental group from the control group is related to the questions designed for the post-experimental phase. The experimental group underwent a set of questions that were not similar with the control group. The questions used in the pre-experiment phase are the same for both groups. The specifications of each phase of the experiment are explained in detail in the following sub-sections.

2.2. PRE-EXPERIMENT PHASE

Before the presentation with the experimental stimulant, data were collected regarding (i) the demographic characteristics of the participants; (ii) the level of interest in the code of ethics and the rules of integrity at work (iii) ethical attitudes; (iv) and tolerance to corruption. To measure these categories were drawn up questions that evaluate the perceptions and behaviors of the participants towards corruption¹².

10 Olken, B. A. 2009. "Corruption Perceptions vs. Corruption Reality". *Journal of Public Economics*, 93 (7).

11 Abbink, K. 2006, "Laboratory experiments on corruption." në Rose-Ackerman, Susan (ed). *International handbook on the economics of corruption*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

12 Appendix 1- Pre-experiment questionnaire.

2.3 EXPERIMENT PHASE - INTERVENTION

After completing the pre-experiment survey, all participants were presented with a hypothetical corruption scenario that confronted them with an ethical dilemma¹³. The scenario describes an unethical recruitment process in a state institution. According to the scenario, an employee, a member of the recruitment committee, faces pressure from his superior to favor an unqualified candidate for an important position due to the candidate's political connections promising him that the selection of this candidate would bring favors to institution in the future.

2.4 POST-TREATMENT PHASE

In the post-treatment phase (after the participants read the material describing the hypothetical situation), they completed the post-experiment questionnaires. Firstly, was completed the questionnaire measuring the level of group loyalty, **only for the experimental group**¹⁴, and then were completed **from both groups** the questionnaires¹⁵ on the willingness of the participants to protect colleagues involved in the irregular process. It is worth noting that the experimental group was given both questionnaires at the same time.

13 Appendix 2 - The scenarios used were created for the purpose of this experiment.

14 Appendix 3 - Questionnaire measuring the level of group loyalty - only for the experimental group.

15 Appendix 3/a - Questionnaire that measures the readiness to protect colleagues in case of violation - for both groups.

3. METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

Profile and analysis of two experimental groups (pre-experiment phase)

The first phase of the analysis was conceived based on the categories on which the pre-experiment questionnaire was designed. *This analysis is dedicated only to the findings generated by the analysis and processing of the data gathered in the pre-experiment analysis, i.e., before the exposure of both groups to the experimental stimulant.*

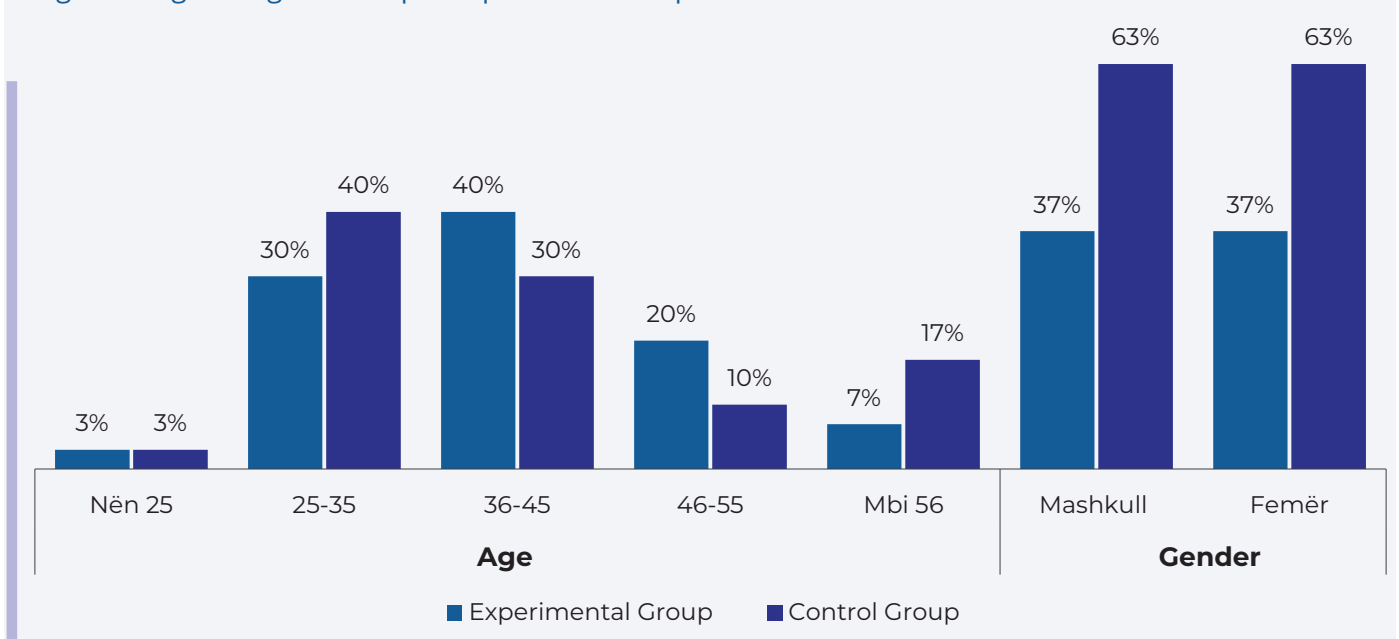
The purpose of this analysis is to test the relationship between the independent variables (i) *knowledge of integrity rules and interest in training*, (ii) *willingness to report violations with the dependent variable tolerance to corruption*. To fulfill this goal the following procedures were carried out:

1. Measuring the degree of recognition, agreement, and interest of individuals regarding the rules of ethics and integrity.
2. Measuring the degree of tolerance towards unethical behavior/corrupt acts.
3. Analysis of the connection of interest in integrity and ethics, training, reporting violations with tolerance to corruption.

These procedures were carried out for both groups to highlight the degree of recognition and agreement of public administration employees regarding **ethics at work** and tolerance **towards unethical behavior**.

In the study participated 63 individuals divided into two groups, without statistical differences in the demographic profile to minimize the influence of these factors on the results of the experiment. The selection of participants was carried out through the random method. The participants of the groups were aged 25-45 years, with a composition of 37% men and 63% women (Fig.1).

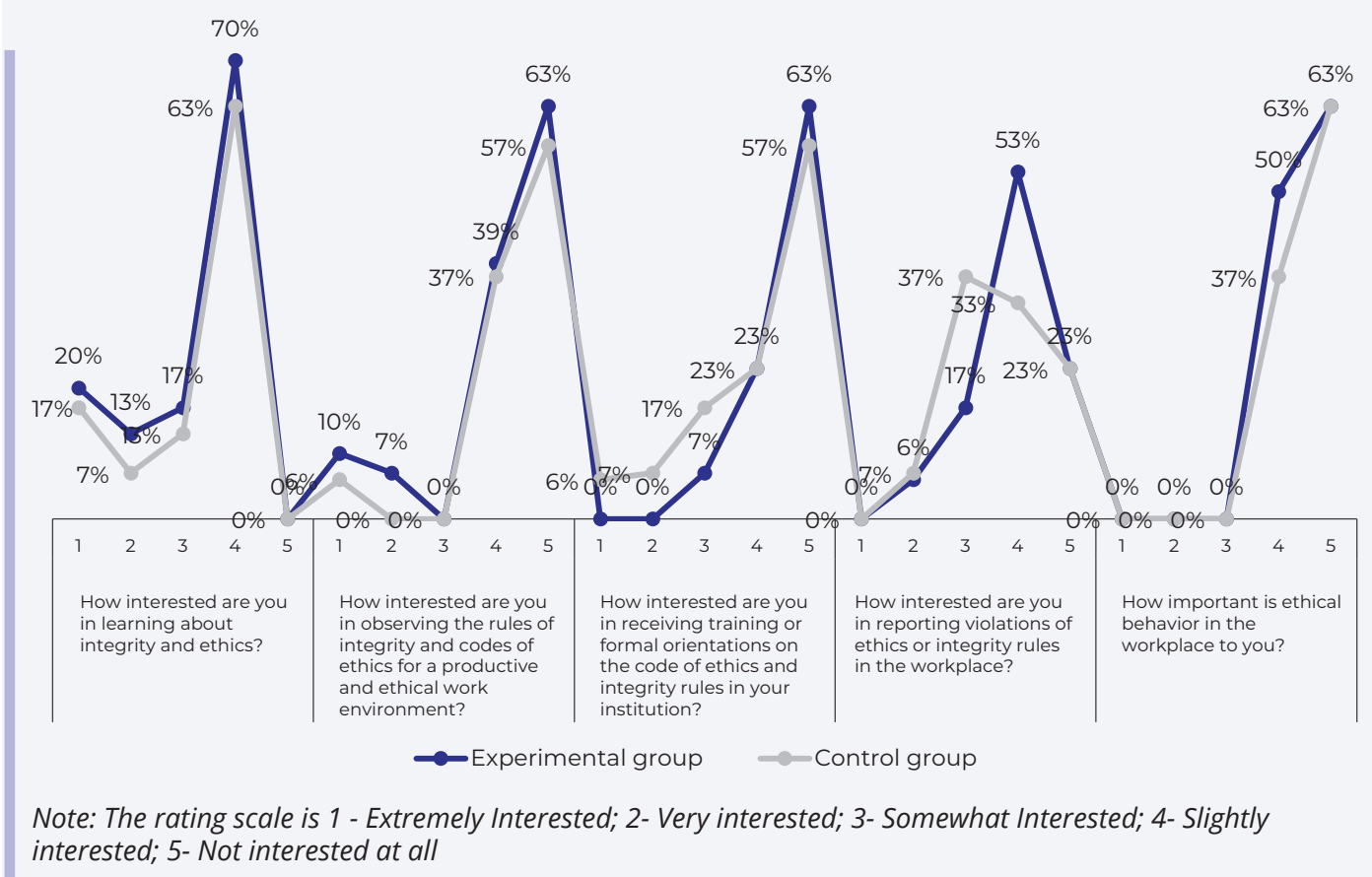
Figure 1. Age and gender of participants in the experiment



3.1.1 THE DEGREE OF RECOGNITION, AGREEMENT, AND INTEREST OF INDIVIDUALS ON THE RULES OF ETHICS AND INTEGRITY AT WORK

Before facing the experimental stimulant (scenario), the approach to ethics and institutional integrity was assessed for both groups (questions 5-9, appendix 1)¹⁶. Participants answered the question about **their level of interest in relation to their knowledge about integrity**. According to the data analysis, 70% of individuals from the experimental group and the control group declared a **high degree of interest** in relation to their knowledge about integrity and ethics, indicating a high prevalence of interest in both groups. Regarding the **interest to participate in training dedicated to the code of ethics and rules of integrity**, the participants reported high frequencies of interest (63% of individuals in the control group and 57% of individuals in the experimental group). When asked **how willing they are to report** cases of ethical violations, individuals **showed a more modest degree of agreement**. 50% of both groups stated that they strongly agree, while 33% of the control group and 27% of the experimental group stated that they somewhat agree to report. Meanwhile, more than 50% of individuals declared that ethical behavior in the workplace is important to them (Fig. 2). According to the data, both groups manifested comparable levels of interest and importance in ethics and integrity issues, with small and statistically insignificant differences.

Figure 2. Degree of recognition & agreement of individuals with the rules of ethics and integrity



16 Questions 5 to 9 (appendix 1) have information on P5#interest in increasing knowledge on integrity and ethics, P6#on compliance with integrity rules for a productive and ethical work environment, P7#interest in training on integrity, P8#interest for reporting violations, P9#the importance of ethical behavior in the workplace.

3.1.2 TOLERANCE TOWARDS UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR/CORRUPT ACTS AMONG PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION EMPLOYEES

Through the responses given by the individuals, collected in the first phase of the experiment - before the experimental intervention, the level of tolerance towards unethical behavior in the work environment was measured (questions 10-14, Appendix 1)¹⁷. According to the data, **one in two people report unethical/corrupt experiences in the workplace**, demonstrating an equal prevalence of unethical experiences between the two groups, but with a clear difference in reporting (70% of cases are reported, compared to 33% in the control group, as seen in Table 1. These data highlight the need for interventions to improve reporting culture, as there is a clear gap in willingness to report unethical behavior between the two groups. This difference suggests the presence of other influencing factors, such as previous education, attitudes towards integrity, or exposure to ethics policies, which influence reporting behavior before the intervention. Further studies should delve into these aspects to better understand this phenomenon.

Individuals also report on their **feelings about reporting** colleagues' behavior, with the **majority feeling 'neither good nor bad'** (43% for the experimental group and 60% for the control group). The participants in the experiment also express **disagreement or complete opposition to tolerating corruption** for the benefit of the team or colleagues (63% in the experimental group, 64% in the control group - the percentages come as the results of the answers 'I do not agree and do not agree at all'). Almost **one in two participants from both groups would confront a colleague who commits unethical behavior** or a corrupt act, while the majority of those who will not intervene in such cases is very small (3% for the experimental group, 7% for the control group). **These responses identify a low degree of tolerance for corruption, regardless of the rationale for the benefit of the team or colleagues** (Table 1).

Table 1. Degree of tolerance towards unethical behavior/corrupt acts

Questions	The category of answers	Experiment Frequency (in %)	Control Group Frequency (in %)
<i>Have you ever witnessed unethical behavior in your workplace? (e.g., favoritism, bribery, misuse of resources).</i>	Yes	50%	53%
<i>If you witnessed instances of unethical behavior, did you report them?</i>	Yes	70%	33%
<i>How would you feel if you reported cases of unethical behavior of a colleague to your superiors?</i>			
	Very good	23%	3%
	Good	7%	17%
	Neither good nor bad	43%	60%
	Bad	20%	17%
	Too bad	7%	3%

17 Questions 10 to 14 (appendix 1) have information on P10#known cases of unethical behavior in the workplace, P11#reporting of unethical cases, P12#feeling after reporting, P13#agreement on: a. Tolerance of the violation for the benefit of the team or colleagues; b. participation in corrupt acts if it helps colleagues, P14#actions they would take in case a colleague is involved in a corrupt case.

Questions	The category of answers	Experiment Frequency (in %)	Control Group Frequency (in %)
<i>I believe that minor ethical violations in the workplace are acceptable if it is in the best interest of our team or colleagues.</i>			
	I totally agree	3%	0%
	I agree	10%	10%
	Neutral	23%	27%
	I don't agree	53%	57%
	I do not agree at all	10%	7%
<i>I would be willing to participate in or overlook corrupt acts if it helps my colleagues or the department where I work to achieve their goals.</i>			
	I totally agree	0%	0%
	I agree	0%	0%
	Neutral	10%	13%
	I don't agree	37%	37%
	I do not agree at all	53%	50%
<i>A colleague is involved in a corruption scandal. What actions would you take?</i>			
<i>I would report it to the superior or the ethics commission</i>	Yes	47%	37%
<i>I would confront the colleague directly</i>	Yes	47%	43%
<i>I would seek advice from a trusted colleague</i>	Yes	37%	30%
<i>I would do nothing but wait for someone else to deal with it</i>	Yes	3%	7%
<i>I would support and defend the colleague involved</i>	Yes	0%	3%

3.1.3 TESTING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN INTEREST IN INTEGRITY AND ETHICS, TRAINING, REPORTING OF VIOLATIONS AND TOLERANCE TO CORRUPTION

To understand the relationship or influence that the interest and importance of integrity and ethics have in relation to the degree of tolerance to corruption among public administration employees, ANOVA¹⁸ analysis was used. To carry out this analysis was created the index “degree of tolerance towards corrupt acts”¹⁹, which served as a dependent variable. Meanwhile, questions 5-8, Appendix 1 served as independent variables: (i) interest in being informed about integrity and ethics; (ii) compliance with integrity rules and codes of ethics; (iii) participation in trainings regarding the code of ethics and integrity; (iv) willingness to report violations.

18 ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)

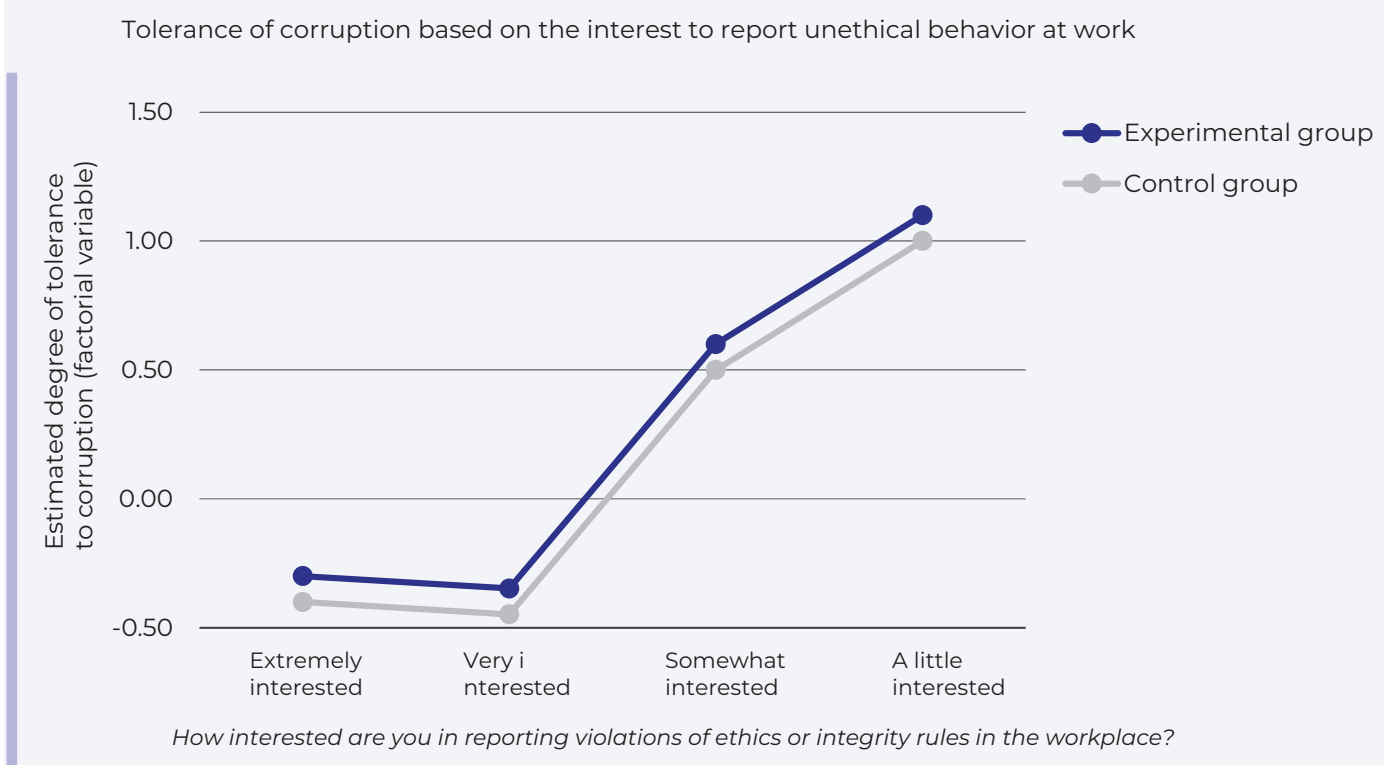
19 Dependent variable ‘degree of tolerance towards corrupt acts. To create such an index, factorial analysis was used, which triangulates the questions (12-14, appendix 1) into a single variable that evaluates the degree of interest and importance as a linear combination of the answers received. Questions 12 to 14 (Appendix 1) give information on Q12#feeling after reporting, Q13#agreement on: a. tolerance of the violation for the benefit of the team or colleagues; b. participation in corrupt acts if it helps colleagues, P14#actions they would take in case a colleague is involved in a corrupt case.

The result of the ANOVA analysis showed that the degree of tolerance towards unethical behavior and corrupt acts is influenced (statistically reliable) by the interest of employees to know concepts on integrity and ethics, the interest to respect, the interest to receive training, the desire to report and the reports they made (Appendix 4/Table 2).

In detail, the analysis suggests that **the interest in knowledge about integrity and ethics significantly affects tolerance to corruption** (Eta .303). The results show that about 30% of the changes in the attitude towards corruption can be explained by this interest. This means that the more someone cares about integrity and ethics, the less tolerant they will be of corruption. Also, **compliance with the rules of integrity and codes of ethics has little effect on the tolerance towards unethical behavior** (Eta .289). This suggests that even though the impact is lower (29%), there is still a significant relationship between compliance with ethics and attitude towards corrupt behavior. **Code of ethics trainings play a major role in reducing tolerance to corruption** (Eta .357), explaining about 36% of the changes in this attitude. This shows that ethics education can have a positive effect on reducing tolerance to corrupt behavior. Furthermore, **the willingness to report ethical violations has a very large impact on reducing tolerance to corruption** (Eta .755). This shows that the more willing individuals are to report violations, the less inclined they are to tolerate corruption. Finally, **the reporting of unethical behavior has an even greater impact**, explaining about 82% of the variation in tolerance of corrupt behavior. This implies that the reporting of corrupt behavior is among the strongest factors that help reduce tolerance to corruption.

To assess whether there is a difference between the experimental group and the control group in relation to the above analysis, the variation of tolerance to corruption and willingness to report violations was examined. According to the graphic representation (Figure 3), both groups show small but statistically significant differences. The graph shows that public administration employees who are less interested in reporting violations of ethics and integrity rules in the workplace have a higher tolerance for corruption (this applies to both groups).

Figure 3. The variation of tolerance of corruption



3.2 ANALYSIS OF POST-EXPERIMENTAL STIMULANT DATA

The analysis of the second phase of the paper examines the influence that group membership has on the tolerance of unethical behavior in the work environment, after the presentation of the stimulant. To fulfill the main goal of the second phase, the following objectives were achieved:

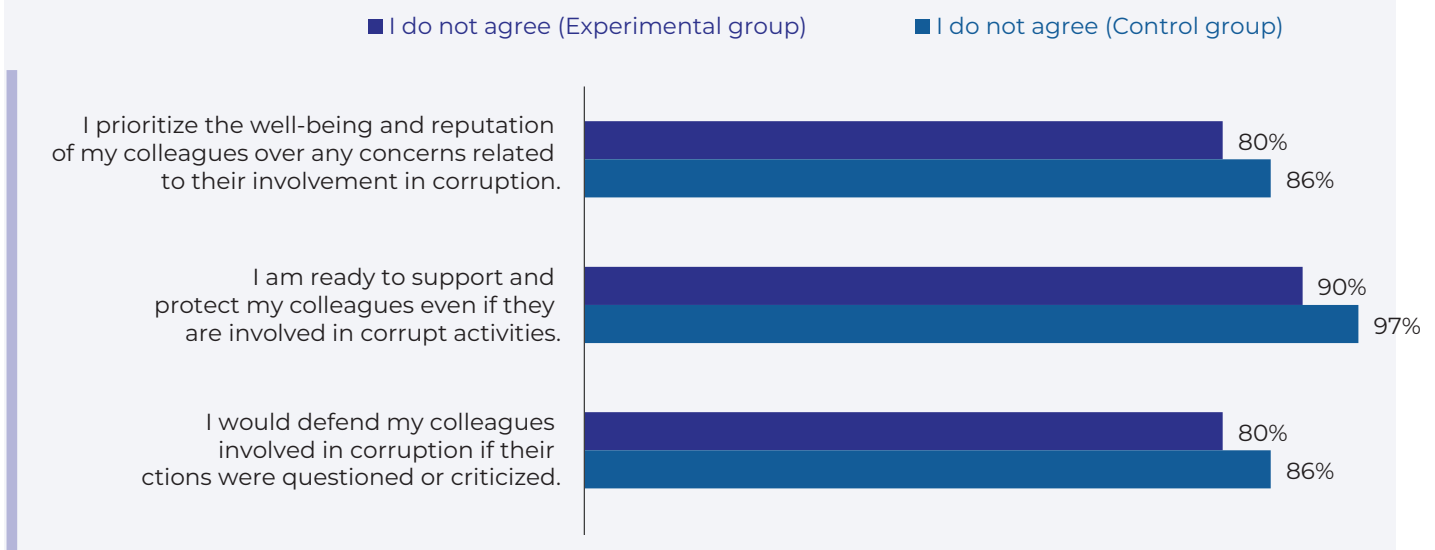
1. Analyzing the willingness to tolerate corrupt behavior in both groups, including the experimental and the control group.
2. Measuring the level of loyalty to the group, only in the experimental group.
3. Testing the connection between the feeling of belonging to the group in relation to the tolerance towards unethical behavior.

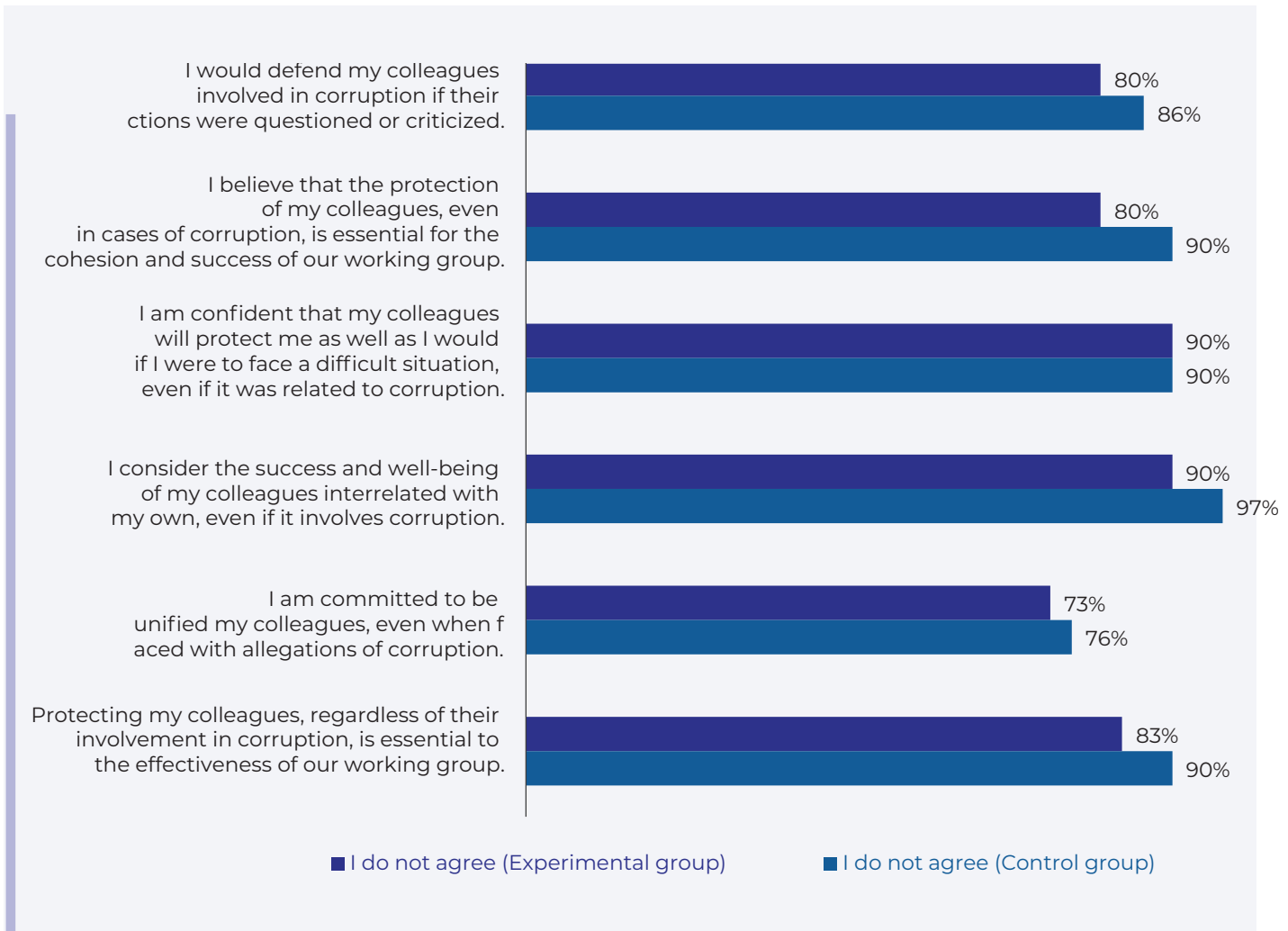
3.2.1 WILLINGNESS TO TOLERATE CORRUPT BEHAVIOR

To understand how willing public administration employees are to tolerate corrupt behavior, the data collected from a questionnaire that was completed after an experimental stimulation by both groups was analyzed. The collected data measured the degree of compliance with a series of statements that include situations where individuals must choose whether to support their colleagues in cases of corrupt behavior, or to reject this behavior (see Appendix 3.a for the common questions for both groups after the experiment).

In an overall analysis (see figure 4), both groups participating in the experiment show a high level of disagreement with the statements, indicating that employees would choose to stand on the side of law and ethics, regardless of the consequences for colleagues, work and the shared objectives of a department. This approach remains the same even when employees consider cases where their choice would be contrary to personal interests or would cause the loss of support from colleagues. According to the data, 90% of the experimental group and 97% of the control group express a strong tendency to prioritize ethical behavior. The similar percentage in both groups (about 90%) shows that individuals think that colleagues would also not be willing to protect them in similar situations. Although the differences between the percentages of the two groups are small, they remain statistically significant. However, in most cases, the control group shows a greater discrepancy, showing a more determined attitude against the tolerance of corrupt behavior compared to the experimental group.

Figure 4. Group belonging and attitude towards corrupt behavior

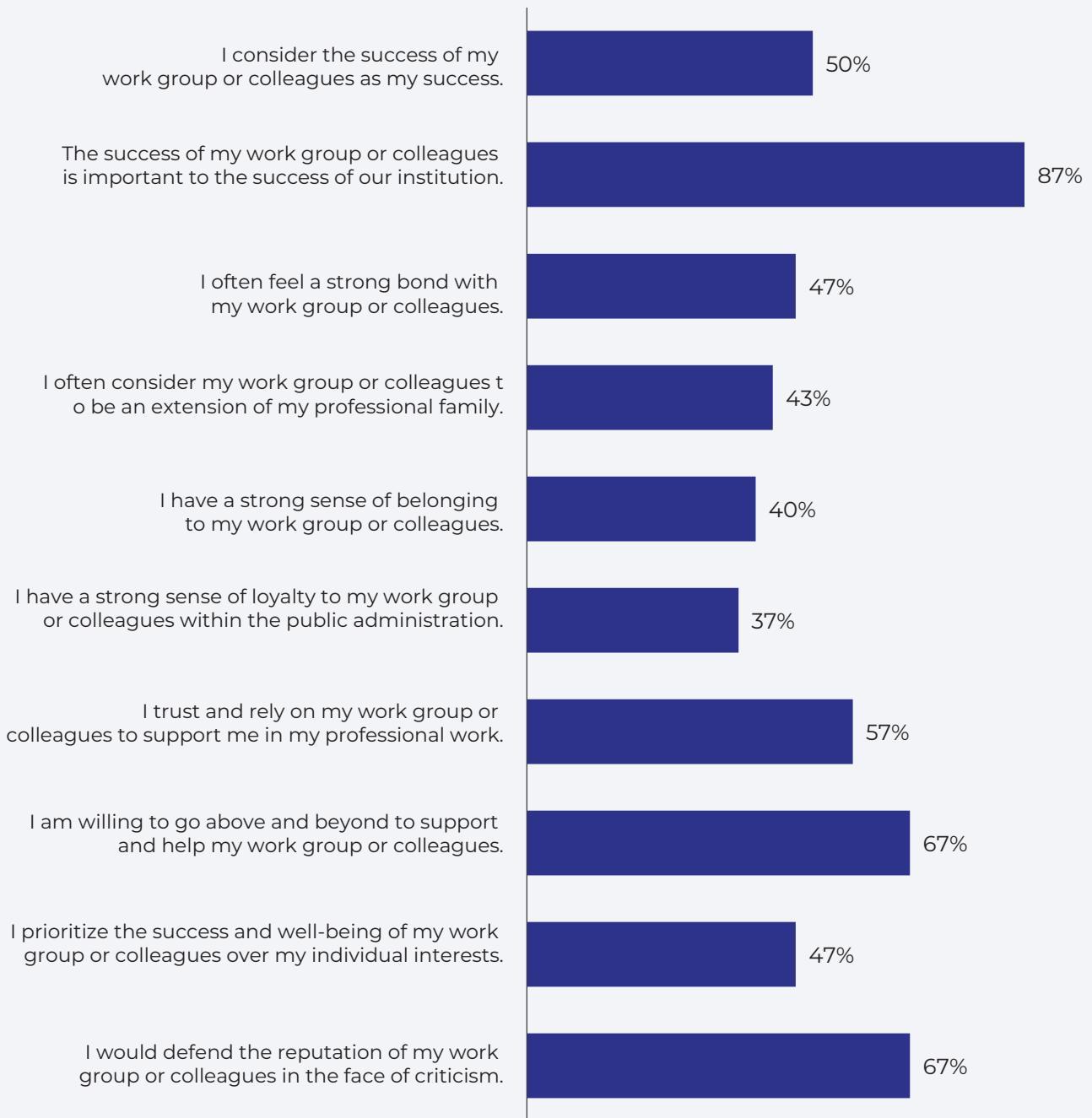




3.2.2 MEASURING THE LEVEL OF GROUP AFFILIATION (EXPERIMENTAL GROUP ONLY)

After facing the stimulant (scenario) the experimental group was provided with a questionnaire (questions 1-10, appendix 3) and asked to express their agreement with the statements that assess belonging to the group. According to the graphic presentation (figure 5), affiliation as a **professional affiliation** related to the success of the work of individuals and the group, is confirmed to a high extent of 50%. **Social affiliation** is confirmed to the extent of 47%. Meanwhile, belonging as **an extension of the professional family** is confirmed by 43% defining the group as a professional family or as a high sign of loyalty. This sense of belonging is also evident in efforts **to support the group in cases of criticism** (67%). Meanwhile, public administration employees claim that they are ready to work beyond their means to guarantee the group's success (67%). These data confirm once again that the public administration employees involved in the study have developed a sense of belonging to the group. This data creates the opportunity to measure and test whether group affiliation plays a role in the tolerance of corrupt behavior among public administration employees.

Figure 5. Group belonging (post-experiment)²⁰



3.2.3 THE DEGREE OF TOLERANCE TO UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR AND THE ROLE OF GROUP BELONGING

After the data showed that the participants in the study are inclined to stand on the side of integrity when faced with an unethical case in the workplace, but at the same time they are loyal to the group,

²⁰ The comparison was made using the scale of agreement - agree, strongly agree, and extremely agree and similar questions designed before and after the stimulant of the experiment.

it was tested whether the sense of belonging to the group affects the level of tolerance to unethical behavior. To measure the role of the group towards unethical behavior in the workplace, through factorial analysis, the '**sense of belonging**'²¹ index was created. This index is built from four factors (appendix 6) which played the role of independent variables²². Their labelling is made in accordance with the reasons for which they declare their affiliation and loyalty to the group. Each of these four factors served as four simple independent variables.

Considering the distribution of questions for each factor, these factors are: (Appendix 6)

1. **The group as an extension of the professional family** - The first factor collects questions that describe belonging to the group as a family or social feeling.
2. **The group as a source of confidence and professional success** - The second factor reflects a group affiliation built on trust and opportunities to achieve personal or professional success and goals.
3. **The group as protection and support** - The third factor represents affiliation which reflects the need for mutual protection and support.
4. **The group leadership** - The fourth factor represents a sense of belonging in relation to the leadership and direction of the group.

Meanwhile, the dependent variable '*tolerance to corruption*' was created through factor analysis (see subsection 3.1.3).

In order to test the premise that there is a strong connection between **the sense of belonging** to the group and the **tolerance of unethical behavior**, the following four hypotheses were constructed:

H1: There is a strong connection between peer learning and tolerance for unethical change.

H2: There is a strong relationship between considering colleagues as a source of trust and professional success and tolerance of unethical behavior.

H3: There is a strong relationship between considering colleagues as protective and supportive and tolerance of unethical behavior.

H4: There is a strong relationship between feeling like a group leader and tolerance of unethical behavior.

Data analysis showed that: (Appendix 5)

Belonging to a group as an alliance and to ensure professional success, especially when participants have a sense of belonging in relation to the leadership and direction of the group (group leadership), affects the tolerance to unethical actions (the coefficient of influence ETA 0.955 and 0.832). These coefficients indicate that belonging to a group aimed at professional success and leadership

21 Index 'sense of belonging'. To create this variable, factorial analysis was used, which triangulates the questions (1-10, appendix 3 and 1-8, appendix 3.a) into a single variable that evaluates the degree of interest and importance as a linear combination of the answers received.

22 The created index 'sense of belonging' through triangulation has identified four factors that played the role of independent variables: #Group as an extension of the professional family, #Group as a source of confidence and professional success, #Group as protection and support, #Leadership group - The fourth factor represents a sense of belonging in relation to the leadership and direction of the group (see Appendix 6).

enhancement increases tolerance to corrupt acts almost twice. (Appendix 5, Table 3). These data confirm H2 and H4. **Belonging to a group where the individual feels close and familiar** increases tolerance towards unethical acts (ETA influence coefficient 0.26). This value shows that when individuals feel close and have a sense of family within the group, they tolerate corrupt behavior (Appendix 5, Table 3). This data confirms H1. Meanwhile, belonging to a group as a form of seeking support or protection does not appear to have a significant impact on the tolerance of unethical behavior. Thus, H3 is not confirmed.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the initial analysis (the phase before the experimental intervention) *the connection between interest in ethics and integrity, involvement in trainings, willingness to report violations with tolerance to corruption was proven*, thus creating a complete panorama regarding the challenges and opportunities for improving the ethical culture in the public administration. The main findings of the study for the phase before the experimental intervention showed that both groups (experimental and the control group), showed a high interest in **knowledge about ethics** and integrity in the workplace as well as in **participating in trainings dedicated to the code of ethics**.

Regarding **the tolerance of unethical behavior and corrupt acts**, the data showed that, although the prevalence of unethical experiences in the workplace is equal in both groups, there is a clear difference in their reporting (70% in the experimental group and 33% in the control group). This underlines the need for interventions to improve reporting culture and suggests the necessity for further studies to analyze factors such as education, attitudes toward integrity, and exposure to ethics policies, which may influence reporting behavior.

In order to better understand the **factors that influence the non-toleration of corruption** among public administration employees in the workplace, factorial ANOVA analysis was used in the study. According to ANOVA, the key factors that influence the reduction of tolerance to corruption are: *(i) interest in knowledge about integrity and ethics; (ii) observing the rules of ethics; (iii) training on the code of ethics; and (iv) willingness to report violations*. The strongest relationship was observed between **willingness to report violations** and **tolerance of corruption**, suggesting that active reporting of corrupt and unethical behavior is of critical importance for reducing corruption tolerance.

The analysis of the second phase (after the experimental stimulant) focused on the influence that the sense of belonging to the group has on the tolerance towards unethical and corrupt behavior in the work environment. First, the willingness to tolerate corrupt behavior was analyzed in both groups, and then the level of group loyalty was measured only for the experimental group, to understand how the sense of belonging affects the tolerance of unethical behavior.

The main findings of the study for the phase after the experimental intervention show that both groups prefer to stand on the side of integrity and not tolerate the irregular recruitment process, even when it negatively affects the common goals of the directorate. Regarding the **level of loyalty to the group (experimental group only)**, the participants expressed a high sense of belonging and loyalty to the group, which includes professional (50%), social (47%) and family (43%) affiliation when colleagues are considered an extension of the professional family. This strong sense of belonging and loyalty to the group is closely related to mutual support and efforts to ensure the success of the group. Meanwhile, **the analysis of the relationship between belonging to the group and tolerance to unethical behavior shows that the sense of belonging to the group as an alliance and to ensure professional success, especially when the participants have a sense of belonging in relation to the leadership and direction of the group, increases tolerance to unethical behavior**. Likewise, the sense of social closeness within the group (among colleagues who have established friendships) increases tolerance towards unethical and corrupt behavior.

Based on the results of the analysis, some intervention strategies and instruments can be designed that can help reduce the level of tolerance towards unethical behavior and corrupt acts by public administration employees. Some of the recommendations are given below:

1. Strengthening ethics and integrity training through the organization by organizing ongoing trainings that focus on the importance of ethics and integrity at work. Institutions should increase the number of trainings and education campaigns on ethics and integrity, focusing not only on theoretical knowledge, but also on the practical application of rules in the work environment. Training should also include real-life scenarios and strategies for reporting unethical behavior.

1. Encouraging the reporting of unethical behavior through the creation of reliable and anonymous mechanisms for reporting unethical behavior.
2. Promoting a culture of transparency and accountability through the implementation of policies that support information sharing and open decision-making.
3. Reviewing and strengthening internal rules and policies by strengthening punitive measures for those who violate integrity rules.
4. Creating a monitoring system that constantly assesses compliance with the code of ethics in the institution.
5. Setting up working groups and support networks that provide advice and assistance on ethical issues.

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APPENDIX I. PRE-EXPERIMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. HOW OLD ARE YOU?

- 1 Under 25
- 2 25-35
- 3 36-45
- 4 46-55
- 5 Over 56

2. WHAT IS YOUR GENDER?

- 1 Male
- 2 Female
- 3 Other (please specify)

3. WHERE WERE YOU BORN?

4. HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU BEEN WORKING IN THE PUBLIC/CIVIL SERVICE?

5. HOW INTERESTED ARE YOU IN LEARNING ABOUT INTEGRITY AND ETHICS?

- 1 Extremely interested
- 2 Very interested
- 3 Somewhat interested
- 4 A little interested
- 5 Not interested at all

6. HOW INTERESTED ARE YOU IN OBSERVING THE RULES OF INTEGRITY AND CODES OF ETHICS FOR A PRODUCTIVE AND ETHICAL WORK ENVIRONMENT?

- 1 Extremely interested
- 2 Very interested

- 3 Somewhat interested
- 4 A little interested
- 5 Not interested at all

7. HOW INTERESTED ARE YOU IN RECEIVING TRAINING OR FORMAL ORIENTATIONS ON THE CODE OF ETHICS AND INTEGRITY RULES IN YOUR INSTITUTION?

- 1 Extremely interested
- 2 Very interested
- 3 Somewhat interested
- 4 A little interested
- 5 Not interested at all

8. HOW INTERESTED ARE YOU IN REPORTING VIOLATIONS OF ETHICS OR INTEGRITY RULES IN THE WORKPLACE?

- 1 Extremely interested
- 2 Very interested
- 3 Somewhat interested
- 4 A little interested
- 5 Not interested at all

9. HOW IMPORTANT IS ETHICAL BEHAVIOR IN THE WORKPLACE TO YOU?

- 1 Extremely interested
- 2 Very interested
- 3 Somewhat interested
- 4 A little interested
- 5 Not interested at all

10. HAVE YOU EVER WITNESSED UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR IN YOUR WORKPLACE (E.G., FAVORITISM, BRIBERY, MISUSE OF RESOURCES)?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

11. IF YOU WITNESSED INSTANCES OF UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR, DID YOU REPORT THEM?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No

12. HOW WOULD YOU FEEL IF YOU REPORTED CASES OF UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR OF A COLLEAGUE TO YOUR SUPERIORS?

- 1 Very good
- 2 Good
- 3 Neither good nor bad
- 4 Bad
- 5 Very bad

13. PLEASE TELL US HOW MUCH YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:

a. I believe that minor ethical violations in the workplace are acceptable, if it is in the best interest of the team or our colleagues.

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Neutral
- 4 I do not agree
- 5 Strongly disagree

b. I would be willing to participate in or overlook corrupt acts if it helps my colleagues or the department where I work to achieve their goals.

- 1 Strongly agree
- 2 Agree
- 3 Neutral
- 4 I do not agree
- 5 Strongly disagree

14. IMAGINE A SCENARIO WHERE A COLLEAGUE IS INVOLVED IN A CORRUPTION SCANDAL. WHAT ACTIONS WOULD YOU TAKE? (CHOOSE ALL THE ANSWERS THAT APPLY TO YOU).

- 1 I would report it to the superior or the ethics commission.
- 2 I would confront the colleague directly.
- 3 I would seek advice from a trusted colleague.
- 4 I wouldn't do anything but wait for someone else to deal with it.
- 5 I would support and protect the colleague involved.

15. HOW DO YOU PERCEIVE THE IMPACT OF CORRUPTION ON THE EFFECTIVENESS AND REPUTATION OF YOUR DIRECTORATE?

- 1 Extremely negative
- 2 Very negative
- 3 Somewhat negative
- 4 Slightly negative
- 5 Not negative at all

16. Do you want to tell us something else about the tolerance of corruption in your workplace?

APPENDIX II. SCENARIO FOR BOTH GROUPS

You find yourself in a difficult situation at your workplace in a state institution. Your department/institution is in the process of recruiting a new employee for an important position. As a dedicated and ethical employee, you have always believed that the most qualified candidates should be selected to ensure the effectiveness and integrity of the institution. So, you understand the importance of respecting transparency, fairness and meritocracy in the recruitment process.

However, the situation takes an unexpected turn when your superior, who holds an important position in the institution, instructs you to give preferential treatment to a certain candidate. This candidate turns out to be closely related to a senior government official, a fact that your superior also points out. On the other hand, the candidate in question lacks the qualifications and experience that are usually needed for this job position. From the candidate's CV and the results of the interview, major deficiencies are evident in terms of the skills and knowledge necessary for a quality job in this position. However, your superior insists on selecting the candidate despite his/her obvious shortcomings. The superior justifies his position by highlighting the strong connection between the candidate and the senior government official. The superior emphasizes the potential benefits that come from fulfilling the official's wishes, such as promotion and favorable treatment in the institution.

APPENDIX III. POST- EXPERIMENT. MEASURING THE LEVEL OF FIDELITY (EXPERIMENTAL GROUP ONLY)

1. TO WHAT EXTEND DO YOU AGREE WITH EACH STATEMENT ON A SCALE FROM 1 (STRONGLY DISAGREE) TO 7 (STRONGLY AGREE). CIRCLE ONE ANSWER FROM 1 TO 7 FOR EACH STATEMENT.

		Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
1	I have a strong sense of loyalty to my work group or colleagues within the public administration.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	I prioritize the success and well-being of my work group or colleagues over my individual interests.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	I am willing to go above and beyond to support and help my work group or colleagues.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	I often feel a strong bond with my work group or colleagues.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	I consider the success of my work group or colleagues as my success.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	I would defend the reputation of my work group or colleagues in the face of criticism.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7	I trust and rely on my work group or colleagues to support me in my professional work.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	I have a strong sense of belonging to my work group or colleagues.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9	The success of my work group or colleagues is important to the success of our institution.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10	I often consider my work group or colleagues to be an extension of my professional family.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

APPENDIX III. A. POST- EXPERIMENT WILLINGNESS TO PROTECT COLLEAGUES (FOR BOTH GROUPS)

1. TO WHAT EXTEND DO YOU AGREE WITH EACH STATEMENT ON A SCALE FROM 1 (STRONGLY DISAGREE) TO 7 (STRONGLY AGREE). CIRCLE ONE ANSWER FROM 1 TO 7 FOR EACH STATEMENT.

		Strongly disagree						Strongly agree
1	I prioritize the well-being and reputation of my colleagues over any concerns related to their involvement in corruption.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	I am ready to support and protect my colleagues even if they are involved in corrupt activities.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	I would defend my colleagues involved in corruption if their actions were questioned or criticized.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	I believe that the protection of my colleagues, even in cases of corruption, is essential for the cohesion and success of our working group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5	I am confident that my colleagues will protect me as well as I would if I were to face a difficult situation, even if it was related to corruption.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	I consider the success and well-being of my colleagues interrelated with my own, even if it involves corruption.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7	I am committed to be unified my colleagues, even when faced with allegations of corruption.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	Protecting my colleagues, regardless of their involvement in corruption, is essential to the effectiveness of our working group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

APPENDIX IV. ANOVA (INFLUENCE OF INTEGRITY AND ETHICS ON THE DEGREE OF TOLERANCE TO CORRUPT BEHAVIOR)

Table 2. Results of the ANOVA analysis (univariate) on the influence of integrity and ethics on the degree of tolerance to corrupt behavior

Dependent variable: Degree of tolerance to corruption (factor analysis)						
Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F - Statistic	P- Value	Partial Eta Squared
Model	50.628	14	3.616	19.579	.000	.910***
Experimental group versus control group	5.327	2	2.663	14.420	.000	.516***
How interested are you in learning about integrity and ethics?	2.165	2	1.082	5.861	.008	.303**
How interested you are in observing the rules of integrity and Codes of Ethics?	2.027	2	1.014	5.488	.010	.289**
How interested are you in receiving training or official guidelines for the code of ethics and rules of integrity?	2.765	2	1.383	7.486	.003	.357**
How interested you are in reporting violations of ethics or integrity rules in the workplace	15.375	3	5.125	27.747	.000	.755***
How important is ethical behavior in the workplace to you?	.058	1	.058	.316	.579	.012
Have you ever witnessed unethical behavior in your workplace?	.355	1	.355	1.923	.177	.066
If you witnessed instances of unethical behavior, did you report them?	22.556	1	22.556	122.120	.000	.819***
Error	4.987	27	.185			
Total	55.615	41				
R Squared = .910 (Adjusted R Squared = .864)						

APPENDIX V. TOLERANCE OF CORRUPTION AND SENSE OF BELONGING

Table 3. Correlation of tolerance to corruption with the sense of belonging to the group


Dependent Variable: Tolerance to corruption						
Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Model	23.951	4	5.988	173.34	.000	.964***
Belonging to the Group						
Social/Family	.329	1	.329	9.521	.005	.268**
Confidence and professional success	19.180	1	19.18	555.23	.000	.955***
Protection/support	.009	1	.009	.274	.605	.010
Group Leadership	4.433	1	4.433	128.332	.000	.832***
Error	.898	26	.035			
Total	24.849	30				
R Squared = .964 (R Adjusted R Squared = .958)						

APPENDIX VI. FACTOR ANALYSIS OF THE GROUP BELONGING VARIABLE

Table 4. Factor analysis of the group belonging variable

	Factor 1 Sense of Group Belonging Social	Factor 2 Sense of Group Belonging Confidence/ Success	Factor 3 Sense of Group Belonging Protection	Factor 4 Sense of Group Belonging Group Leadership
I have a strong sense of loyalty to my work group or colleagues within the public administration.	1.256	.142	-.856	.207
I prioritize the success and well-being of my work group or colleagues over my individual interests.	.743	-1.010	1.237	.151
I am willing to go above and beyond to support and help my work group or colleagues.	.734	-.154	.568	-.688
I often feel a strong bond with my work group or colleagues.	1.405	.094	-.578	-.329
I consider the success of my work group or colleagues as my success.	1.367	-.864	.493	.476
I would defend the reputation of my work group or colleagues in the face of criticism.	1.012	-.047	-.031	.301
I trust and rely on my work group or colleagues to support me in my professional work.	1.136	-.890	-.026	.143
I have a strong sense of belonging to my work group or colleagues.	1.434	-.294	-.496	-.142
The success of my work group or colleagues is important to the success of our institution.	.600	-.542	.661	-.653
I often consider my work group or colleagues to be an extension of my professional family.	1.673	-.021	-.512	.074
I prioritize the well-being and reputation of my colleagues over any concerns related to their involvement in corruption.	.153	.543	.675	1.115
I am ready to support and protect my colleagues even if they are involved in corrupt activities.	.249	.401	.309	.252

	Factor 1 Sense of Group Belonging Social	Factor 2 Sense of Group Belonging Confidence/ Success	Factor 3 Sense of Group Belonging Protection	Factor 4 Sense of Group Belonging Group Leadership
I would defend my colleagues involved in corruption if their actions were questioned or criticized.	.732	1.203	.429	-.220
I believe that the protection of my colleagues, even in cases of corruption, is essential for the cohesion and success of our working group.	.412	.725	.478	-.143
I am confident that my colleagues will protect me as well as I would if I were to face a difficult situation, even if it was related to corruption.	.292	.326	.117	.203
I consider the success and well-being of my colleagues interrelated with my own, even if it involves corruption.	.268	.865	.222	-.629
I am committed to be unified my colleagues, even when faced with allegations of corruption.	.677	1.736	.003	.434
Protecting my colleagues, regardless of their involvement in corruption, is essential to the effectiveness of our working group.	.658	1.077	.489	-.377



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