# WHY ARE FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS IN THE PHILIPPINES BEING DENIED? AN ANALYSIS USING A PRACTICE-BASED APPROACH

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#### **Abstract**

In 2016, the Philippine president signed the Executive Order no. 2 that required government agencies under the executive branch to implement Freedom of Information (FOI). Along with this, the eFOI Portal was created which aims to increase government transparency while making it easy for the citizens to file a request. As of June 2019, the portal has received 11,990 FOI requests across 366 government offices. However, a series of reports on the actual experience of users of eFOI Portal by the Philippine Center of Investigative Journalism in December 2018 revealed the many problems of the FOI implementation. Among these are the high rates FOI requests being denied, overdue responses from government agencies, and unsatisfactory results for fulfilled FOI requests. And so, given that the goal of eFOI Portal is to promote transparency in the government and support the public disclosure of information, but user experience tells otherwise, this looked at the mechanisms resulting in this gap. In particular, it attempted to answer why eFOI requests are being rejected.

Guided by Schatzki's conception of practices, thematic analysis of the sayings, or the actual conversations of citizens and government agencies were performed on the 346 randomly sampled FOI requests. The paper found out that citizens and government agencies in the Philippines have unique practices when performing FOI, some of which favours the outcome of FOI requests being rejected. Government agencies reject FOI requests mostly because they do not have the information being requested, they do not consider the request made by some citizens as a valid form of FOI, and processing of FOI requests may be different from one agency to another. On the other hand, citizens also have some practices leading to FOI request denials such as requesting for research work, requesting for the government agencies' opinion on current issues, and submitting complaints. Furthermore, the rules allowed for government agencies to have their own rules in processing FOI requests. Also, there are socio-technical arrangements in the eFOI Portal such as limited categories for reasons used by FOI Officers of respective government agencies in rejecting FOI requests, absence of the appeals process within the system, and no user satisfaction feedback for the whole transaction. Both of the rules and system design provided the environment for the FOI practices to happen and perpetuate. Thus, in improving the performance of FOI implementation, designers of the system must take into account the unique practices of government agencies and citizens. Some of the design considerations suggested by this paper is adding an additional support layer before citizens can file an FOI request to government agencies and improving the feedback to the system such as user satisfaction and appeals.

**Keywords:** Freedom of Information, eFOI, practice theory

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Freedom of Information (FOI) is generally understood as the laws made by governments to allow its citizens the right to access information held by public institutions (Stein & Camaj, 2018). These laws have common features such as procedures for requesting information, restrictions on what information may be disclosed, appeals for denied requests, penalties for withholding public information, and promotional measures, among others (Mendel, 2008). Ultimately, the intended goal of FOI is to increase government accountability and promote participation among the citizenry (Stein & Camaj, 2018).

In the Philippines, the rights of its citizens to access government information is stated in the Philippine Constitution of 1987, Article 3, Section 7, as: "The right of the people to information on matters of public concern shall be recognized. Access to official records, and to documents and papers pertaining to official acts, transactions, or decisions, as well as to government research data used as basis for policy development, shall be afforded the citizen, subject to such limitations as may be provided by law." In 2016, through Executive Order no. 2 and the Freedom of Information Memorandum Circular no. 1, the FOI Project Management Office (FOI-PMO) and the electronic FOI (eFOI)<sup>1</sup> portal was created.

The eFOI portal, or simply eFOI, is dubbed as "the Government's response to the call for transparency and full public disclosure of information" (Freedom of Information Philippines, n.d., What is eFOI section, para. 1). It is an online system that Filipino citizens can use to submit their FOI requests to government agencies with ease. As of June 2019, the website has received 11,990 FOI requests across 366 government agencies.

However, as with any other FOI implementation (Banisar, 2006; Mendel, 2008), the Philippine eFOI is not without problems. In 2018, 30% of the 7,712 requests were denied, 33% were reported as being processed, while 35% were successful (Freedom of

Information Philippines, 2018). There is no standard stating the percentage of FOI requests that must be granted nor rejected. Although the general aim of FOI is to increase transparency, it must also protect sensitive information; thus, government agencies may have valid reasons for denying such requests. For example, in 2018, Australia has a denial rate of 16.19% (Office of the Australian Information Commissioner, 2018), while the United Kingdom (UK) has a procedural refusal rate of 52.8% (Cabinet Office National Statistics, 2019). Procedural refusals were defined as resolvable FOI requests but denied due to costs, being a repeated request, being vexatious, or falling under the FOI exemptions. What is important, however, is whether the reasons for the denial are justified. Australia and the UK keep track of the statistics of reasons for withholding FOI requests and the number of appeals made for denied requests, both of which are not available for the case of the Philippines.

Aside from the numbers, there are also user stories pointing out the problems with the Philippine eFOI. In a series of investigative reports initiated by the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, multiple civil society organizations revealed how their interactions with eFOI unfolded. One organization advocating for indigenous peoples' interest in the Philippines said, "the FOI practice started slow and was unsuccessful in obtaining documents within the prescribed period" (Bantay Kita, 2018, Insights section, para. 1). Another one, who is pushing for social accountability, stated that their requests were actioned in 24-30 days, which exceeded the maximum 15 working days stated in the Executive Order and done without formal extension of the request made by the government agency. On top of that, all of the requested documents were given in the wrong format, and for the eFOI requests that were denied, proprietary rights were invoked by the government agency (Affiliated Network for Social Accountability in East Asia & Pacific, 2018). A third organization reported that they had to make a total of 156 contacts (75 phone calls, 58 emails, 21 eFOI

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The portal's web address is https://www.foi.gov.ph/.

requests, and two personal visits) for the 14 initial eFOI requests they made, 8 of which were unsuccessful (Action for Economic Reforms [AER], 2018). Similar experiences were reported by other civil service organizations (AER et al., 2018; Ateneo Policy Center, 2018). These are just some of the woes reported by users of the eFOI portal.

Thus, given that the goal of eFOI is to promote transparency in the government and support the public disclosure of information, but user experience tells otherwise, this study would like to understand the mechanisms resulting in this gap. In particular, it will attempt to answer why eFOI requests are being rejected. In doing so, ways of improving the system may be proposed.

The study of FOI in library and information science (LIS) is of great interest because the theories and skills in LIS are highly compatible with FOI. Snell and Sebina (2007) argued that a solid knowledge in records management, information privacy, archives, and information systems could improve FOI implementation of most countries.

More importantly, FOI goals, such as access to information and transparency, are values inherent to The International Federation of Library Association and Institutions (IFLA) Code of Ethics for Librarians and other Information Workers states the following about access to information: "The core mission of librarians and other information workers is to ensure access to information for all for personal development, education, cultural enrichment, leisure, economic activity and informed participation in and enhancement of democracy" (IFLA, 2016, Access to information section, para. 1). Aside from that, IFLA also affirms LIS professionals' role when it comes to transparency: "Librarians and other information workers support and participate in transparency so that the workings of government, administration and business are opened to the scrutiny of the general (IFLA, Privacy, 2016, secrecy transparency section, para. 3).

Ultimately, the goal of FOI and the values of LIS are to make a healthier democracy.

#### A CLOSER LOOK AT FOI

The idea of people's right to access information dates back to the 18th Century during the Age of Enlightenment (Banisar, 2006) in Western European countries. However, its popularity increased only after the Second World War and with the development of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 (Stein & Camaj, 2018), which states that, "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom [emphasis added] to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers [emphasis added]" (United Nations General Assembly, 1948). Eventually, English-speaking countries passed laws on FOI in the 60s to 80s. This was followed by different international organizations such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, which created pressure for nations across the globe to do the same (Stein & Camaj, 2018). Currently, 123 countries have some form of legislation or order to implement FOI (Access Info Europe & Centre for Law and Democracy, 2016a).

Although FOI laws are becoming the norm today, their interpretation and implementation have greatly varied amongst different nations. Stein and Camaj (2018) said that "in some cases the commitment to FOI has been superficial, with countries failing to design strong laws or to implement them" (p. 6).

In the Philippines, there is no FOI legislation. However, there is an Executive Order No. 2 signed by the president entitled, Operationalizing in the Executive Branch the People's Constitutional Right to Information and the State Policies to Full Public Disclosure and Transparency in the Public Service... (Exec. Order No. 2, 2016). In the current Philippine legal context, executive orders are "acts of the President providing for rules of a general or permanent character in implementation or execution of constitutional or statutory powers shall be promulgated in executive orders" ("Executive Orders", n.d., para. 1). As a consequence, FOI in the Philippines has the following characteristics. First, it is only implemented among government offices

under the Executive Branch. This includes national government offices (such as the Department of Health, Department of Labor and Employment, and others) and all its attached agencies, government-owned or government-controlled corporations (such as water companies and other utilities), and state universities and colleges (Exec. Order No. 2, 2016, Section 2). Second, by its nature, an executive order may be overturned in the future by laws passed in the Congress (Philippine Information Agency, n.d.). For this reason, many advocates of FOI in the country were worried that the passage of a genuine FOI law in the future might never happen because of this executive order (Pasion, 2016).

Furthermore, an evaluation of the legal framework of Executive Order No. 2 shows unsatisfactory results. The Global Right to Information (RTI) Rating<sup>2</sup>, a project sponsored by the Centre for Law and Democracy and Access Info Europe, evaluated the strength of FOI laws (or form of laws) from different countries and found that the Philippines ranked 120th out of 123. The rating uses 61 indicators across seven categories: Right of Access, Scope, Requesting Procedures, Exceptions and Refusals, Appeals, Sanctions and Protections, and Promotional Measures (Access Info Europe & Centre for Law and Democracy, 2016b). In their analysis, the Philippine FOI scored poorly in all categories except for Right of Access, which only checks if the citizens' right to public information is stated in the constitution (Access Info Europe & Centre for Law and Democracy, 2016c). From a legal standpoint, much has to be improved in the Philippine FOI, especially in penalizing violations of the order (1 point out of 8 or 12.5%) and institutionalizing programs to promote the eFOI portal (2 points out of 16 or 12.5%).

However, judging a country's FOI program solely by its legal framework can be limited or naïve at best. Countries such as Afghanistan and South Sudan, which ranked 1st and 12th, respectively, in the RTI

Rating, are consistently at the bottom of the list (among 180 nations) when it comes to perceptions on government transparency (Transparency International, 2018). An essential measure of FOI success would be on the practice, such as quantitative data on user requests (Hazell & Worthy, 2010; Henninger, 2017) and qualitative anecdotes from usage (Henninger, 2017; Stein & Camaj, 2018).

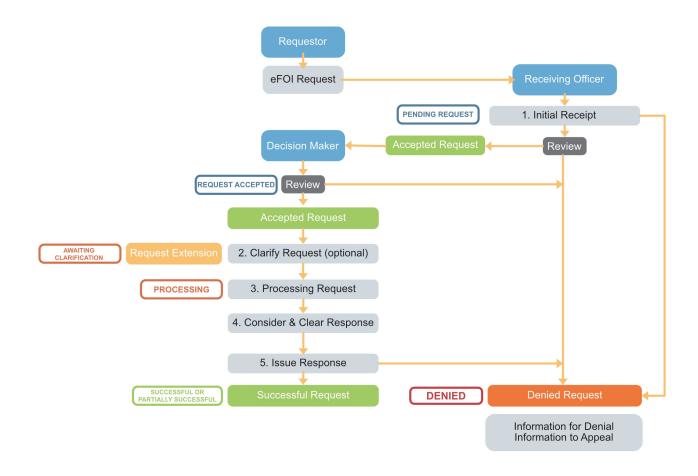
In using quantitative data, Hazell and Worthy (2010) looked at how the UK FOI in practice fared against Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and Ireland. They proposed the following as indicators of a healthy FOI: volume of requests and its growth throughout the years, the proportion of successful requests, timeliness of responding to requests, the proportion of requests that are taken to appeals, proportion of appeals that upheld the original decision, and proportion of requests denied through the use of exemptions. In the end, they found out that among the countries in the study, New Zealand performed best, followed by the UK, Ireland, Australia, and lastly, Canada. They acknowledged that "numbers only take us so far" (p. 358), and there are other factors that can affect FOI performance, such as the political contexts of each country.

On the other hand, Henninger (2017) used qualitative data from two case studies on top of the quantitative data from multiple datasets to show that Australia's FOI is leaning more towards secrecy than openness. The study showed that the trends in FOI requests involving personal information were unaffected by the personal data privacy reforms introduced by politicians. All the while, refusal of FOI requests involving policy matters continued to rise on the grounds of the vague public interest test. The use of the public interest tests arbitrarily by administrators to deny FOI requests were confirmed by the case studies.

The abovementioned studies are examples of ways to understand the mechanisms of FOI by looking at the practice.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The Global Right to Information Rating is accessible at https://www.rti-rating.org/.

Figure 1
eFOI Workflow Diagram



*Note.* Adapted from "*FOI Annual Report*," by Freedom of Information Philippines, 2017, p. 13 (https://www.foi.gov.ph/downloads/2017\_FOI\_Annual\_Report.pdf). In the public domain.

# A PRACTICE-BASED APPROACH AND THE eFOI IN THE PHILIPPINES

Of the many theoretical approaches in studying the phenomenon of information, in this particular, the Freedom of Information, why then is a practice-based approach preferred in this study? This will be answered first by showing that the concepts of practices, materiality, and relationships (Schatzki, 2012) can be used to understand eFOI in the Philippines, and then second, by arguing that a practice-based approach offers advantages as opposed to other approaches that focus on the individual's information behavior.

Schatzki (2012) defined practices as a set of organized activities or sayings and doings. The FOI transactions visible in the eFOI portal are manifestations of activities or sayings in written form. According to Wittgenstein (2009, as cited in Schatzki, 2016), "sayings can be actions of countless sorts, for example, asserting, denying, explaining, asking, complaining, describing, insulting, bothering, ordering, remonstrating, begging, celebrating and so forth" (p. 132). Moreover, Schatzki (2016) said that "Under 'sayings' I include acts of writing. Writing is a very different activity than speaking, but they share several key features" (p. 132). It is clear that the

visible text of the eFOI transactions are indeed activities, but whether these activities belong to a practice needs to be examined.

To determine if the sayings in the eFOI portal belong to a practice, or are organized, we can examine how the eFOI transaction unfolds. There are three visible users of the eFOI portal, the users who submit their FOI requests, who will be referred to as the citizens, the users who act on such requests, who will be referred to as the government agencies, lastly, the Presidential Communications Operations Office (PCOO), who, aside from being a government agency that responds to FOI requests, also acts as the office responsible for the implementation of the eFOI portal (Memorandum Order No. 10, 2016). Citizens submit their FOI requests by accomplishing several tasks such as opening their web browser, typing in the web address of the eFOI portal, logging into the system or registering for an account (which in itself includes several other tasks), browsing within the eFOI portal for the government agency they are requesting from, filling-out the online form, and then clicking the submit button. These activities must be done in order; otherwise, an FOI transaction would not have unfolded. This means that one would not have submitted an eFOI request by accident. Although some may argue that machines or computer programs may do the whole process of eFOI requests, this study assumes that the system's security, which is reCAPTCHA by Google ("reCAPTCHA", n.d.), prevents this from happening. The same would be the case for the government agencies. They need to perform specific actions leading to the response posted in the eFOI request (shown in Figure 1). Whether the government agencies' motivations or goals are to promote transparency and accountability or just to get the job done, it is clear that these activities are intentional and not "mere occurrences" (Schatzki, 2012, p. 18). Lastly, all of these actions are guided by rules, such as Executive Order No. 2, which are enforced by the PCOO.

These eFOI activities, as a practice of Freedom of Information, are carried out in a material entity, which is the eFOI portal. Although an FOI request can be made manually, through a paper form submitted to the concerned government agency, a significant portion of the FOI requests are done through the portal. According to PCOO (2019a), as of April 2019, 92% of all FOI requests were made through the eFOI portal. In addition to that, the PCOO released a memorandum which states:

To ensure that the public will have ease and convenience in requesting for information to different agencies under the Executive Branch, it is hereby instructed that all government Agencies covered by EO No. 2, s. 2016 shall enrol and be onboarded to the eFOI platform... (PCOO, 2017, Section 1)

Since the FOI requests are more popularly carried out through the eFOI portal, it can be said that the practice of FOI is intimately related to the website or the material entity. This relationship can be further examined to understand, for instance, why certain FOI requests are denied.

In sum, FOI requests in the Philippines can be interpreted as organized sayings embodied through the eFOI portal. This implies that by looking at the FOI practices of the citizens and government agencies, the rules enforced by the PCOO, and the relationship of the practices with the online portal, we can understand why FOI requests are being denied.

Looking at the practices and not on an individual's information behavior offers some advantages. According to Tuominen, Talja, and Savolainen (2005, as cited in Irvine-Smith, 2017), a practice-based that the "assumes processes information seeking and use are constituted socially and dialogically, rather than based on the ideas and motives of individual actors" (The call to practice section, para. 2). This opens up new analyses and questions that are more sensitive to the social context. For example, one can ask why citizens and government agencies in the Philippines practice FOI in a particular way compared to those of Australia or the United States.

Another tool that the practice theory offers is the belief that human activities cannot be controlled but are rather reactive to its social context (Schatzki, 2012). This implies that "the best that designers of lives and institutions can do is to create contexts that, as experience and thought show, make certain activities very or more likely" (p. 22). This can help answer how the system can be improved such that activities leading to the denial of FOI requests are less likely to happen.

#### **METHODS**

This is a case study on the eFOI practices in the Philippines. To determine why eFOI requests are being denied, it looked at both the qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative and qualitative data used for this study can be grouped into three, the actual eFOI Requests on the portal, the various documents about the FOI in the Philippines, and the statistics of eFOI Requests maintained by the PCOO. These data were gathered in different ways.

The first group of data, the publicly accessible eFOI requests, were gathered through Web Scraping using the Python programming language. A Python library, called Beautiful Soup (Richardson, n.d.), was used to navigate and search HTML files to extract pertinent data. Table 1 shows the fields extracted from the website and their descriptions as observed by the researcher.

**Table 1**Fields Extracted from eFOI Portal for Denied Requests

Field	Description	Data Specifications
Title	This is where citizens specify the title of their request or title of the documents they are requesting	This corresponds to an HTML input form of the type text. Values obtained from this field are free texts
Agency	The government agency that received the request	This corresponds to an HTML input form of a dropdown options type. Values are acronyms of the agency and are from a list of values
Purpose	The specified purpose of the citizen in lodging an eFOI request	This corresponds to an HTML input form of the type text. Values obtained from this field are free texts
Request ID	A unique identifier of the request	An identifier given to the user upon submission of the request. This includes an acronym of the Agency requested from and a series of numbers. Ex.: #PSA-316957801711
Status	The current status (or outcome) of the request	In the eFOI portal, there were six status for requests that were observed. These are AWAITING CLARIFICATION, DENIED, EXTENDED, PARTIALLY SUCCESSFUL, PROCESSING, SUCCESSFUL. For this study, only those that had the status of DENIED as of 24 April 2019 were scraped.
Date Requested	The date the eFOI request was submitted	This is a system-generated value. It is a Date Format in the Philippine Standard Time
Request URL	The publicly accessible URL of the request	This is the public URL link for the requests and is unique for each request
Conversations	Responses from both the citizen and government agency	These are free text conversations between the citizen and the government agency. Messages coming from the citizens and government agencies were determined through their HTML classes.

As of 24 April 2019, a total of 3,650 denied eFOI requests were collected.

The second group of data are the documents related to the FOI implementation in the Philippines. These documents were obtained from the Official Gazette of the Philippines<sup>3</sup> and the resources link of the eFOI Portal.

The last group of data are the eFOI requests statistics maintained by the PCOO. This document is not readily available to the public but was obtained through an eFOI request made to PCOO by the author (PCOO, 2019b). Table 2 shows the columns of the Excel File obtained from PCOO.

The data from PCOO is as of 03 May 2019 and has a total number of denied requests of 4,003. However, since the scraped data is only as of 24 April 2019,

some of the records past that date will have to be removed. Also, it has been observed that some of the records are duplicates. After removing the duplicate records and requests made after 24 April 2019, a total of 3,917 unique denied requests remained, out of a total of 12,285 unique eFOI requests.

There is a difference between the scraped data and the data from PCOO. The scraped data provides the actual conversation (the sayings) between the citizens and the government agency. In contrast, the data from PCOO contains the tags or categories used by the FOI Receiving Officers and FOI Decision Makers when they denied the requests. Furthermore, it must be noted that there are records showing in the scraped data that do not appear in the PCOO data and vice versa. Using the Request ID field from both sets of data as the primary key, an inner-join was performed to make a merged table that has a

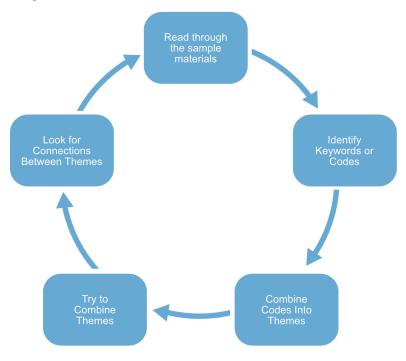
 Table 2

 Columns from the Excel File maintained by the PCOO

Column Title	Description by PCOO
Name ID	eFOI Request Tracking Number
Agency	Agency Acronym
Coverage	Date of Coverage of the Document
Created	The creation date of the request
Extended	TRUE = complex request; FALSE = simple request
Purpose	Reason for the requested information
Status	Status of the request: Pending, Accepted, Awaiting Clarification, Processing, Successful, Partially Successful, Denied, and Closed
Title	Title of Information
dm_exception	Reason for the denial by the Decision Maker
ro_exception	Reason for the denial by the Receiving Officer

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The Official Gazette is accessible at https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/.

Figure 2
Framework for the Thematic Analysis



Note. From Bryman, A. (2016). Social research methods, pp. 587-9.

total of 3,462 denied requests. This number will now be referred to as the total number of denied requests for this study.

Due to the volume of data and the researcher's limited resources, a random sample of the denied requests was generated for the qualitative data analysis. This study aimed to uncover practices that resulted in eFOI requests being denied. Practices will be the organized sayings that are repeated across citizens and government agencies. The researcher's sample is such that many records are analyzed but at the same time within the researcher's capacity. The sample size used is 10 percent of the denied requests, which is 346.

Thematic Analysis was used in categorizing the denied requests. A generic qualitative data analysis approach proposed by Bryman (2016) was adapted for this study and is depicted in Figure 2.

A recursive thematic analysis was done to develop the themes. After reading through the sample eFOI transactions, keywords, phrases used, or codes signifying the outcome of the requests were identified. These were later on combined into themes, which were then re-evaluated to create a more general theme. These themes were labeled as the reasons for which the requests were denied. Finally, the developed reasons were analyzed with the help of documents (such as the Executive Orders and the Memoranda) to see whether they are connected.

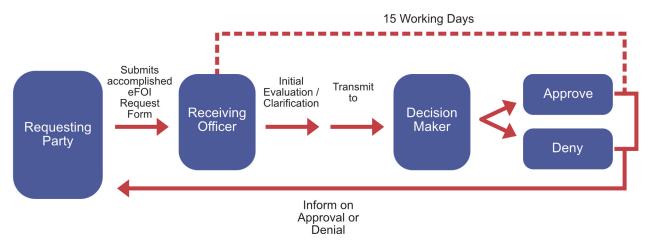
#### FINDINGS AND RESULTS

process is shown in Figure 3.

# How the Government Agencies Respond to Requests Government agencies have FOI receiving officers (RO), and FOI decision makers (DM) requests. After the RO identified that the request is valid, the request is then forwarded to the DM. A diagram of the

**Figure 3**How eFOI Requests are Processed

# The eFOI portal: Agency Backend



Note. Adapted from "Knowing your Government Better," Freedom of Information Philippines, n.d.

As shown in Figure 3, eFOI requests may be denied by the RO if they failed the initial evaluation or by the DM. This process is seen in the statistics provided by PCOO, where reasons for denial has two separate columns, one for RO and one for DM.

# **Denied Requests According to Government**

Based on the statistics provided by PCOO, the main reason eFOI requests are being denied is that the requests are lodged to the wrong agency. This reason is used by ROs for 1,473 requests or 42.55% of all

Table 3
Categories used by Governments to Deny Requests

Receiving Officer	Decision Maker	Count of Requests	% of Total
wrong-agency	null	1473	42.55%
null	null	683	19.73%
	wrong-agency	263	7.60%
	other-exceptions	129	3.73%
	privacy	32	0.92%
	law-enforcement-and-protection	16	0.46%
	national-security-international-relations	9	0.26%
	prejudicial-premature-disclosure	7	0.20%
	records-of-proceedings	5	0.14%
	executive-privilege	3	0.09%
	personal-safety	3	0.09%
information-available-online	null	451	13.03%
incomplete-request	null	388	11.21%
Grand Total		3462	100.00%

**Table 4** *Categories used by Government (Sample, N=346)* 

Receiving Officer	Decision Maker	Count of Requests	% of Total
wrong-agency	null	153	42.55%
null	null	83	23.99%
	wrong-agency	21	6.07%
	other-exceptions	17	4.91%
	privacy	2	0.58%
	records-of-proceedings	1	0.29%
	prejudicial-premature-disclosure	1	0.29%
	law-enforcement-and-protection	1	0.29%
	personal-safety	1	0.29%
incomplete-request	null	39	11.27%
information-available-online	null	27	7.80%
(	Grand Total	346	100.00%

denied requests, and by DMs for 263 requests or 7.60%. Combined, it accounts for a total of 1,736, which 50.14% or half, of all the denied requests. The succeeding most used categories are null, which accounts for 683 requests (or 19.73%), information-available-online (451 or 13.03%), and incomplete-request (388 or 11.21%). All of the reasons or tags used are shown in Table 3. Notably, null values are shown in Table 3, which suggests that when ROs acted upon eFOI requests, the DMs no longer have to provide any reasons. However, for instances where null appears on both the ROs and DMs, it is assumed that no reason was provided for denying the request.

The pattern in Table 3 is also similar to the sampled denied requests, which is shown in Table 4.

However, reading through the conversations of citizens and government agencies, the generated themes are different.

### eFOI Practices of Government Agencies

In general, government agencies deny eFOI requests because; first, they do not have the information being requested, or second, they do not qualify the request as a form of FOI request, or third, the request has some issues coming from the side of the citizen, or lastly, the request falls under the FOI Exceptions. These categories were generated through the thematic analysis, and a majority of the sampled requests fall under the first category. The following sections will discuss each category. A complete list of the sample denied requests and their corresponding themes are depicted in Appendix A.

# Category 1: The Government Agency does not have the Information

It has been found that government agencies deny requests mainly because they reported that they do not have the information being requested. A total of 211 (or 60.98%) of the sampled requests were denied using responses that indicated that the government agency does not have the information (201 requests), that the data being requested is not yet available (6 requests), or that the granularity or format of data being requested is not available (4 requests). These are shown in Table 5.

**Table 5** *eFOI Requests that are Denied because the Government does not have the Information* 

Reason (General)	Reason	Count	% of Total
Does not have the info	Does not have the info	201	58.09%
	Data not yet available	6	1.73%
	Does not have the level of data	3	0.87%
	No electronic copy	1	0.29%
Grand Total		211	60.98%

Government agencies use a variety of phrases or words indicating that they do not have the requested information. The most commonly used phrase is "in this instance this Office does not have the information you have requested," which appeared 131 times. This phrase is usually followed by a suggestion of which government agency the citizen should request from, such as "However, you may wish to contact ...". The government agency's suggestion can be questionable as there are instances where citizens are referred back and forth to different offices. Such is the case of the eFOI requests shown in Table 6.

Other phrases that fall under the general theme of "Does not have the info" are variations of the following:

- in this instance this Office cannot provide the information you have requested since we do not collect such information
- this office does not have [...] the information you are requesting
- not included in the survey, hence, we do not have information on such
- Unfortunately, [this agency] does not have the information you need

**Table 6** *eFOI Requests that are Denied because the Government does not have the Information* 

Reason (General)	Request Title	Date Request Made	Agency Requested From	Agency Referred To
#DOLE-973913053674	Alien Employment Permits (AEPs) by Nationality	3.f 1 00 0040	DOLE	PSA
#PSA-105216169996	Alien Employment Permits (AEPs) by National	April 01, 2019	PSA	ВІ
#BI-769274361511	Alien Employment Permits (AEPs) by Nationality and Sector	April 05, 2019	ВІ	DOLE

Note. DOLE = Department of Labor and Employment; BI = Bureau of Immigration; PSA = Philippine Statistics Authority.

Table 7
Reasons generated from Thematic Analysis versus the tags used by Government Agencies

Reason (General)	Reason	Receiving Officer (RO)	Decision Maker (DM)	Count	% of Total
	Does not	information- available-online	null	1	0.29%
	have the	null	null	37	10.69%
	info	null	wrong-agency	16	4.62%
		null	other-exceptions	5	1.45%
Does not		wrong-agency	null	142	41.04%
have the		null	null	4	1.16%
		null	wrong-agency	1	0.29%
	available	null	other-exceptions	1	0.29%
	Does not have the requested level of data	null	null	3	0.87%
	No electronic copy	null	null	1	0.29%
	TOTAL				60.98%

A complete list of the phrases that fall under this particular theme is shown in Appendix A.

Comparing the reasons generated through the thematic analysis with the tags used by FOI ROs and DMs shows different categories. While the thematic analysis says that the government does not have the information, the outcome reported by the government agencies varies. This is shown in Table 7.

Table 7 shows that a total of 158 (142 by RO and 16 by DM) were tagged as "wrong-agency" when what is being reported is that they do not have the information. Phrases that were identified during the thematic analysis that pertains to the outcome of "wrong-agency" are the following:

- [this agency] does not have in its custody
- [this agency] is not the repository agency
- beyond the jurisdiction of our Agency

- this is to inform you that we are denying your request since you are seeking the wrong agency
- this Office does not have the information you have requested as it pertains to another office
- This request is for [other agency]

Requests that fall under this category were grouped with the broader category, which is Issues Coming from the User Side, which will be discussed later.

## Category 2: Request is not FOI

Another common practice is that government agencies do not qualify the request as a valid FOI request. This can be for different reasons, such as when FOI request is classified as a frontline service or the information is already available online. Sixty-four denied requests fall under this category, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8
eFOI Requests that are not Qualified as valid FOI

Reason (General)	Reason	Count	% of Total
	Not FOI but frontline service	35	10.12%
Not FOI	Not FOI because info is available online	26	7.51%
	Not FOI	3	0.87%
Total		64	18.50%

One example is a request made to the Department of Trade and Industries (DTI) shown in Figure 4. Although the request may seem to be a normal request, for that particular agency, the requested information falls under their frontline services. The same goes for the National Mapping and Resource Information Authority (NAMRIA) shown in Figure 5.

In the sampled requests, 22 of the 29 denied requests for DTI (or 75.86%) were under the theme of "not FOI but frontline service," and 3 out of 4 denied requests for NAMRIA (or 75%) is the same. Consequently, looking at all the eFOI requests from the PCOO statistics, both organizations have a high percentage of denied requests, 98.70% (227 out of 230) for DTI and 75% (45 out of 60) for NAMRIA.

Figure 4
A Denied Request for DTI (Request ID #DTI-519787681078)

Hi! May I request for the following:

1. List of all company in the Philippines with ISO certificates

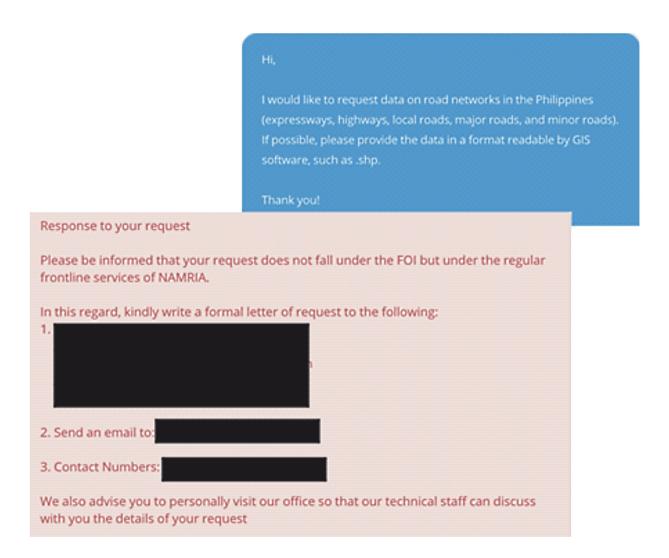
2. List of all company Philippines that have six sigma implemented

Dear Mr.

Thank you for your request.

Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016). As such, we will be forwarding this to the concerned bureau/office, DTI - Bureau of Philippine Standards (BPS) and Philippine Accreditation Bureau (PAB). Please expect a reply from them on this matter.

Figure 5
A Request made to NAMRIA (Request ID #DENRNAMRIA-182017530869)



## Category 3: Issues Coming from the User Side

Of course, some requests were denied due to some issues coming from the citizen's side. Some of these include incomplete information about the request, or the citizen has made the request to the wrong agency, or there have been some technical issues such as the user submitted the same request more than once.

However, a notable practice in this category is seen in three government agencies, which are the University of the Philippines Diliman (UPD), the Philippine Ports Authority (PPA), and the Bureau of Customs (BOC). These three agencies qualified the eFOI requests as incomplete because the citizen has failed to attach an extra form that they require. This is shown in Figures 6, 7, and 8, respectively.

The contents of the forms being requested by the three agencies are essentially the same as the eFOI Online Form. Based on the PCOO Data, out of all the requests lodged to these organizations, a very high percentage can be seen to have been denied, as shown in Table 9.

# Figure 6

A Denied Request for DTI (Request ID #DTI-519787681078)

Hi! I would like to request procedures, policies and master list of scholars in University of the Philippines.

Attachments:

% IMG\_20190220\_093826.jpg

Since you did not provide the certification required under the UP FOI Manual, we regret that in the meantime we are constrained to DENY your request.

Article III Section 7 of the 1987 Constitution which is the basis for the requirement under the UP FOI Manual states:

"The right of the people to information on matters of public concern shall be recognized. Access to official records, and to documents, and papers pertaining to official acts, transactions, or decisions, as well as to government research data used as basis for policy development, shall be afforded the citizen, subject to such limitations as may be provided by law."

Refer also to the FAQ at https://www.foi.gov.ph/help

You must also submit the following certification as required by the UP System FOI Manual via email to fro.updiliman@up.edu.ph once you have re-filed your request via the eFOI portal.

CERTIFICATION TO BE SIGNED BY REQUESTING PARTY WHO FILED VIA THE EFOI PORTAL AND/OR USED THE APPLICATION FORM IN THE EFOI PORTAL

I declare that:

 a. the information I provided in the eFOI portal and/or the eFOI request form is complete and correct;

I certify to the truthfulness of the information or application, including the information or	nation contained in the eFOI request form my Filipino citizenship.
Signature:	
Person Administering Oath	
The certification should be signed before oath such as a notary public, mayor or b	e someone who is authorised to administer an earangay captain.
Once you are able to provide the above a period of sixty (60) days from receipt of	certification you may re-file your request within f this letter.

# Figure 7 A Denied Request for DTI (Request ID #DTI-519787681078)

Hil I would like to request the technical specifications of all ports here in the Philippines including private ports. My main focus would be the capacity of the ports. Please include all capacity indicators such as berthing spaces, draft, lenght of wharf(?) and other capacity indicators.

Thank you!

#### Response to your request

While our aim is to provide information whenever possible, in this instance we would need for you to resubmit your request as we are still missing from you some vital information. Please ensure that, in addition to all the mandatory fields, you also submit a duly accomplished Access to Information Request Form. You may download the form at

http://ppa.com.ph/sites/default/files/forms\_downloadable/FOI%20Request%20Form.pdf

Further, may we be informed whether the requested data or information will be used for academic or corporate purposes. Please be apprised that if the request is for academic purposes, kindly submit a certification from your school that you are currently enrolled for the semester and the purpose of the request. Meanwhile, if the request is for corporate purposes, kindly submit a Board Resolution/Secretary's Certificate authorizing you are duly authorized to request on behalf of the company and the purpose of the request.

For further assistance you may review the FAQ section of the eFOI site: https://www.foi.gov.ph/help.

Your right to request a review

If you are unhappy with this response to your FOI request, you may ask us to carry out an internal review of the response by writing to us. Your review request should explain why you are dissatisfied with this response, and should be made within 15 calendar days from the date when you received this letter. We will complete the review and tell you the

# Figure 4 A Denied Request for DTI (Request ID #DTI-519787681078)

I would like to request for the Statement of Assets, Liabilities, and Net worth of BOC personnel/official

Your request

You asked for SALN of BOC personnel.

Response to your request

While our aim is to provide information whenever possible, in this instance we would need for you to resubmit your request as we are still missing from you some vital information. Please ensure that, in addition to all the mandatory fields, you also fill out the FOI request forms, please see link

http://customs.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/annex-d-request-form-page1.jpg

http://customs.gov.ph/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/annex-d-request-form-page2.jpg

For further assistance you may review the FAQ section of the eFOI site: https://www.foi.gov.ph/help.

Your right to request a review

If you are unhappy with this response to your FOI request, you may ask us to carry out an internal review of the response by writing to our Commissioner Isidro S. Lapena, with email address boc.cares@customs.gov.ph. Your review request should explain why you are dissatisfied with this response, and should be made within 15 calendar days from the date when you received this letter. We will complete the review and tell you the result within 30 calendar days from the date when we receive your review request.

**Table 9**Percent of Denied Requests for BOC, PPA, and UPD

Agency	Total Number of Requests	Total Number of Denied Requests	% Denied
BOC	51	46	90.20%
PPA	66	60	90.91%
UPD	35	31	88.57%

Asking for extra forms is just one of the practices categorized into the theme of "Incomplete Information." From the sampled denied requests, seven transactions were denied because the agency asked the citizen to file another request with an attached eFOI form. Whenever agencies used the phrase "we are still missing from you some vital information," they mean

different things, such as clarifying the information being requested, or the citizen has not attached an eFOI form that they require. This, together with users requesting to the wrong agency, and other technical issues, were all grouped in the general theme of User Side Issues. A total of 45 transactions were categorized into this general theme, which is shown in Table 10.

**Table 10**Denied Requests due to User-Side Issues

Reason (General)	Reason	Count	% of Total
User Side Issues	Incomplete Information	26	7.51%
	Requested to the Wrong Agency	14	4.05%
Other technical issues		5	1.45%
Total		45	13.01%

## Category 4: FOI Exceptions

Lastly, some requests fall under the FOI Exceptions. Guidelines on what information are considered FOI Exceptions are outlined in Section 4 of the Executive Order no. 2 s. 2016. These transactions are shown in Table 11.

This last category comprised the fewest transactions from the sampled denied requests. Whether these reasons were invoked appropriately by the government agencies currently cannot be determined due to the unavailability of statistics on the number of appeals.

**Table 10**Denied Requests due to User-Side Issues

Reason (General)	Reason	Count	% of Total
	Confidentiality	11	3.18%
	Proprietary Information	4	1.16%
	Security Reasons	3	0.87%
	info is only for internal use	2	0.58%
FOI Exceptions	Section 4- Personal Safety	1	0.29%
	Section 3 - Filipino Citizens	1	0.29%
	Privacy Issues	1	0.29%
	Under item 9 (d) of the said memorandum	1	0.29%
	National Privacy Act	1	0.29%
	Safety Issue	1	0.29%
	Total	26	7.51%

#### eFOI PRACTICES OF CITIZENS

On the other side of the transaction, the citizens have practices that resulted in their requests being denied. Some of these practices include requesting research work, requesting the government agency's opinion, and using the eFOI as a channel for customer complaints.

Examples of requests classified as research work are shown in Figures 9, 10, and 11. In these requests, citizens used words such as "[what are] the trends," "What other possible reasons," and "[what are] the implications of these tax reforms to foreign investments ..."

**Figure 9** *eFOI Request ID #DCP-467672152021* 

Good Day! I would like to request any research data on product design trends in Palawan particularly souvenir products. This will guide me in my architectural thesis on demo pearl farm resort in Puerto Princesa, Palawan, particularly on the tourism branding of the city/province.

Thank you very much!

**Figure 10** *eFOI Request ID #DFA-591198407524* 

Good day! I am a 5th year architecture student from the University of the East-Caloocan, currently having a study for my architectural proposal ASEAN Headquarters which will be located in the Philippines. Relative to this I would like to ask your good office the following questions and data:

- Statistics of ASEAN citizen living in the Philippines
- 2.) What other possible reasons for the the said headquarters to be based on the Philippines (ex: Philippines is known as a leading country in ASEAN, the Philippines is a founding member of ASEAN, etc...)
- 3.) List of ASEAN orgs in the Philippines

**Figure 11** *eFOI Request ID #PLA-324492658167* 

Hi, hope you can help me gather the following info on tax reform in the country:

- Summary of the recently implemented TRAIN, & additional tax reforms (w/status) planned to be implemented in 2019 & coming years
- Statistics on effect of TRAIN in the previous years in national revenue collection & economy in general (GDP & oth. econ. metrics) as well as projections for the coming years
- Implications of these tax reforms to foreign investments (most particularly, Japanese) as well as business opportunities for these foreign investors

Let me know if you need more details. Thank you!

Requests for data for research are common among the sampled requests. According to Freedom of Information Philippines (2018), 62% or 2,582 of the registered users of the eFOI portal belongs to academe either as a student or researcher. Furthermore, looking at the Purpose field of the scraped data, words such as research, academic, and thesis appear very common. Statistical and linguistic

analysis of the Purpose field, using the TerMine Service (Frantzi, Ananiadou, & Mima, 2000), reveals that the top 20 significant words are mostly about academic research. This is shown in Figure 12.

Another notable practice is citizens asking for the government agency's position on a particular issue. This is shown in Figures 13 and 14. In these requests,

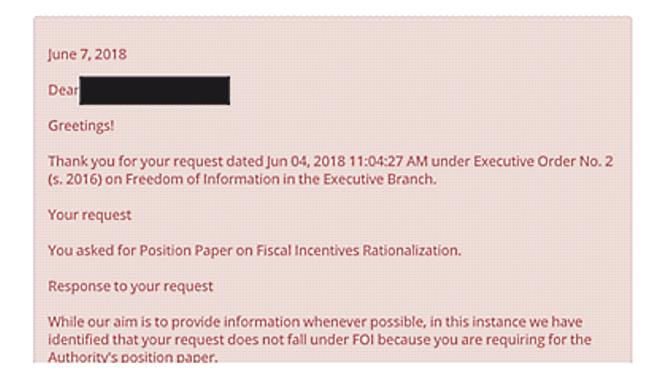
**Figure 12**Reasons for Users Requesting for Information

Rank	Term	Score
1	undergraduate thesis	147.647827
2	thesis research	135.650513
3	thesis writing	67.639893
4	academic research	62.620239
5	architectural thesis	58.742558
6	research paper	41.639809
7	thesis study	41.551987
8	research purpose	37.651516
9	thesis purpose	35.64629
10	undergraduate research	25.614754
11	feasibility study	24.841667
12	graduate school	23.888235
13	market research	22.709183
14	infrastructure construction focus group	22
15	school research	21.773859
16	research purposes	18.730627
17	personal research	16.808695
18	research study	15.8703
19	civil engineering research	15.109975
20	graduate research	14.872038

**Figure 13** *eFOI Request ID #AFAB-649125604161* 

Tam an incoming \*\*\*. Tam currently updating my welfare analysis of the recently-passed TRAIN Law.

In line with my pursuit of coming up with a scholarly analysis, I wish to know your stand on Fiscal Incentives Rationalization (FRI)which are required for me to come up with my own analyses.



**Figure 14** *eFOI Request ID #AFAB-860683628923* 

Hit i would like to request for information regarding the implication or significance of the general design of roofs of the buildings existent in the AFAB such as the attached picture provided.

Attachments:

Symbol.png

the citizens used words such as "I wish to know your stand on ..." and "[what are] the implication or significance of ...".

Lastly, some citizens use the eFOI portal to voice their concerns, similar to a customer complaints service. These can be seen in Figures 15 and 16.

In Figure 15, a citizen is complaining to the Land

Transportation Office (LTO) about implementing a particular law or ordinance. In contrast, in Figure 16, a citizen is following-up a particular service from the Philippine Post Office (PhilPOST). Looking at the PCOO's statistics on the performance of the two agencies show that PhilPOST has a denied requests rate of 95.65% (22 out of 23) while LTO, although has only a 6.29% denied request (9 out of 143), has no successful eFOI transaction (0 out of 143). This is because eFOI

**Figure 15** *eFOI Request ID #LTO-954731124604* 

Hi id like to know why you guys implement smoke belching on delivery truck but the mmda trucks dont get caught from smoke belching

August 23, 2018

Dear I

#### Greetings!

Thank you for your request dated Aug 23, 2018 under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016) on Freedom of Information in the Executive Branch.

#### Your request

You asked for Implementing smoke belching along the main road.

#### Response to your request

While our aim is to provide information whenever possible, in this instance we shall forward your concern to our Central Office Public Assistance Complaint Desk Officer thru email address Itoco.pacd@gmail.com for their appropriate action. Rest assured that we shall continue serving the public with outmost integrity and professionalism.

requests lodged to LTO have a PENDING status (131 out of 143), even for requests filed in 2016.

#### **DISCUSSION**

Using the sayings to understand how citizens and government agencies perform an eFOI transaction revealed particular practices from both parties contributing to the request being denied. These practices can be explained by looking at the rules and the material entity or socio-technical arrangements.

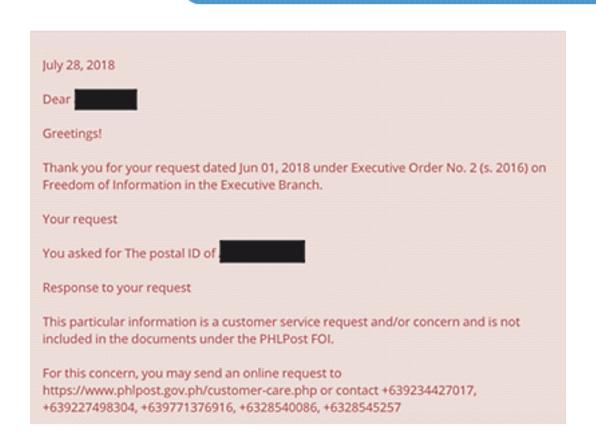
#### The Rules

What can be said about the rules is that they allowed the practices seen in the eFOI transactions. For example, Section 8 of Executive Order No. 2 s. 2016 states that each government agency should create its own FOI manual:

People's Freedom to Information (FOI) Manual. For the effective implementation of this Order, every government office is directed to prepare within one

Figure 16
eFOI Request ID #PHLPost-239413588548

Hi! I would like to know, why my ID not dilevered until now?



hundred twenty (120) calendar days from the effectivity of this Order, its own People's FOI Manual, which shall include among others the following provisions... (Exec. Order No. 2, 2016, Section 8)

The FOI manual, in essence, outlines the procedure on how citizens can request information. As seen in UPD, PPA, and BOC, an additional step of attaching a scanned paper form was required on top of the similar online eFOI form. These three agencies consequently have very high denial rates (ranging from 80% to 90%), and it was seen that they denied most of the requests because a paper form was not attached in the online form.

Another example is Section 1 of the said executive order. This section defines, although as broadly as possible, what constitutes information.

INFORMATION. Shall mean any records, documents, papers, reports, letters, contracts, minutes and transcripts of official meetings, maps, books, photographs, data, research materials, films, sound and video recording, magnetic or other tapes, electronic data, computer stored data, any other like or similar data or materials recorded, stored or archived in whatever format, whether offline or online, which are made, received, or kept in or under the control and custody of any government office

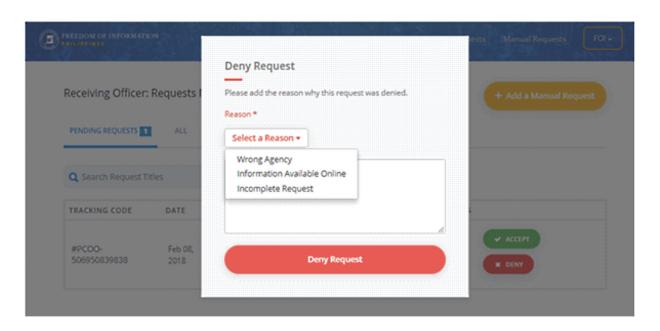
pursuant to law, executive order, and rules and regulations or in connection with the performance or transaction of official business by any government office. (Exec. Order No. 2, 2016, Section 1)

As seen from the practices of both government agencies and users, there are some instances when the understanding of what constitutes information from both parties does not match. What a citizen might refer to as data might be an opinion or a research work on the part of the government agency. This has been evident for the cases of DTI and NAMRIA, where they qualify requests for data (or map) as a frontline service and not as a form of FOI. As a result, both agencies have high denial rates (98.70% and 75%, respectively). On the other hand, citizens also have various interpretations of what information can be requested from agencies. Citizens may request research work, opinions, or file complaints, which some agencies may receive more than the others. This was seen in the case of PhilPOST (95.65% denial rate) and LTO (0% success rate).

## The Socio-Technical Arrangement

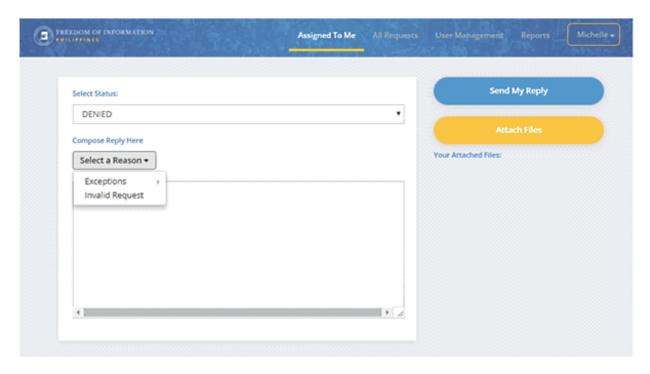
The design of the system also contributes to the practices. One of the relationships that Schatzki (2012) mentioned about practices and material entities is prefiguration. According to Schatzki (2012), material entities prefigure practices when "present states of affairs that qualify forthcoming activity on indefinitely numerous registers such as easier/harder, more/less expensive, nobler/baser, more/less time-consuming" (p. 17). One example of this is the tags used by the FOI receiving officers and decision makers. Currently, there is no category for when a requested information simply does not exist, as shown in Figures 17 and 18. Because of this, citizens may be referred to other agencies without an assurance that that particular agency possesses the requested information. Such design makes it harder and more time-consuming for citizens to obtain the information that they need. Moreover, having no category for "does not have the info" means that

**Figure 17**FOI Receiving Officer Responding to a Denied Request



Note. Adapted from "eFOI Request Statistics," by Presidential Communications Operations Office, 2019b, p. 65.

**Figure 18**FOI Decision Maker Responding to a Denied Request



Note. Adapted from "eFOI Request Statistics," by Presidential Communications Operations Office, 2019b, p. 77.

agencies will not be able to track what information is frequently being requested to them that they do not have. Tracking these kinds of transactions will help agencies evaluate whether they really ought to have the information requested. Without it, the practice of suggesting to citizens where to look for information is more likely to perpetuate.

Another example is the absence of a feedback mechanism within the portal, such as filing for an appeal, which has been identified as an essential indicator for a healthy FOI (Hazell & Worthy 2010). When citizens are dissatisfied with the outcome of their request, they can file an appeal as instructed by the government agency, as seen in Figure 19. This activity is outside of the material entity that is the eFOI portal, which means that there is an additional effort for citizens to perform appealing denied requests. Furthermore, because the appeals activity is not connected to the system, statistics on how denied requests are appealed, many consequently reversed, are not available.

#### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A Freedom of Information law is a crucial element of a healthy democracy. Much more important is how it is being implemented and practiced by the states and their citizens.

In the Philippines, there are unique practices that are performed by both government agencies and their citizens that contribute to FOI requests being rejected. Practices observed among government agencies include not having the requested information, having different criteria for qualifying what an FOI request is, and having different procedures in handling an eFOI request. At the same citizens time, have shown that requesting information can mean different things. These may include requesting research work, for government opinion, and even lodging of customer complaints, among others.

In improving the eFOI portal's performance, the practices of government agencies and citizens must

Figure 19
A Government Agency stating how a Citizen can file for Appeals

## Your right to request a review

If you are unhappy with this response to your FOI request, you may ask us to carry out an internal review of the response by writing to Corporate Planning Department, PHLPost at corplan@phlpost.gov.ph/corplan.phlpost@gmail.com. Your review request should explain why you are dissatisfied with this response, and should be made within 15 calendar days from the date when you received this letter. We will complete the review and tell you the result within 30 calendar days from the date when we receive your review request.

If you are not satisfied with the result of the review, you then have the right to appeal to the Office of the President under Administrative Order No. 22 (s. 2011).

be considered. For example, since most eFOI denials revolve around the information not being available, either the government agency does not have it or the citizen requested from the wrong agency, an additional layer of search mechanism can be added before the FOI receiving officers. The search mechanism should be able to gap the citizens' expectations with that of the government's, which can be done through controlled vocabularies, help guides, and even chat supports. Once the information has been identified as either existing or not, the filing for an FOI can begin. In this way, it reduces the time and effort of citizens in exercising FOI, and at the same time, can reduce the denial rates of government agencies.

In improving the FOI implementation as a whole, important practices such as appeals must not be left out in the design of the socio-technical material. Statistics on appeals could be generated once incorporated in the portal, allowing for government agencies and citizens to monitor the legitimacy of eFOI requests denials. Other forms of feedback, such as user satisfaction ratings, can also help in identifying outlier agencies.

Aside from the design of the eFOI portal, the recordkeeping practices of government agencies must also be investigated. It was revealed in the findings that many agencies were unable to provide the requested information due to not having specific file formats or electronic copies of such documents. A future study can be conducted to identify whether Philippine agencies' recordkeeping practices can meet the demands of FOI.

Lastly, a practice-based approach can be an effective theoretical framework when investigating the mechanisms of FOI. Further studies can focus on both the doings and sayings or on specific agencies, especially those with very high denial rates.

#### DECLARATION ON CONFLICTING INTERESTS

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

#### DECLARATION ON SOURCES OF FUNDING

The author received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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# **APPENDIX**

# Categories Generated through Thematic Analysis

leason (General)	Reason	Phrase(s) Used	Count	% of Tot
Does not	Does not	[this agency] do not have the requested data	1	0.29%
have the info	have the info	[this agency] does not have the information [this agency] does not have the information you have requested	3 2	0.87%
	11110	[this agency] does not have the information you need	3	0.38%
		due to unavailability of the said documents	1	0.29%
		in this instance [this agency] does not have the information you have requested	1	0.29%
		in this instance this agency does not have the information you have requested	1	0.29%
		in this instance this Office cannot provide the information you have requested since we do not collect such information	1	0.29%
		in this instance this Office cannot provide you the data you requested since we do not collect this information	1	0.29%
		in this instance this Office cannot provide you the information you need	1	0.29%
		in this instance this Office does not have the information you have requested	1	0.29%
		in this instance this Office does not have [] the information you have requested	1	0.29%
		in this instance this Office does not have [some of]* the information you have requested	31	8.96%
		in this instance this Office does not have [the information]	1	0.29%
		in this instance this Office does not have all of the information you have requested	1	0.29%
		in this instance this Office does not have any record	1	0.29%
		in this instance this Office does not have data [] you have requested	1	0.29%
		in this instance this Office does not have records of the information you have requested	2	0.58%
		in this instance this Office does not have some of the information you have requested	1	0.29%
		in this instance this Office does not have statistical data	1	0.29%
		in this instance this Office does not have the complete information you have requested	1	0.29%
		in this instance this Office does not have the information you have requested	131	37.86%
		in this instance this Office does not have the information you requested	1	0.29%
		in this instance this Office does not have the requested	1	0.29%
		in this instance this Office does not have the specific information you have requested	1	0.29%
		in this instance this Office is only able to provide you in this instance, [this agency] does not have the documents that you requested	1	0.29%
		not included in the survey, hence, we do not have information on such	1	0.29%
		Please be informed that you request for [] is not available at [this agency]	1	0.29%
		Requested data not available	1	0.29%
		this office does not have [] the information you are requesting	1	0.29%
		Unfortunately, [this agency] does not have the information you need	1	0.29%
		we are not able to provide	1	0.29%
		we do not have the complete information	1	0.29%
		You may request directly to	1	0.29%
	Does	[data not available]	2	0.58%
	not yet available	document you requested is still undergoing review	1	0.29%
l		in this instance this Office cannot provide the information you have requested for the mean time	1	0.29%
		in this instance this Office does not have the information you have requested since we have yet [to prepare the data]	1	0.29%
		result is not yet finalized, thus, we cannot disclosed any information regarding the said study	1	0.29%
	Does not have	in this instance [this office] does not have anymore disaggregation for the [data]	2	0.58%
	the requested level of data	in this instance this Office does not have the information you are requesting	1	0.29%
	No electronic copy	in this instance this Office do not issue electronic copy	1	0.29%
Does not ha	ve the info T		211	60.98%
Not FOI	not	As per phone conversation with you, your query has been resolved	1	0.29%
	FOI but	falls under regular transaction	1	0.29%
l	frontline service	in this instance we cannot act favorably on your query as the eFOI Portal's use is mainly to cater the requests of the public for any public		
		document within the custody of (selected) government offices/institutions	1	0.29%
		Lin this instance you shall forward your concern to learnalaints officel	1	0.29%
I		in this instance we shall forward your concern to [complaints office]	- 4	
		in this instance, please note, that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 s 2016	1	
		in this instance, please note, that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 s 2016  Please be informed that your request does not fall under the FOI but under the regular frontline services	1	
		in this instance, please note, that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 s 2016  Please be informed that your request does not fall under the FOI but under the regular frontline services  please be informed that your request falls under regular transaction of [this agency]	1	0.29% 0.29%
		in this instance, please note, that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 s 2016  Please be informed that your request does not fall under the FOI but under the regular frontline services  please be informed that your request falls under regular transaction of [this agency]  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016)		0.29% 0.29%
		in this instance, please note, that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 s 2016  Please be informed that your request does not fall under the FOI but under the regular frontline services  please be informed that your request falls under regular transaction of [this agency]  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016)  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016), we will be forwarding this to the concerned	1 4	0.29% 0.29% 1.16%
		in this instance, please note, that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 s 2016  Please be informed that your request does not fall under the FOI but under the regular frontline services  please be informed that your request falls under regular transaction of [this agency]  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016)  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016), we will be forwarding this to the concerned bureau/office	1	0.29% 0.29% 1.16%
		in this instance, please note, that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 s 2016  Please be informed that your request does not fall under the FOI but under the regular frontline services  please be informed that your request falls under regular transaction of [this agency]  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016)  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016), we will be forwarding this to the concerned bureau/office  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016). As such, we will be forwarding this to the	1 4 17	0.29% 0.29% 1.16% 4.91%
		in this instance, please note, that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 s 2016  Please be informed that your request does not fall under the FOI but under the regular frontline services please be informed that your request falls under regular transaction of [this agency]  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016)  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016), we will be forwarding this to the concerned bureau/office  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016). As such, we will be forwarding this to the concerned bureaus/office	1 4 17	0.29% 0.29% 1.16% 4.91% 0.29%
		in this instance, please note, that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 s 2016  Please be informed that your request does not fall under the FOI but under the regular frontline services please be informed that your request falls under regular transaction of [this agency]  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016)  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016), we will be forwarding this to the concerned bureau/office  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016). As such, we will be forwarding this to the concerned bureaus/office  request does not fall under the FOI but under the regular frontline services of [this agency]	1 4 17 1 1	0.29% 0.29% 1.16% 4.91% 0.29% 0.29%
		in this instance, please note, that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 s 2016  Please be informed that your request does not fall under the FOI but under the regular frontline services  please be informed that your request falls under regular transaction of [this agency]  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016)  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016), we will be forwarding this to the concerned bureau/office  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016). As such, we will be forwarding this to the concerned bureaus/office  request does not fall under the FOI but under the regular frontline services of [this agency]  This is to inform you that your request does not fall under FOI but under the regular frontline services	1 4 17 1 1 1	0.29% 0.29% 1.16% 4.91% 0.29% 0.29% 0.29%
		in this instance, please note, that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 s 2016  Please be informed that your request does not fall under the FOI but under the regular frontline services  please be informed that your request falls under regular transaction of [this agency]  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016)  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016), we will be forwarding this to the concerned bureau/office  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016). As such, we will be forwarding this to the concerned bureaus/office  request does not fall under the FOI but under the regular frontline services of [this agency]  This is to inform you that your request does not fall under FOI but under the regular frontline services  This particular information is a customer service request and/or concern	1 4 17 1 1 1 3	0.29% 0.29% 1.16% 4.91% 0.29% 0.29% 0.29% 0.87%
	not	in this instance, please note, that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 s 2016  Please be informed that your request does not fall under the FOI but under the regular frontline services  please be informed that your request falls under regular transaction of [this agency]  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016)  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016), we will be forwarding this to the concerned bureau/office  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016). As such, we will be forwarding this to the concerned bureaus/office  request does not fall under the FOI but under the regular frontline services of [this agency]  This is to inform you that your request does not fall under FOI but under the regular frontline services  This particular information is a customer service request and/or concern  We regret to inform you that we cannot accommodate your request	1 4 17 1 1 1 3 1	0.29% 0.29% 1.16% 4.91% 0.29% 0.29% 0.29% 0.87% 0.29%
	not FOI	in this instance, please note, that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 s 2016  Please be informed that your request does not fall under the FOI but under the regular frontline services  please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016)  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016), we will be forwarding this to the concerned bureau/office  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016), we will be forwarding this to the concerned bureau/office  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016). As such, we will be forwarding this to the concerned bureaus/office  request does not fall under the FOI but under the regular frontline services of [this agency]  This is to inform you that your request does not fall under FOI but under the regular frontline services  This particular information is a customer service request and/or concern  We regret to inform you that we cannot accommodate your request  [data available online]	1 4 17 1 1 1 3 1 3	0.29% 0.29% 1.16% 4.91% 0.29% 0.29% 0.29% 0.87% 0.29%
	FOI because	in this instance, please note, that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 s 2016  Please be informed that your request does not fall under the FOI but under the regular frontline services  please be informed that your request falls under regular transaction of [this agency]  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016)  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016), we will be forwarding this to the concerned bureau/office  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016). As such, we will be forwarding this to the concerned bureaus/office  request does not fall under the FOI but under the regular frontline services of [this agency]  This is to inform you that your request does not fall under FOI but under the regular frontline services  This particular information is a customer service request and/or concern  We regret to inform you that we cannot accommodate your request  [data available online]  All the information you have requested is already available online	1 4 17 1 1 1 3 1	0.29% 0.29% 1.16% 4.91% 0.29% 0.29% 0.29% 0.29% 0.87% 0.29% 0.29%
	FOI	in this instance, please note, that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 s 2016  Please be informed that your request does not fall under the FOI but under the regular frontline services  please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016)  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016), we will be forwarding this to the concerned bureau/office  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016), we will be forwarding this to the concerned bureau/office  Please note that this is a regular request and does not fall under Executive Order No. 2 (s. 2016). As such, we will be forwarding this to the concerned bureaus/office  request does not fall under the FOI but under the regular frontline services of [this agency]  This is to inform you that your request does not fall under FOI but under the regular frontline services  This particular information is a customer service request and/or concern  We regret to inform you that we cannot accommodate your request  [data available online]	1 4 17 1 1 1 3 1 3	0.29% 0.29% 1.16% 4.91% 0.29% 0.29% 0.29% 0.87% 0.29%

Reason (General)	Reason	Phrase(s) Used	Count	% of Tota
		We were able to determine that this particular information is already available online and therefore cannot be counted as a valid FOI request	15	4.34%
		we were able to determine that this particular information is already available online and therefore does not qualify as a valid FOI request	1	0.29%
		We were able to determine that this particular information is partially available online and therefore cannot be counted as a valid FOI request	3	0.87%
		We would like to inform you that the information/documents that you intend to acquire is already available in online	1	0.29%
	not	in this instance upon further evaluation of your request, please be advised that the information that may be requested under FOI is defined by		
	FOI	Section 2 of the FOI Manual	1	0.29%
		in this instance we have identified that your request does not fall under FOI	1	0.29%
		We were able to determine that this particular information cannot be counted as a valid FOI request	1	0.29%
Not FOI To	otal		64	18.50%
User Side	Incomplete	[Requesting clarification from user]	1	0.29%
Issues	Information	in this instance we are still missing from you some vital information	1	0.29%
		in this instance we would need for you to resubmit your request	1	0.29%
		in this instance we would need for you to resubmit your request as we are still missing from you some vital information	22	6.36%
		We have not received the information we have requested from you in order to facilitate your request	1	0.29%
	Wrong	[this agency] does not have in its custody	1	0.29%
		[this agency] toos not that e in its custody	1	0.29%
	Agency	[User Cancelled]	1	0.29%
		in this instance this agency recommends that you contact	1	0.29%
		in this instance this agency recommends that you contact [other agency]	1	0.29%
			1	0.29%
		in this instance this Office does not have the information you have requested	1	-
		in this instance this Office does not have the information you have requested, beyond the jurisdiction of our Agency		0.29%
		in this instance this Office is not the proper agency to address your concern	1	0.29%
		in this instance, this Office does not produce the data for the information you have requested	2	0.58%
		this is to inform you that we are denying your request since you are seeking the wrong agency	1	0.29%
		this Office does not have the information you have requested as it pertains to another office	1	0.29%
		This request is for [other agency]	1	0.29%
		we regret that we do not provide [requested information]	1	0.29%
	Other	in this instance we would be denying this request since we have already accepted the initial request	1	0.29%
	technical	prior request similar to this one was already accepted	1	0.29%
	issues	the requested data has already been provided to [you]	1	0.29%
		This request has been previously responded	1	0.29%
		Upon evaluation, we cannot accept your request due to the discrepancy on the Identification Card you have presented	1	0.29%
Jser Side Is	ssues Total		45	13.01%
FOI	Confidentiality	[Confidentiality]	1	0.29%
Exception		Due to the level of confidentiality of the request, we recommend you to provide a duly signed letter request addressed to	1	0.29%
		Existing corporate policies prevents us from disclosing information that may be used for case build up	1	0.29%
		for security purposes, this Office would prefer for you to resubmit your letter request	1	0.29%
		in this instance your request falls under the "Confidentiality Section" of the	1	0.29%
		in this instance your request is confidential in nature and requires approval	1	0.29%
		in this instance, we regret to inform you that request is considered denied due to its level of confidentiality	1	0.29%
		information you are requesting is confidential	1	0.29%
		It is with regret to inform you that your request shall fall under the exemptions provided on EO 2	1	0.29%
		still under review and still subject for approval, considered confidential	1	0.29%
		this Office is also bound by the restrictions/proscriptions under the law	1	0.29%
		cannot be given due course considering that the disclosure [] are subject to certain limitations and restrictions as provided by law	2	0.58%
	Proprietary	in this instance this Office cannot disclosed the information you requested	1	0.29%
	Information	it is of the view of our legal department that your request cannot be given as it is subject to certain limitations and restrictions as provided by law	1	0.29%
	C	for security purposes, this Office would prefer for you to resubmit your letter request including your designation and purpose of the request	2	0.58%
	Security Reasons			
	info is	in this instance, this Office regret to inform you that your request access to information was DENIED for Security Reason	1	0.29%
	only for	is proprietary and for internal use only	_	0.29%
	Section 4-	We wish to inform you that the maps we possess are only for the internal use	1	0.29%
	Personal	in this instance this Office cannot disclose the data you have requested for it falls under the List of Exceptions to Right of Access to	1	0.000/
	Safety Section 3	Information (Section 4- Personal Safety)	1	0.29%
	Section 3 - Filipino Citizens	Please be informed that the right to information provided under Section 3 of Executive Order No. 2, s. 2016 applies to Filipino citizens only	1	0.29%
	Privacy Issue	requests containing personal information such as Official Civil Registration documents cannot be addressed due to privacy issues	1	0.29%
	of the said memorandum	The requested documents do not fall within the purview of our good office	1	0.29%
	National Privacy Act	it is considered private data	1	0.29%
	Safety Issue	this Office regret to inform you that your request access to information was DENIED for Safety and Security Reason	1	0.29%
OI Except	tion Total		26	7.51%
	OTAL		346	100.00%

#### **AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY**

**Paul Jason V. Perez** is a full-time faculty member of the UP School of Library and Information Studies where he teaches introductory courses on LIS, ICT, and Programming. Before joining the school, he worked as a Senior Technical Associate for UP Information Technology Development Center, where he was involved in implementing a systemwide information system.

He finished his Bachelor of Library and Information Science from the same school. In 2019, he completed his Master of Digital Information Management from the University of Technology Sydney through the Australia Awards Scholarship. His current interests include Freedom of Information, Open Data, Digital Assets Management, and Research Data Management.



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The PhJLIS is published by the School of Library and Information Studies, University of the Philippines Diliman. ISSN 2719-0471 (Online)