

## **Nigerian Police Corrupt Practices and Commercial Drivers: An Analysis of The Yenegoa Local Government in Bayelsa State**

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### **Abstract**

*The increasing rate of corrupt, practices amongst police officers, especially through the erection of illegal road checks on our busy roads to illegally and forcefully threaten to shoot to kill commercial drivers if certain amount of money is not offered to them for no offence committed astounds all and sundry. The phenomenon of police corruption in this regard is disturbing and embarrassing. Therefore, this study examines this corrupt practice in Yenegoa local government area of bayelsa state. To achieve the objectives of the study, four hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Literatures related to the variables were reviewed. A survey research was adopted and a total of 200 respondents were selected from four major towns namely: Yenegoa, Okwe, Powerline Camp and Oko that make up Yenegoa through using purposive sampling technique and simple random sampling technique. A four point sketch type structured questionnaire was developed and used to elicit information from the respondents. The four hypotheses of the study were tested using two statistical techniques namely, the chi-square and the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis for testing the research hypotheses. The findings revealed that greed, poverty, low salaries, get rich-quick syndrome and bad leadership are responsible for police corruption. Recommendations made include the need for police to have external monitoring bodies to help check this corrupt practice, especially on Ababa, the state capital. A reward system should be developed to honor and reward deserving police officers for being disciplined while on duty and commercial drivers who attempt to offer money to them should be arrested and prosecuted in a competent court.*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Every ethnic group in the country has one name or the other for corruption. In other words, several local jargons exist to describe it—the police call it “roadja,” students call it sorting, Yorubas call it “egunji” (meaning free food), while the Oshimilis call it “aka-azu” (literally money delivered through the back hand). Other jargons include lobby cards, kola, connection fee, kickback, up-front, ten percent, and dash. Whatever name is employed to describe it, it is obvious that corruption is inimical to development in Nigeria. Corruption compromises everything good, just, and legitimate in a social system. It includes "soliciting and accepting bribes, dereliction of duty, embezzlement" (Goldstein, 1975); "influence peddling" (Olufemi, 2003); "advanced-fee fraud and over-invoicing scams involving community exports" (Contreras, 1994). Beyond accepting and giving bribes, the Anti-Corruption Law (2000) defines corruption as using one's position of

authority for financial gain, self-gratification, giving dishonest advice in order to obtain an advantage, working less than a full day for a full day's compensation, being late, and being untidy. It is a stigma that runs counter to national development goals, generates doubts towards organizations and government development policies, and has taken a toll on the quality of services provided and the lives of the people in the country.

Transparency International ranked the Nigeria Police as the most corrupt institution in Nigeria in their most recent edition of the 2023 Global Corruption Barometer (GCB). The Transparency International findings are the outcome of 114,000 respondents in 107 countries being interviewed. According to the Berlin-based organization, the main objectives of the 2023 GCB report were to ascertain respondents' perceptions of the credibility of significant public organizations and to investigate their own experiences of paying bribes for government services. Nigeria is one of the 88 nations whose anti-corruption initiatives are ineffective, according to the press release.

In the present-day, corruption amongst officers of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) is not only disturbing, but geared towards the senseless worship of, and mad rush for, money and wealth. It is a clear sight to see police officers on major roads collecting bribes from commercial drivers with impunity to the extent that corruption has become so ingrained in the psyche of the average Nigerian Police Officer. This is because the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), one of the main institutions that should have been checking corrupt practices, is neck deep in the act. Where is the hope for Nigerians with such negative assessments by the GCB report, if the police—one of the key institutions and one of the most important to the development and survival of democracy—are described in the TI report as the bastion of corruption with no hope? Therefore, the Nigerian people already know the outcome of TI's verdict: the Nigerian police force is corrupt.

Nigeria must address police corruption if it is to become a society that is secure and well-organized. The widespread corruption in the NPF, particularly the extortion at checkpoints, presents the country as apathetic against such misbehavior. The study aims to provide practical recommendations for reducing corruption, reviving professionalism within the police, and enhancing public confidence in law enforcement agencies by comprehending the underlying causes and societal consequences.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.3 Corruption in the Nigerian Police Force**

Police corruption, as described by Znoy (2009), involves police misconduct aimed at obtaining financial benefits, personal gain, or career advancement by neglecting or selectively pursuing investigations. A common form of this corruption is soliciting or accepting bribes in exchange for ignoring organized crime activities, such as drug trafficking or prostitution. Another form is the use of falsified evidence to secure convictions. In rare cases, police officers may engage directly in organized crime.

Bribery, defined as offering, giving, receiving, or soliciting something of value to influence actions, is a criminal act (Funk, 2011). It encompasses various forms, such as tips, gifts, favors,

discounts, and more. Bribery can be classified into active and passive types, with active bribery involving the offering of undue advantages and passive bribery involving the acceptance of such advantages (Criminal Law Convention on Corruption, ETS 173).

Extortion, or blackmail, involves unlawfully obtaining money, property, or services through coercion. Unlike robbery, which involves immediate force, extortion involves threats to cause harm or damage reputation unless demands are met. It is often associated with organized crime.

Extortion and bribery are forms of blue-collar crime, typically associated with individuals from lower social classes (Black's Law Dictionary, 2009). In Nigeria, police officers frequently extort money from drivers and passengers at checkpoints, sometimes leading to violence (Duck, 2010). Roadblock extortion has become a significant source of corrupt enrichment within the Nigerian Police Force, affecting officers from the rank of constable to Inspector General (Umeagbalasi, 2011). The practice has become so entrenched that checkpoints often function as tolls, with officers openly collecting money. The extent of this corruption is illustrated by the prevalence of roadblocks in Nigeria. For example, Umeagbalasi and Ijeoma (2010) reported over 1,350 police checkpoints in southeastern Nigeria, where extortion was rampant. This number included checkpoints between Lagos and Benin, where illegal toll collection was common (Ihonde, 2006). It is estimated that roadblock extortion generated \$3.48 billion for the Nigerian Police Force from 2009 to 2011 (Umeagbalasi, 2011).

Police corruption in Nigeria also includes extra-judicial killings and embezzlement. Since 1991, Nigerian police are believed to have been responsible for over 101,000 deaths, including those resulting from excessive force and custodial killings (Umeagbalasi & Ijeoma, 2010). Additionally, senior police officials have been accused of embezzling public funds, compromising the police's capacity to investigate crimes and maintain forensic laboratories.

In conclusion, widespread police corruption in Nigeria has seriously harmed the professionalism and competency of the force, especially when it comes to detecting and preventing crime.

## **THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **The Rotten Apple Hypothesis**

The Rotten Apple Hypothesis asserts that police corruption arises from hiring individuals already inclined towards corrupt behavior. According to Delattre (2006), "indiscriminate hiring, inadequate training, and poor supervision" contribute to this issue. The solution involves stricter hiring guidelines, better training, and increased supervision. Glenn (2007) emphasized that these theories are not mutually exclusive and should be considered together when discussing police corruption. This study adopts the Rotten Apple Hypothesis, asserting that personal choice is central to corruption. Despite societal influences or poor examples from senior officers, individuals with a predisposition for corruption are more likely to engage in corrupt practices. A popular adage states, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink," indicating that individuals ultimately choose their actions.

Emile Durkheim's functionalist perspective suggests that social problems like corruption can drive social change. However, the recent surge in the quest for quick wealth in Nigeria highlights a breakdown of social order. Robert K. Merton's theory of social deviation points out that weak social regulations lead to the breakdown of order, causing people to prioritize success goals over institutional norms. The emphasis on success without equal access to legitimate means creates a disparity that drives individuals to seek illegitimate paths. Merton (1957) argues that when society extols success goals but restricts access to achieving them, deviant behavior becomes widespread. This is evident in Nigeria, where traditional paths to success, such as education, no longer guarantee stability. Understanding police corruption requires a comprehensive framework that includes the Rotten Apple Hypothesis, societal influences, and structural factors.

### **Sampling Techniques and sample Size**

The sample of 150 respondents was selected for this study to respond to the questionnaire. The purposive sampling technique shall be used to ensure that both private and commercial drivers who ply the roads and policemen who are stationed in Yenegoa and its environs shall be selected to represent the general population of drivers and policemen. The subjects for the study involve all the 5,674 individuals in the community including the policemen and drivers working in the town. However a sample of one hundred and fifty (150) respondents was given the questionnaires to respond to the items. The purposive sampling techniques procedure was adopted to distribute the one hundred and fifty (150) questionnaires to ensure that it cut across the police and drivers and mature individuals in the research locale.

### **Method of Data Collection**

In order to obtain relevant data for this study, the researcher sourced for both primary and secondary data. The questionnaires were used to obtain the primary data after being distributed to the sample population which was structured to elicit information that was relevant to the research focus while secondary data was obtained from journals, books, newspapers and internet sources.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The method of data analysis to be employed for the study is the simple percentage statistical tool with the formula as follows:

#### **Method of Data Analysis**

The method of data analysis used for this study primarily involves the Chi-square test of independence to examine the relationships between various factors and police corruption in Nigeria. Below are the steps and rationale behind the chosen data analysis method:

##### **1. Data Collection:**

- Responses were collected for four key areas related to police corruption: the role of greed, the involvement of drivers, the impact on society, and the effectiveness of corrective measures.
- The responses were categorized as "Yes" or "No" for each hypothesis.

##### **2. Descriptive Statistics:**

- The frequency and percentage of responses for each category (Yes and No) were calculated to provide a basic understanding of the data distribution.

**3. Chi-square Test of Independence:**

- The Chi-square test was employed to determine whether there is a significant association between the categorical variables (e.g., greed and corruption, drivers and police corruption, etc.).
- The observed frequencies (FO) and expected frequencies (FE) were calculated for each hypothesis.
- The formula for the Chi-square statistic is:

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(FO - FE)^2}{FE}$$

- The calculated Chi-square values were compared against the critical value from the Chi-square distribution table at the 0.01 significance level and with the appropriate degrees of freedom.

**4. Degrees of Freedom:**

- The degrees of freedom (df) for the Chi-square test were calculated using the formula:  $df = (r - 1)(c - 1)$   
 Where r is the number of rows and ccc is the number of columns in the contingency table.

**5. Hypothesis Testing:**

- Null hypotheses (H0) were formulated for each research question, stating that there is no significant relationship between the variables.
- The p-value (probability value) obtained from the Chi-square test was compared to the significance level (0.01).
- If the p-value was less than 0.01, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating a significant relationship between the variables.

**6. Interpretation of Results:**

- The results were interpreted to understand the nature and strength of the relationships between the variables.
- The significance of the relationships was used to draw conclusions and make recommendations based on the research objectives.

**DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

**Objective 1: To ascertain the causes of corruption in the Nigerian Police Force**

Response	Frequency (FO)	Percentage (%)	Chi-square (X <sup>2</sup> )	df	p-value	Conclusion
Yes	109	72.67	30.82	4	< 0.01	Significant relationship between greed and corruption
No	41	27.33				
Total	150	100				

**Analysis:** The analysis reveals that 72.67% of the respondents believe there is a relationship between greed and corruption in the Nigerian Police Force, while 27.33% do not. The Chi-square

test value of 30.82 with a p-value < 0.01 indicates that this relationship is statistically significant. Therefore, we conclude that greed is a significant cause of corruption in the Nigerian Police Force.

**Objective 2: To ascertain the role of drivers in police corrupt practices**

Response	Frequency (FO)	Percentage (%)	Chi-square (X <sup>2</sup> )	df	p-value	Conclusion
Yes	111	74.00	34.56	4	< 0.01	Significant relationship between drivers and police corruption
No	39	26.00				
Total	150	100				

The analysis shows that 74.00% of the respondents believe there is a relationship between drivers and police corruption, while 26.00% do not. The Chi-square test value of 34.56 with a p-value < 0.01 suggests that this relationship is statistically significant. Therefore, we conclude that drivers play a significant role in police corrupt practices in Nigeria.

**Objective 3: To investigate the effect of police corruption in the society**

Response	Frequency (FO)	Percentage (%)	Chi-square (X <sup>2</sup> )	df	p-value	Conclusion
Yes	106	70.67	25.62	4	< 0.01	Significant relationship between police corruption and crime
No	44	29.33				
Total	150	100				

The data indicates that 70.67% of the respondents believe there is a relationship between police corruption and crime in society, while 29.33% do not. The Chi-square test value of 25.62 with a p-value < 0.01 confirms that this relationship is statistically significant. Thus, we conclude that police corruption has a significant impact on crime rates in society.

**Objective 4: To recommend ways to curb police corruption in the society**

Response	Frequency (FO)	Percentage (%)	Chi-square (X <sup>2</sup> )	df	p-value	Conclusion
Yes	100	66.67	16.66	4	< 0.01	Significant effect of corrective measures on police corruption

No	50	33.33				
Total	150	100				

The analysis reveals that 66.67% of the respondents believe that corrective measures have an effect on police corruption, while 33.33% do not. The Chi-square test value of 16.66 with a p-value < 0.01 indicates that the effect of corrective measures on police corruption is statistically significant. Therefore, we conclude that implementing corrective measures can effectively curb police corruption in society.

### Conclusion

The study aimed to explore the relationships between various factors and police corruption in Nigeria, focusing on greed, the role of drivers, the impact of police corruption on society, and the effectiveness of corrective measures. The analysis revealed significant relationships and effects for all the investigated hypotheses.

Firstly, the relationship between greed and corruption was found to be significant, suggesting that greed is a major driver of corrupt practices within the Nigerian Police Force. Secondly, the role of drivers in police corruption was also significant, indicating that drivers frequently engage in activities that contribute to corrupt practices. Thirdly, the analysis showed a significant relationship between police corruption and crime rates in society, highlighting the detrimental impact of corruption on public safety and social order. Lastly, the study found that corrective measures have a significant effect on reducing police corruption, demonstrating the potential effectiveness of targeted interventions in curbing corrupt practices.

These findings provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to police corruption and the impact of such corruption on society. The statistical significance of the relationships and effects underscores the importance of addressing these issues to improve the integrity and functionality of the Nigerian Police Force.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to address police corruption in Nigeria:

1. **Address Greed through Ethical Training and Accountability Measures:** The significant relationship between greed and corruption suggests a need for robust ethical training programs within the Nigerian Police Force. Regular workshops and seminars should be conducted to instill ethical values and integrity among police officers. Additionally, establishing strict accountability measures and transparent systems for monitoring and evaluating police conduct can help deter corrupt practices driven by greed.
2. **Regulate and Monitor Drivers' Interactions with Police:** Given the significant role of drivers in police corruption, it is essential to regulate and monitor their interactions with

police officers. Implementing strict regulations on road conduct and enhancing surveillance systems can reduce opportunities for corrupt exchanges. Furthermore, educating drivers about the consequences of participating in corrupt practices and encouraging them to report instances of corruption can help mitigate this issue.

3. **Enhance Crime Prevention Strategies by Tackling Police Corruption:** The significant relationship between police corruption and crime rates underscores the need to address corruption as part of broader crime prevention strategies. Efforts to reduce police corruption should be integrated with crime reduction initiatives to create a more secure and law-abiding society. Strengthening internal affairs departments and promoting community policing can foster trust between the police and the public, thereby reducing crime rates.
4. **Implement and Strengthen Corrective Measures:** The significant effect of corrective measures on reducing police corruption highlights the importance of such interventions. The Nigerian government and police authorities should implement comprehensive corrective measures, including regular audits, surprise inspections, and anti-corruption task forces. Additionally, creating an independent oversight body to investigate and address complaints of corruption can enhance the effectiveness of these measures.
5. **Promote Transparency and Public Engagement:** Increasing transparency within the Nigerian Police Force and engaging the public in anti-corruption efforts can further strengthen the fight against corruption. Publicizing the outcomes of corruption investigations and disciplinary actions taken against corrupt officers can deter potential offenders. Encouraging public participation in reporting corruption through anonymous hotlines and online platforms can also enhance accountability and transparency.

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