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Chapter

Corruption in Ghana's Justice System in the Eyes of Police Officers

Moses Agaawena Amagnya

Abstract

Corruption is a topical issue worldwide particularly when criminal justice systems and institutions that ensure compliance with the law and play a key role in controlling corruption are affected. Evidence from research shows that citizens of developing countries in Africa and elsewhere perceived criminal justice institutions in their countries, especially the police and judiciary, as among the most corrupt public institutions. However, little research has considered the views of criminal justice officials themselves when it comes to corruption in criminal justice systems. Through a survey of 616 Ghanaian police officers, this study examines police officers' views of corruption in Ghana's criminal justice system. Descriptive statistical analyses were conducted to ascertain police officers' views of the nature, prevalence, levels, and initiators of corruption. A key finding is that police officers perceive corruption as prevalent in Ghana's criminal justice system and as a serious problem. In addition, high public perceptions of corruption in the police and judiciary recorded in public perception surveys are corroborated by this study. Consistent with prior studies, lawyers, suspects/accused persons, and other judicial officers were identified as common initiators of corruption in the justice system. However, contrary to previous studies, many police officers stated that corruption in criminal justice institutions in Ghana has decreased in the past 5 years. The chapter concludes that leaders of criminal justice institutions should desist from denying corruption allegations and research finds their institutions among the most corrupt. Such denials appear to be influencing officers in the front line. Rather, efforts should be made to address the perception or reality of corruption in criminal justice institutions.

Keywords: corruption, criminal justice system, justice official, initiator of corruption, police officer, blame game

1. Introduction

Corruption is a major problem worldwide, which seriously hinders democratic governance and economic advancement. Evidence shows that corruption diverts resources away from essential public services, causes inefficiencies in public institutions, and exacerbates inequalities [1–5]. The consequences of corruption become

more serious when justice officials who are expected to ensure compliance with the law and play a key role in preventing corruption engage in corruption [6, 7]. Evidence from various studies exploring public perceptions of corruption shows that citizens perceive criminal justice institutions, especially the police and judiciary, as among the most corrupt public institutions [8–12]. This is the case in Africa [4, 12–14], Europe [15], Latin America [16, 17], and Asia [18, 19]. However, a scan of the literature suggests that most studies on corruption in justice systems often rely on the views of members of the public.

Measuring public perceptions of corruption is important to develop strategies for fighting corruption and detecting weaknesses in formulated and implemented policies [20]. Thus, public perception studies facilitate public involvement in anti-corruption reforms and give policymakers and members of the public an indication of progress and trends [7, 20, 21]. In addition, studies based on public opinion allow us to ascertain the public's view that helps to define and frame issues of corruption, raise awareness, encourage public debate on corruption, and advance reforms [21]. Public opinion surveys provide feedback on the extent of corruption across key institutions, which supplements expert views and ensures the credibility of anti-corruption efforts [20]. Foreign investors, governments, civil society, and aid agencies often use public perception surveys to gauge the prevalence of corruption and public confidence in governance structures and to plan anti-corruption policies and work.

Because no measurement of corruption is flawless, public perceptions surveys have been criticised as not keeping pace with reforms and improvements in anti-corruption and often do not reflect the most current state of progress [20]. Furthermore, public perception studies neglect the views of justice officials such as police officers, judges, auxiliary court staff, prosecutors, and lawyers who are directly involved in justice administration and usually stand accused. For instance, in the Ghanaian context, little research explored corruption in justice institutions from the perspectives of justice officials (see [4, 7, 14, 22]). Addressing the lack of scholarly attention to the views of justice officials regarding corruption in justice systems, this study explores police officers' perceptions of corruption in Ghana's justice system through a survey. Exploring the views of police officers who are direct stakeholders allows us to evaluate the true level of corruption in institutions and identify attitudes and perceptions of officials towards corruption. In the end, anti-corruption policies and plans that account for justice officials' opinions can be formulated and implemented to tackle corruption.

The succeeding parts of the chapter review literature focus on the nature and extent, prevalence, levels, and initiators of corruption. The literature review provides the foundation for the current study and highlights gaps that will be addressed. Then, the context of the study and the methods used to conduct the study are described, focusing on the data, setting, sampling, data collection, measures, data analysis, and sample characteristics. Finally, the results of the study are reported and key findings are discussed before a conclusion is presented.

2. Literature review

This section reviews the literature on the perceptions of corruption with a specific focus on corruption in criminal justice systems. Areas to be covered include evaluation of corruption, corruption prevalence, levels of corruption over time, and initiators of corruption.

2.1 Corruption evaluation

Corruption is an illicit and secretive activity, which is often difficult or impossible to observe and directly measure. To navigate the observability or direct measurement problem, scholars devise and use surveys and interviews to measure the nature, prevalence, causes, and effects of corruption (see [23–35]). To help understand the problem of corruption and develop measures to address it, some researchers evaluate past corruption incidents or ask participants to evaluate corrupt behaviours. For example, Albanese and Artello evaluated the nature and typologies of discovered and prosecuted corruption cases in the United States [36]. In addition, in a bribery experiment to test whether distributive fairness makes well-paid public officials less corruptible, Abbink asked participants to evaluate transcripts of videos containing interactive decision-making wherein corruption could be committed [37].

Similarly, in the World Business Environment and Business Environment and Enterprise Performance surveys between 2000 and 2005, the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development asked firm managers to evaluate corruption in their countries [38]. In addition, the Due Process of Law Foundation (DPLF) asks experts to evaluate the level of judicial corruption in Central America and Panama and the mechanisms for combating it [39]. Other studies ask participants to evaluate scenarios describing corrupt behaviours that occur in different institutions. The studies often focus on the likelihood of occurrence, seriousness of behaviour, preferred and expected sanctions, and willingness to report corrupt behaviours [40–45]. The current study follows that path by asking police officers to evaluate some corrupt behaviours that can occur in the police service.

2.2 Corruption prevalence

Corruption prevalence referring to the ‘widespread nature of corruption’ [7] is always a subject of interest to scholars and anti-corruption institutions [11, 12, 14, 46–50]. One of the most recognised and acceptable measures of corruption prevalence around the world is the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) by Transparency International (TI). TI has published a CPI yearly since 1995 when the first report involving 41 countries was released (see <https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi>). The latest CPI released in January 2023 ranks 180 countries and territories around the world by their perceived levels of public sector corruption, scoring on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean) [51]. The report concludes that most countries are failing to stop corruption with more than two-thirds of countries scoring below 50. The global average remains unchanged at 43 out of 100, with 155 countries making no significant progress against corruption and 26 countries falling to their lowest scores [51].

Evidence shows that most research or probes into the prevalence of corruption often include or focus on criminal justice institutions and officials and report them as the most corrupt. For instance, the 2015 CPI reports that people who encountered the courts (28%) and police (27%) were most likely to pay bribes compared with healthcare facilities (12%), government identification services (13%), schools (18%), and utility service providers (19%) [52]. Similarly, the 2012 CPI reports that on average, one in four citizens globally paid a bribe to justice institutions: 31% of participants who encountered the police paid bribes followed by 24% for the judiciary [53]. Participants also perceived the police and judiciary as the most corrupt, most often bribed, and most bribery-prone institutions [14]. Other studies found

corruption as more prevalent in the police and judiciary compared with other public institutions such as parliament, hospitals, and schools [54, 55].

Using secondary data, Salihu and Gholami explored the prevalence of corruption in the Nigerian justice system [50]. They concluded that the prevalence of corruption in the judicial system is widespread and is an obstacle to the fight against corruption in Nigeria. Warf examined the global prevalence of corruption in and among countries using data from TI: Over 76% of countries in the world are very or extremely corrupt [56]. In addition, Chak man Lee through interviews and surveys of the public and police officers explored the prevalence of police corruption in China and India [57]. He found that petty police corruption is more pervasive and less subtle in India compared with China. Amagnya through interviews with judges, police officers, prosecutors, lawyers, and anti-corruption officials explored corruption patterns and prevalence in Ghana's criminal justice system [14]. A majority of participants regard corruption as a huge problem in Ghana, with the police service and granting bail being the justice institution and process as the most corrupt or most prone to corruption [14]. Even police officers who talk about corruption prevalence in criminal justice institutions regard the police service as the most corrupt or more prone to corruption institution [4, 14].

Perceptions of the prevalence of corruption in institutions or countries can impact officials' support for as well as engagement in corruption. Perceiving corruption as widespread creates a normative expectation that corruption is okay, which makes it easy for officials to justify their engagement in corruption. Furthermore, corruption prevalence has a negative impact on the social, political, and economic health of states and compounds the crime problem [58]. Brownsberger [59] noted that the prevalence of corruption can provide an incentive to youths who need money to enter government, distract civil servants from the business of governing, and discourage public service by weakening administrations. However, the relationship between corruption prevalence and support or engagement in corruption is scanty in the literature. A few studies showed that perceptions of corruption prevalence highly correlate with and predict officials' engagement in and support of corruption (e.g., [7, 60, 61]).

Criminal justice systems, institutions, and officials should investigate, identify, and remedy the prevalence of corruption and the reasons accounting for it even if perceptions of corruption prevalence are wrong [7, 14, 62]. Nonetheless, some corruption perception studies are not always reliable due to exaggeration by members of the public to cover up their corrupt behaviours [62, 63]. This is especially so because many studies of corruption prevalence focus on the perceptions of members of the public, which neglects the perspectives of public officials who are often indicted in research. Neglecting the views of public officials may lead to corruption prevention measures, missing aspects that are important to ensuring effectiveness. Addressing this lacuna, the current study explores police officers' views of corruption prevalence in Ghana's justice system. Exploring corruption prevalence from the perspectives of critical stakeholders could confirm, contradict, or complement public perceptions of corruption and provide a foundation for developing effective corruption prevention measures.

2.3 Change in levels of corruption

Scholars and institutions are often interested in measuring the level of corruption because corruption levels can change over time. One of the universally recognised measures of corruption levels is the TI's public perception or opinion survey known as

the Global Corruption Barometer (GCB). In the 2003 and 2004 GCB surveys, for instance, participants were asked to indicate whether corruption will increase or decrease in the next 3 years. While 42% of participants in 2003 thought corruption would increase to some degree, 45% of participants in 2004 thought it would increase [64]. In the 2016 GCB focusing on corruption in the Middle East and North Africa, participants were asked whether the level of corruption in their country had changed or stayed the same in the last 12 months before the survey. Results show that 61% of participants stated that corruption increased to some degree, with only 15% saying it decreased and 19% indicating it stayed the same [65]. The perceived increase in corruption was worst for some countries such as Lebanon (92%), Yemen (84%), and Jordan (75%) compared with countries such as Egypt (28%) and Morocco (26%).

In other GCB reports, a majority of participants stated that corruption has increased to some degree over the past year: 58% in the 2015 survey and 55% in 2019 [52, 55]. However, perceptions often vary between developed and developing jurisdictions: 32% of participants in Europe thought that corruption has increased compared with 38% in Asia, 55% in Africa, and 56% in the Pacific [55, 66–68]. Beyond GCB reports, scholars make efforts to measure changes in the levels of corruption in countries and institutions as admonished by Kobonbaev [69]. In his doctoral study, Malinowski asked police officers in Chicago whether they think corruption in their departments has increased or decreased since they joined the police. However, the results were not reported [70]. Using survey data from the Latinobarómetro that measures public opinion in 18 countries in Latin America, Rose-Ackerman examined whether corruption has increased or decreased [71]. She reported that an overwhelming majority of participants stated that corruption has increased to some degree over the past year. The current study adds to the few studies that explore variations in the levels of corruption from the perspectives of public officials.

2.4 Initiators of corruption

Significant efforts have been targeted at studying corruption from the supply and demand perspectives especially after the Lockheed and Watergate scandals in the 1970s (e.g., [72, 73]). As noted by AlHussaini, the literature usually treats people and firms as victims of the greed of corrupt politicians, legislators, or officials who initiate corrupt transactions from a demand-side [38]. However, this does not portray a full picture of corruption, a phenomenon that always involves two or more parties, any of whom could initiate a corrupt activity [6, 74]. People and firms could initiate corrupt transactions or encourage bribe payments when faced with rigid laws, market uncertainties, weak legal protections, corrupt systems, rare and lucrative opportunities, or competition. Recognising that corruption always involves at least two parties, any of whom could initiate it, AlHussaini defined corruption as the 'willingness and ability of a private party to present a benefit (monetary or nonmonetary) to a public party with the object of inducing them to give special consideration to the interests of the donor (s)' [38]. This definition shows that corruption can be initiated by private parties (e.g., giving payment or gifts in exchange for illegal or legal rights) or public officials (e.g., requiring payments or gifts in exchange for performing their duties or buying votes to reach a political office).

Notwithstanding initiators of corruption being mentioned or discussed in the literature, few studies explore the topic. One of the few studies is Sadigov's examination of initiators of bribes in Azerbaijani higher education by [75, 76]. He found that both demand and offer of bribes were practised widely in higher education but with

the rates of bribes offered greater than bribes demanded. Significantly, professors or administrators refrain from initiating bribes compared with students [76]. Another study that explores initiators of corruption is Graycar's work on corruption in procurement [2]. He examined 42 real cases of public sector procurement corruption in Australia and found that 75% of corrupt activities were initiated by public servants and 25% were initiated by external companies or private persons [2]. The present study contributes to this scant literature by asking Ghanaian police officers to determine who commonly initiates corruption in Ghana's criminal justice system. Thus, the study considers both the supply and demand sides as initiators of corruption.

3. Context of the current study

The study was conducted in Ghana, a country that is praised for its democratic consolidation and is regarded as a beacon of hope for Africa [77–79]. However, evidence shows that Ghanaian criminal justice agencies and officials sometimes do not adhere to due processes [80]. In addition, there are reports and evidence of widespread public perceptions of corruption, which can be detrimental to the country's democracy and economic development [7, 14, 81]. For instance, Ghana scored 43 in the 2020, 2021 and 2022 TI's CPI on a scale of 0 ('highly corrupt') to 100 ('very clean'), which is similar to its 2019 and 2018 scores of 41 [9–12]. The scores from 2018 to 2022 are the lowest for Ghana since 2012, suggesting growing perceptions of institutional corruption and a lack of adequate efforts to tackle corruption in Ghana [82]. The CPI reports also feature the police among the most perceived corruption and corruption-prone public institutions in Ghana.

The policing architecture in Ghana was instituted by British colonial administrators in 1831 to facilitate trading activities and the extraction of agricultural and mineral resources [83]. As a result, the Ghana Police Service has been facing public mistrust, which is compounded by officers' misuse of power during arrest, investigations, and criminal prosecution, and widespread perceptions or reality of corruption [7, 82–84]. Evidence from the recent Afrobarometer surveys shows that over 90% of Ghanaians believed that some, most, or all police officers are corrupt [85, 86]. In terms of trust in the police, a low percentage of Ghanaians expressed high trust in police officers in 2020 (15%) and 2021 (10%). Beyond public perceptions of corruption, reports of police officers using the threat of prosecution to collect bribes from motorists suspected of breaking the rules and people who come into contact with the police are widespread [87, 88]. Despite widespread allegations and perceptions of corruption in the police, few studies examine corruption from the perspectives of Ghanaian police officers [4, 7, 14, 22, 81]. This study contributes to addressing this gap by exploring police officers' perceptions of corruption in Ghana's justice system.

4. Methods

4.1 Data

The study uses cross-sectional survey data from police officers collected across three regions in Ghana: Greater Accra, Ashanti, and Upper East. Whereas the Upper East Region represents rural dynamics and the Ashanti and Greater Accra regions provide urban dynamics. Between July 2017 and February 2018, questionnaires were

administered to police officers in the three regions after ethical approval from Griffith University and permission from the Ghana Police Service (see Appendix A for a sample of the questionnaire). The researcher visited various police stations and briefed police officers present at the stations about the study and informed them of the voluntary, anonymous, and confidential nature of the study. Questionnaires were then left with commanders to be distributed to all police officers at each station visited. Furthermore, participants were asked to seal the questionnaires in envelopes provided before dropping them in boxes placed at commanders' offices. This ensures that nobody knew the officers who completed the questionnaires.

On average, a questionnaire took 25 minutes to complete. The researcher went back to each station to collect questionnaires that had been dropped in the boxes at least 2 weeks after distributing questionnaires. Out of 900 questionnaires distributed, 780 were returned. After cleaning, 164 questionnaires that were uncompleted at all or not fully completed were excluded from the data. Therefore, 616 questionnaires representing a 68% response rate were used for the analysis. **Table 1** presents the characteristics of the sample. Participants were largely evenly distributed across the three regions comprising 38% from Upper East, 33% from Greater Accra, and 29% from Ashanti. 61% of participants stated that they work in urban areas, which largely corresponds to the proportion of participants from the urban regions of Greater Accra and Ashanti. However, further scrutiny of the data shows that about 24% of participants from the urban regions of Greater Accra and Ashanti described their places of work as rural areas. Conversely, 36% of participants from the rural Upper East Region described their place of work as urban.

With gender, about 64% of participants were males and 36% were females: These results are consistent with the work gender distribution in the police service and Ghanaian formal sector. Whereas about 55% of participants had education below the tertiary level, 82.2% of participants earned GHC2000 or less, suggesting that some officers with tertiary qualifications were not earning an income above GHC2000. It is common knowledge that some police officers in Ghana pursue further studies without approval from the police due to the difficulty of obtaining approval for further studies. Such police officers often do not submit additional qualifications to the police as they may be investigated and disciplined for pursuing studies without approval. Most officers were ranked below the inspectorate level (77.7%) and worked at the General Policing and Administration (51.4%) and Criminal Investigation Department (40.1%). With an average of 37 years, participants' age ranges from 20 to 59 years with work experience ranging between 1 and 40 years, averaging 14 years.

4.2 Measures

The study focuses on four main areas: (i) evaluation of corruption and corrupt behaviours, (ii) corruption prevalence, (iii) changes in levels of corruption, and (iv) initiators of corruption. How each of the areas of focus was measured is discussed subsequently.

Evaluating corrupt behaviours: This part of the study focuses on assessing police officers' views of some wrongdoings that police officers may engage in, which amount to corruption. Officers were presented with six statements describing corruption and corrupt acts and asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with those statements. Examples of the items are 'It is okay to bend the rules in order to get the job done,' 'The end always justifies the means in police work,' and 'It is acceptable for an officer to hide evidence that may help the prosecution of a case.' They were

Items	Valid n	Mean/percent	SD	Min	Max
Age	568	37yrs	8.29	20	59
Years of service	590	14yrs	7.91	1	40
Gender	616			0	1
Male		64.3%			
Female		35.7%			
Area of work	596			0	1
Urban		60.9%			
Rural		39.1%			
Education	611			0	1
High school or less		55.3%			
Tertiary		44.7%			
Monthly income				0	1
GHC2000 or less		82.2%			
Above GHC2000		17.8%			
Region	616			1	3
Upper East		38.3%			
Greater Accra		32.6%			
Ashanti		29.1%			
Rank	613			1	3
Constable/corporal		59.4%			
Sergeant		18.3%			
Inspector and above		22.3%			
Department/unit	612			1	3
CID		40.0%			
GPA		51.5%			
MTTU		8.5%			

Note: CID: Criminal Investigation Department; GPA: General Policing and Administration; MTTU: Motto Traffic and Transport Unit.

Table 1.
Descriptive statistics of sample characteristics.

measured on a five-point scale ranging from ‘Strongly Disagree’ to ‘Strongly Agree’. However, to simplify the analysis and results, agree and strongly agree were combined into one category known as ‘agree’ and disagree and strongly disagree were combined into one category called ‘disagree.’

Corruption prevalence: This part of the study addresses officers’ assessment of corruption prevalence among different criminal justice institutions. Officers were asked to indicate the extent to which they believe each of the justice institutions (i.e., Police, Judiciary, A-G’s Department, and Legal Profession) are corrupt. The response categories for each institution were measured on a four-point scale ranging from ‘Not Corrupt at All’ to ‘Extremely Corrupt.’

Level of corruption: Another measured area is changes in the levels of corruption, which focuses on police officers' perceptions of the levels of corruption in various justice institutions over the past 5 years. The question was as follows: Over the past 5 years, has the level of corruption in the following parts of the criminal justice system increased a lot, increased somewhat, stayed the same, decreased somewhat, or decreased a lot? The justice institutions were Police Service, Judiciary/Courts, Attorney-General's Department/Prosecution, and Legal Profession/Lawyers.

Initiators of corruption: The last area focuses on police officers' perceptions of the initiators of corruption in the criminal justice system. Officers were presented with the question: Who initiates bribe payment in the criminal justice system either by offering it or asking for it? There were four response categories (Not Common At All, Not Really Common, Common, and Very Common) for each of the actors in the criminal justice system: police officers, judges/magistrates, prosecutors, lawyers, victims, suspects/accused persons, and other judicial officers.

4.3 Data analysis

The data for this chapter was analysed through descriptive statistics focusing on frequencies and proportions of participants' responses to the various questions and categories. Frequencies and percentages for each item were analysed to ascertain participants' aggregated responses. Descriptive statistical analysis is appropriate for this study because the chapter seeks to understand the general perceptions of police officers regarding corruption in Ghana's justice system. The descriptive statistics used allows the data to be visualised and presented in a meaningful and understandable way that allows for a simplified interpretation of the data set. It helps to understand the characteristics, patterns, and trends of the data and compare different groups or variables [89]. A key limitation of an exploratory study and descriptive statistics is not being able to draw conclusions or make predictions about the general population. However, this was not the intention of the current study. Nonetheless, it should be noted that exploratory studies and descriptive statistical analysis are important for scientific research and are used widely [89].

5. Results

This section presents the results of the study, focusing on officers' evaluation of corrupt behaviours, the prevalence of corruption in criminal justice institutions, the level of corruption in criminal justice institutions over time, and the initiators of corruption in a justice system.

5.1 Evaluation of corrupt behaviours

The first results focus on police officers' evaluation of corruption and corrupt behaviours, which are presented in **Table 2**. As can be seen in the table, the majority of officers accept that corruption is an abuse of their power or authority for private gain (66%) and a serious problem in the Ghana Police Service (64%). However, a lower proportion of officers agree with the specific acts of corruption presented to them. For instance, 48, 25, and 16% of officers believed that the end always justifies the means in policing, it is okay to bend the rules in order to get the job done, and it is okay for an officer to hide evidence to help a suspect, respectively. Almost half of

Items	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Total
Corruption is an abuse of authority or power for private gain	161 (26%)	47 (8%)	393 (66%)	601 (100%)
Corruption in the police is a serious problem	163 (27%)	58 (10%)	385 (63%)	604 (100%)
When it comes to police work, the end justifies the means	229 (38%)	82 (14%)	291 (48%)	602 (100%)
It is okay for an officer to hide evidence to help a suspect	493 (81%)	16 (3%)	97 (16%)	606 (100%)
It is okay to bend the rules in order to get the job done	312 (68%)	40 (7%)	151 (25%)	603 (100%)
It is the public that corrupt justice officials	101 (17%)	74 (12%)	430 (71%)	605 (100%)

Table 2.
Evaluation of corruption and corrupt behaviours.

police officers agreeing that the end justifies the means in police work is substantial and can have serious implications for policing. For instance, officers thinking that way may do anything including committing corrupt acts to achieve results in the end. Interestingly, a substantial number of officers (71%) believed that it is the public that bribes justice officials including the police. The results suggest that although police officers regard corruption as a serious problem in the police and justice system, they blame the public for the presence and persistence of corruption in the justice system.

5.2 Prevalence of corruption among criminal justice institutions

The study also assesses officers' views of corruption prevalence in and among criminal justice institutions. The results are captured in **Table 3**. Although the figures show variation across the different response categories and institutions, it can be said that a significant proportion of officers believe all criminal justice institutions are corrupt to some extent. With the police, for instance, 77% of officers indicated that they are either slightly, quite, or extremely corrupt, which is similar to the judiciary (85%), A-G's Department (83%), and the legal profession (83%). Although it is expected that police officers will present a good image of their institution compared with other institutions, differences in the number of participants regarding the police as corrupt compared with the other institutions are low and not statistically significant. Nonetheless, 77% of police officers asserting that there is some form of corruption in the police service is a significant result worth noting. The results for the police and judiciary are consistent with the results from public perception corruption surveys (see [52, 55, 65, 85, 90–92]). The 85% of officers regarding the A-G's Department

Item	Not at all corrupt	Slightly corrupt	Quite corrupt	Extremely corrupt	Total
Police service	137 (23%)	246 (40%)	171 (28%)	57 (9%)	611
Judiciary/court	91 (15%)	184 (30%)	213 (35%)	123 (20%)	611
A-G's Department	108 (18%)	229 (37%)	181 (30%)	92 (15%)	610
Legal profession	94 (15%)	183 (30%)	195 (32%)	138 (23%)	610

Table 3.
Prevalence of corruption among criminal justice institutions.

as corrupt contradict Amagnya's finding of much not heard of the A-G's Department on issues of corruption [4].

5.3 Level of corruption over 5 years

Officers were also asked to assess the level of corruption in four criminal justice institutions over the past 5 years. Results are captured in **Table 4**. More officers believed that corruption in the four justice institutions has decreased over the past 5 years compared with those who thought it had increased. Specifically, 52% of officers believed that corruption in the police decreased somewhat or a lot compared with increasing (26%) or staying the same (22%). A majority of police officers indicating that corruption in the police has decreased over the past 5 years are expected because police officers across all fronts often deny research describing the police as the most perceived corrupt institution by the public (see [93–95]). For the judiciary, 42% of officers thought corruption decreased somewhat or a lot, which is similar to the A-G's Department (44%) and the legal profession (37%). The high percentage of participants stating that corruption in the four justice institutions has decreased is higher than the 36%, 19%, and 6% recorded in the 2017, 2020, and 2021 Afrobarometer surveys, respectively [86, 91, 92].

5.4 Initiators of corruption

The last area of focus is initiators of corruption in the criminal justice system. Participants were asked to indicate stakeholders that commonly initiate bribe payments in the justice system. The results are presented in **Table 5**. Only 37% of officers believed that police officers commonly initiate bribe payments during criminal justice encounters. This result is suspicious because of evidence of police officers regularly demanding bribes from motorists at road checkpoints in full view of members of the public even in instances wherein motorists committed no offence [96, 97]. It is common in Ghana to see police officers mounting road checks in the early part of the day, a peak period when commercial drivers transport people to business centres and markets. During such operations, motorists especially commercial drivers usually pay bribes to police officers in full view of passengers in the vehicles to avoid being arrested or delayed.

Fewer proportions of participants regard prosecutors (39%), judges or magistrates (31%), and victims (26%) as common initiators of bribe payments. However, a majority of police officers believed that suspects or accused persons (78%), lawyers (53%), and other judicial officials (50%) were common initiators of bribe payment in

Item	Increased a lot	Increased somewhat	Stayed same	Decreased somewhat	Decreased a lot	Total
Police Service	84 (14%)	73 (12%)	131 (22%)	154 (25%)	164 (27%)	606
judiciary	84 (14%)	120 (20%)	148 (25%)	153 (25%)	100 (17%)	605
A-G's department	77 (13%)	103 (17%)	159 (26%)	144 (24%)	120 (20%)	603
Legal profession	97 (16%)	107 (18%)	179 (30%)	131 (22%)	90 (15%)	604

Table 4.
Changes in corruption levels over the past five years.

Item	Not at all common	Not really common	Common	Very common	Total
Police officers	162 (27%)	221 (36%)	170 (28%)	52 (9%)	605
Judges/magistrates	134 (22%)	285 (47%)	137 (23%)	47 (8%)	603
Prosecutors	117 (19%)	253 (42%)	183 (30%)	52 (9%)	605
Lawyers	94 (16%)	187 (31%)	207 (34%)	117 (19%)	605
Suspects/accused persons	45 (7%)	88 (15%)	183 (30%)	292 (48%)	608
Victims	168 (28%)	280 (46%)	110 (18%)	47 (8%)	605
Other judicial officials	95 (15%)	209 (35%)	209 (35%)	91 (15%)	604

Table 5.
Common initiators of corruption in the criminal justice system.

the justice system. Suspects or accused persons, lawyers, and other judicial officials being regarded as common initiators of bribe payments are consistent with the findings in qualitative studies by Amagnya [4, 14]. Suspects or accused persons emerging as the most common initiator of bribe payment makes sense because their freedom is often under threat and they could do anything to retain their freedom including initiating and paying bribes to justice officials. In the same vein, lawyers can initiate bribes because they always want to win cases for their clients so that they can attract more clients and earn more income. The public-facing and intermediary role of other judicial officials such as court clerks, secretaries, and bailiffs may account for them being regarded as common initiators of corruption.

6. Discussion

An important finding worth discussing is the blame game wherein police officers blame the public for corruption in the justice system by indicating that it is the public that corrupts the police and justice officials. This finding is similar to Amagnya's studies wherein judges/magistrates, police officers, and prosecutors blamed other justice officials for corruption in Ghana's justice system [4, 14]. In this study, blaming others is unsurprising considering that people who engage in corruption usually blame or accuse other actors as a way of covering up their corrupt activities or justifying the presence of corruption in their institutions [14, 62, 63, 98]. The posture of blaming others for the existence of corruption suggests that police officers may not recognise, accept, and take responsibility for their role in creating and sustaining corruption. This could be inimical to corruption control because recognising and acknowledging one's role or contribution to a problem is vital in finding a solution to the problem. If police officers do not recognise, acknowledge, and accept responsibility for contributing to the creation and/or persistence of corruption in their institution, then they may not think of or work towards addressing their complicity and the corruption problem. Leaders of the police and justice institutions should stop denying allegations and reports of corruption in their institutions because such denials appear to be influencing frontline officers' attitudes towards corruption.

The study also found that participants believed that corruption is prevalent in all criminal justice institutions particularly the police and judiciary or court system. This

result is consistent with the results of Amagnya wherein a majority of justice officials admitted that corruption is widespread in the police and judiciary in Ghana and public perception surveys in Ghana and elsewhere [4, 8–17, 99]. The result not only confirms public perceptions of corruption in the justice system but also suggests that corruption is a real problem in the justice sector: Police officers' views about corruption in the justice system are based on actual experiences of corruption as they work across all aspects of the justice system from arrest to sentencing. Leaders of various justice institutions need to admit the existence of corruption in their institutions and adopt measures to deal with corruption allegations to improve perceptions among staff and members of the public.

Contrary to the results of previous studies (e.g., [86, 91, 92]), a significant proportion of participants in this study thought that corruption in all the justice institutions has decreased over the past 5 years. The high percentage of participants indicating that corruption has decreased over the past 5 years may be because of the change in government in January 2017 from the Mahama-Amissah Arthur's-led NDC to Akuffo-Addo-Bawumia's-led NPP. This may be particularly so because the NPP's victory in the 2016 elections was largely due to labelling the NDC government as corrupt. In addition, new governments often enjoyed goodwill and optimism in their first couple of years when it came to the issue of corruption [100]. The new government's efforts of enacting an Office of Special Prosecutor Act, establishing an Office of Special Prosecutor, and appointing a special prosecutor in the person of Martin Amidu (see [81, 101]) may have given police officers some optimism about the government's ability to tackle corruption. It is also possible that police officers were optimistic about corruption because they see themselves as part of the government and often at the receiving end of corruption accusations by members of the public. Future studies should segregate and compare the views of members of the public and justice officials when measuring changes in levels of corruption.

It has also emerged that participants regarded lawyers, suspects/accused persons, and other judicial officers as common initiators of bribe payment in the justice system. These three actors emerging as common initiators of bribe payment operate at the pretrial stages of the justice system, which is consistent with the findings of Amagnya [4, 14]: Corruption is most prevalent at pretrial stages and involves court clerks, lawyers, and bailiffs. Surprisingly, police officers who operate at an entry point to the justice system identified as the most corruption-prone stage [14] are not regarded as one of the most common initiators of bribe payment. Although police officers presenting a positive image of their institution may account for this unexpected result, suspects/accused persons and lawyers may be the actors who initiate bribe payments during encounters with police officers at the entry stage. Based on the result, it is proposed that efforts to tackle corruption in justice systems should be targeted at pretrial stages and entry points to justice institutions.

7. Conclusion

This study explores the nature and extent of corruption in Ghana's criminal justice system from the perspectives of police officers. Although this study has remarkable strengths such as covering three regions of Ghana including a large sample and multiple measures, some limitations should be noted. First, conclusions drawn should be treated cautiously because the data analysis is descriptive and most of the participants are junior officers who are only a subset of police officers. In addition, there is

limited scope for generalisation because the data came from a nonrandom sample and the analysis is descriptive. Furthermore, because the study measured police officers' perceptions of corruption in the criminal justice system, the results may be affected by desirability bias—the tendency for police officers to present their institution or departments in a positive light (see [14, 102]). Future studies need to include a representative and multiple sample and use experimental design that can better capture corruption issues.

Nonetheless, the results or findings are revealing in that they corroborate public perceptions of corruption in the justice system. Most participants believed that corruption is prevalent and is a serious problem in the justice system, which is consistent with previous studies in which members of the public and justice officials were participants. The results suggest that leaders of justice institutions' continuous denial of research reports on corruption and allegations of corruption are gaining ground with frontline officials and influencing their attitudes towards corruption. This is manifested in participants stating that corruption in the four criminal justice institutions has decreased over the past 5 years, a result that contradicts the findings of public perception surveys. The current findings' implication for corruption control is that leaders of justice institutions need to stop denying corruption allegations and research that finds criminal justice institutions and officials as among the most corrupt. Rather, leaders should collaborate with complainants and researchers to identify the source of the problem and think of measures needed to address it. This will improve public confidence and trust in criminal justice institutions and reduce the high perceptions of corruption in criminal justice institutions by staff and members of the public.

Appendix: Questionnaire for police officer

JUSTICE-SECTOR CORRUPTION SURVEY, 2017/2018

Our survey starts with some questions about yourself. Please answer the following questions.

1. You are? **(Please tick one)**

Male Female

2. How old are you? **(Please write down your age)**

.....(# of years)

3. What is your religious background? **(Please only tick one)**

No religious affiliation

Muslim

Traditional Practice

Catholic

Anglican

Methodist

Protestant/Pentecostal

Other, please specify _____

4. What is your **highest** educational qualification? **(Please only tick one)**

Primary school completed (6 years)

Junior Secondary School completed (12 years)

Senior secondary school (SSS/SHS) completed

Training College completed

Completing/completed a polytechnic course

- Completing/completed an undergraduate course
 Completing/completed a graduate university course

5. What is your **present** rank in the Police Service? (**Please only tick one**)

- Constable
 Lance Corporal
 Corporal
 Sergeant
 Inspector
 Chief Inspector

6. How **long** have you been a police officer? (**Please give the number of years in the police service**)
(# of years)

7. Which department in the police service do you work with **presently**? (**Please only tick one**)

- General Policing and Administration
 Motor Transport and Traffic Department (MTTD)
 Criminal Investigation Department (CID)

8. Where have you worked most of the time (**Please only tick one**)

- Rural areas Urban areas

9. What is your average monthly range of salary after taxes, that is what you and your family can spend (**Please only tick one**)

- GH¢2,000 or less
 Above GH¢2,000

10. People differ in their opinion about corruption in criminal justice agencies (i.e. Police, Judiciary/ Courts, Attorney-General's Department and Lawyers). What is your opinion? Please indicate whether you Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Neither Agree nor Disagree (NA/D); Disagree (D); or Strongly Disagree (SD) with each statement. (**Tick only one for each statement**).

	SA	A	NA/D	D	SD
a. Corruption is an abuse of police authority/power for gain	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. It is okay to bend the rules in order to get the job done.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. When it comes to police work, the end justifies the means.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. It is a good thing for an officer to hide evidence that may help the case of a suspect.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Corruption in the Ghana police is a serious problem	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. It is the public that corrupt police officers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. Different parts of the criminal justice system are more affected by corruption than others. What do you think about the following branches of the criminal justice system? Are they Extremely Corrupt; Quite Corrupt; Slightly Corrupt; or Not at All Corrupt. **Please tick one for each institution.**

	Extremely Corrupt	Quite Corrupt	Slightly Corrupt	Not at all Corrupt
a. Police Service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Judiciary/Courts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Attorney-General's Department	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Lawyers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. Over the past five years, has the level of corruption in the following parts of the criminal justice system Increased a Lot; Increase Somewhat; Stayed the Same; Decreased Somewhat; or Decreased a Lot? **Please tick one for each institution.**

	Increased a Lot	Increased Somewhat	Stayed Same	Decreased Somewhat	Decreased a Lot
a. Police Service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Judiciary/Courts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Attorney-General's Department	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Lawyers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

16. **Who initiates** bribe payment in the criminal justice system, either by offering it or asking for it? Please indicate for each group whether offering or asking for a bribe is Very Common; Common; Not Really Common; or Not Common at All? **(Please tick one for each group).**

Initiating bribe paying in this group is	Very Common	Common	Not Really Common	Not Common at All
a. Suspects/Accused Persons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Victims	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Police Officers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Judges	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Prosecutors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Lawyers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Other Judicial Officers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>


Thank you for completing the questionnaire and your support of the research. Please put the completed survey into the brown envelope, seal it, and drop it into the SURVEY box provided at your police station.

Author details

Moses Agaawena Amagnya
Institute of Policing, School of Justice, Security and Sustainability, Staffordshire University, Stoke-on-Trent, United Kingdom

*Address all correspondence to: moses.amagnya@staffs.ac.uk

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