

# Locus of control and self-efficacy as means of tackling police corruption in Nigeria

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*reduction of police corruption-facilitating attitudes in Nigeria. Three hundred police personnel from three State Police Commands participated in the study. These participants who ranged in age between 26 and 53 (Mean = 35.4) were allocated into one of two experimental conditions or a non-treatment control groups and as well matched into commissioned and non-commissioned groups. Participants treated with locus of control and self-efficacy (both involved six weekly sessions) showed significant reduction in a post-test corruption measure. Participants in the self-efficacy condition demonstrated a higher level of change than their counterparts in the locus of control condition. These findings and their implications for integrity-based policing are discussed.*

## INTRODUCTION

There is a long-standing problem of corruption in Nigeria. It is not a secret that the Nigerian police are seen to be particularly corrupt. Transparency International (TI) has consistently ranked Nigeria as one of the most corrupt countries in the world. From that, we might assume that the high levels of corruption within the Nigerian police are a reflection of a wider problem in society. However, the situation is worse

## ABSTRACT

*The study investigated the effect of two existential-phenomenological counselling techniques (locus of control and self-efficacy) on the*

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than that. The non-governmental Nigeria Governance and Corruption Survey (2005) reports that the public rate the integrity of the police as the lowest of all public organisations (Alemika, 1999). Thus, any study on corruption within the Nigerian police has its work cut out: it looks at, seemingly, the most corrupt organisation within a highly corrupt nation as a whole.

Before presenting our research, it is important to arrive at an understanding of exactly what police corruption is. Police corruption, researchers agree, is universal and predominant in the police (Blair, 1999; Miller, 2003; Newburn, 1999; Punch, 2000; Sherman, 1985). This consensus on the universality of corruption and its predominance in the police is, however, not the same when it comes to deciding what police corruption is. Aremu (in press) notes that corruption has engendered a definition problem.

Punch (1985) writes that corruption occurs when an official (*police*) receives or is promised significant advantage or reward (personal, group or organisational) for doing something that the official is under no obligation to do. This means that any act of policing, which occurs as a result of an inducement, is corruption. Newburn (1999) is of the opinion that it is largely impossible to define the essential characteristics of police corruption: it is context dependent. Any act on the part of the police may be seen as corrupt depending variously on the means, ends or motivation associated with the conduct. Thus, it could be said that any unethical behaviour on the part of a police officer is corruption.

Police researchers (Aremu, 2007, in press; Bayley, 1969; Elliston & Feldberg, 1974; Goldstein, 1975; Mandel-Campbell, 1999; Newburn, 1999; Punch, 2000; Sherman, 1985) have identified various causes of corruption in the police. Sherman (1974) identifies seven such causes: discretion, low managerial ability, low public visibility, peer

group secrecy, managerial secrecy, status problems and association with lawbreakers. Punch (2000) gives five reasons: group dynamics, police culture, police organisation, organised crime, and societal factors and notes that police corruption usually involves a gradual process of development. More recently, Aremu (2007, in press) has identified the following factors: the Nigerian police organisation, police culture, poor remuneration, poverty, as well as police recruitment. It is pertinent therefore, that efforts be made to stem the tide of corruption in the Nigerian police.

In the literature, many suggested measures have been put forward to reform the police. In most cases, these reforms have been 'top-down' coming from either the government or the police management. For example in Nigeria, successive police administrations have laid emphasis on zero corruption tolerance in the police, yet the problem persists. However, with the establishment of anti-corruption agencies in Nigeria, notably the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and the Independent Corrupt Practices and other related offences Commission (ICPC) there seems to be an increased drive towards tackling it institutionally, through 'top-down' means.

Other types of reform strategies identified are: public education (Anozie, Shinn, Skarlatos, & Urzua, 2004), integrity testing (Homel, 2002), institutional design (Quah, 1989) and emotional intelligence training (Aremu, 2005). Anozie, et al. lay emphasis on police training as a method of curbing police corruption. In particular, in the Nigerian context, it makes sense to devise measures against corruption that are bottom-up, and tackle the everyday interactions that police officers have with citizens. Corruption within the Nigerian police is not only rife, it is also highly visible to the public. A common way of extracting money from citizens is by means

of stopping motor vehicles, threatening with prosecution for traffic offences and asking for money in order that the matter be laid to rest. These are everyday occurrences on the road in Nigeria and intensely resented by the public. Corruption within the Nigerian police cannot be successfully tackled without working on the mind-set of these officers directly. That may require a counselling approach. Unfortunately, there is a dearth of literature in this respect. No study has ever been conducted on the reduction of police corruption using counselling or psychological techniques. The current study therefore is designed to address this and fill this research gap by investigating the effect of two existential-phenomenological counselling techniques (locus of control and self-efficacy) on the reduction of police corruption.

### EXISTENTIAL-PHENOMENOLOGICAL COUNSELLING TECHNIQUES

In psychology, there are different schools of thought that apply different theories in the understanding of human nature and behaviour. One of these schools of thought is the humanistic school, which gives rise to existential-phenomenological counselling. 'Existential counselling' is defined as a humanistic counselling approach that helps individuals and group of individuals who experience difficulties learn to make appropriate choices, experience life in a better dimension and minimise psychological isolation (Van Deurzen-Smith, 1997). Owen (1994) argues that the existential-phenomenological approach is appropriate for counselling because of its subjective approach to reality. This underscores the point that the approach makes an attempt to increase individuals' self-awareness.

In this study, the two theories of existential-phenomenological counselling utilised are locus of control and self-efficacy. Julian Rotter developed locus of control

theory in 1954 from social learning theory. According to Rotter (1954), through the theory, reinforcements strengthen the expectancy of a desired behaviour or event. Rotter (1966) again notes that expectancies are generalised from specific situations and are perceived as similar or related. These generalised attitudes, beliefs and expectancies can affect a variety of behavioural choices in many different life situations (Rotter, 1966). Those people with a strong internal locus of control, or *internals*, tend to attribute outcomes of events to their own control, whereas *externals* attribute outcomes of events to external circumstances. The latter is linked to depression, negative feelings and stress.

In research, locus of control has enjoyed considerable attention (Hamid, 1994; Ji, Peng, & Nisbett, 2000; Lathrop, 1998; Sastry & Ross, 1998). These studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of locus of control in areas like workplace policies (Noor, 2006), and academic performance (Bar-Tal & Bar-Zohar, 1977). There has not been a significant research effort on the influence of locus of control on any area of policing. The only study that utilises locus of control on the police is that of Smith (2001) in which he reports that police officers with higher internal locus of control are found to be more tolerant of shift work problems than their counterparts with low internal of locus of control.

Self-efficacy, the second theory of existential-phenomenological counselling in this study, is associated with Albert Bandura. It has its roots in social cognitive theory. Bandura (1986, p. 391) defines perceived self-efficacy 'as people's judgment of their capabilities to organise and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performance'. Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Such beliefs according to Bandura (1997) produce diverse effects through four major

processes — cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes. Within this perspective, individuals' behaviours are constants under reciprocal influence from cognitive (and other personal factors such as motivation) and environmental influences. Bandura (2001) calls this three-way interaction of behaviour, cognitive factors and environmental situations.

Self-efficacy can be seen as the confidence in an individual's coping skills that is manifested in a wide range of challenging situations. For instance, Speir and Frese (1997) report that self-efficacy relates to better health, better self-development and greater social integration. Bandura (1997), Jex and Bliese (1999) and Grau, Salanova, and Peiro (2001) have found the significant influence of self-efficacy in the reduction of organisational stress. Krueger and Dickson (1994) reason that people with high-perceived self-efficacy focus on the opportunities worth pursuing, whereas the less self-efficacious dwell on the risks to be avoided. The influence of self-efficacy has also been investigated in academic performance, career and vocation. Studies in these areas include that of Bouffard-Bouchard, Parent, and Larivee (1991), Aremu and Ogbuagu (2005) on academic performance; Owre (2005) and Hackett and Betz (1981) on career development of women; Aremu and Akpochafo (2007), Laat and Walters (2006) on teaching self-efficacy.

Aremu (2005) investigated career commitment of young police personnel using self-efficacy alongside three other psychological variables. Similarly, Aremu and Lawal (2007) report the influence of self-efficacy among other variables on career aspirations of police trainees in Nigeria. In these two investigations, the significant contributions of self-efficacy to the criteria measured (career commitment and career aspirations) were obvious. As a result, Aremu (2005, p. 8) called for 'unrelenting research in this area'.

To be able to achieve these objectives, three null hypotheses were generated and tested in the study. They are:

1. There is no significant main effect difference in the reduction of corruption-facilitating attitudes of police personnel in the experimental conditions and those in the non-treatment control group.
2. There is no significant main effect difference in the reduction of corruption-facilitating attitudes of the police personnel exposed to locus of control and self-efficacy counselling techniques.
3. There is no significant main effect difference in the reduction of corruption-facilitating attitudes of the commissioned and non-commissioned police personnel treated with the two counselling techniques.

## METHODOLOGY

### Design and participants

This study adopts a pre-test, post-test and control group quasi-experimental approach in which a 3×2 factorial design is utilised. This 3×2 factorial design employs three rows (locus of control, self-efficacy and non-treatment control group) and two columns (ie rank commissioned and non-commissioned). The participants of the study included 300 personnel of the Nigerian police. They were conveniently sampled from a population of the Nigerian police from three State Police Commands (Oyo, Ogun and Lagos). The participants were aged between 26 and 53 years ( $M = 35.4$ ;  $SD = 3.3$ ) and were evenly matched into commissioned and non-commissioned categories based on their ranks. The Nigerian police have 22 ranks (Constable to Inspector General of Police) classified into three: Senior Police Officers (SPOs), Inspectorate and Regular Members. In the study, police personnel in the

**Table 1: A  $3 \times 2$  factorial matrix of distribution of participants into experimental conditions; number of participants in each group**

<i>Experimental conditions</i>	<i>Commissioned</i>	<i>Non-commissioned</i>	<i>Total</i>
Locus of control	50	50	100
Self-efficacy	50	50	100
Non-treatment control	50	50	100
Total	150	150	300

SPOs and Inspectorate's cadre were classified as commissioned, while the regular members (junior police personnel) were classified as non-commissioned. According to Aremu (2005), the latter constitute about 70 per cent of the total workforce in the Nigerian police. (See Table 1.)

### **Experimentation and data collection procedure**

Participants were grouped into the experimental conditions (locus of control, self-efficacy and control) based on the State Police Commands to which they belonged. This was done for practical reasons, as follows: participants from Oyo, Ogun and Lagos State Police Commands were grouped into locus of control, self-efficacy and control experimental conditions. The experiment lasted six weeks. The meetings were weekly and took place in designated halls in each of the three commands. The control took their pre- and post-test questionnaires in the same location.

The locus of control and self-efficacy programmes can be summarised as follows:

#### **Locus of control**

Week 1: Rapport and administration of pre-test questionnaires.

Week 2: Career expectations in the Nigerian police.

Week 3: Behavioural attitudes (police corruption and culture) of the police.

Week 4: Behavioural choices and consequences.

Week 5: Positive agent of change.

Week 6: Administration of post-test questionnaires and closing.

#### **Self-efficacy**

Week 1: Rapport and administration of pre-test questionnaires.

Week 2: Self-capabilities of police personnel.

Week 3: Policing motivation and efficacy.

Week 4: Cognitive restructuring (policing reorientation).

Week 5: Corruption behaviour modification.

Week 6: Administration and closing.

### **Instrumentation**

In the study, the Police Ethical Behaviour Scale (PEBS) was utilised for the collection of data. PEBS is a self-developed 20-item instrument designed to measure corruption perception in the police. The instrument which was structured on a 4-point rating format ranging from 4 (Very True) to 1 (Very Untrue) was covertly titled so as not to give an instant negative impression to the participants because of the sensitive nature of the subject of corruption in the police. The PEBS as an instrument measures fairness and probity in policing which are integrity-based. The 20-item statements of the instrument were developed after a careful review of the literature on police corruption. The instrument's co-efficient

reliability was estimated at 0.71 using a split-half method. This instrument was administered twice (pre- and post-test) on the participants. The PEBS has the following as examples:

1. Corruption in the police is not anything new as it is also in the public sectors.
2. Using my position to get things done is acceptable.
3. Corruption in the police conveys some elements of moral disapproval.
4. Corruption is abuse of police for gain.

## RESULTS

In view of the nature of the study, the data collected were analysed using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) to test the effect of the interventions (locus of control and self-efficacy) on police corruption (dependent variable). ANCOVA was further used to test the significance of the differences (as hypothesised) among means of the experimental groups, and the correlation of the initial measures and the dependent variable. The T-test statistic was also employed in the study to establish the differential effectiveness of the independent variables and mean differences of the moderating variable (rank).

In Table 2, the results indicate that the effect of treatment on the post-test scores of the participants is found to be significant:  $F(2,294) = 503.07, p < 0.05$ . There is significant difference in the reduction of corruption of the participants exposed to locus of control and self-efficacy interventions as compared with those in the non-treated control group. With these results, the first null hypothesis is rejected. Similarly, the adjusted x-mean scores on treatment (rows) as presented in Table 3 indicate the reduction in y-mean adjusted scores of the participants in the treatment conditions (36.840, 33.420, 28.400, and 30.660).

Results of hypothesis two in Tables 4 and 5 shows the relative effectiveness of the two intervention programmes (locus of control and self-efficacy). The ANCOVA results indicated that participants treated with self-efficacy demonstrated a higher level of change on corruption measures than their counterparts exposed to the locus of control programme  $F(1,196) = 22.67, p < 0.05$ . The adjusted y-mean scores of participants treated with self-efficacy (30.736 and 28.450) were also found to be lower than those of their counterparts treated with locus of control (36.760 and 33.375). This hypothesis is also rejected.

Tables 6 and 7 present results of ANCOVA on the effects of the two interventions on corruption reduction of

**Table 2: Analysis of covariance summary of the participants (commissioned and non-commissioned) in experimental and control groups**

Source of variation	Sum of squares	DF	Mean squares	F	P
Treatment	1211.915	2	605.958	503.07	0.05*
Commissioned status	0.319	1	0.319	0.26	NS
Interaction	7.973	2	3.986	3.31	0.05*
Within	17706.382	294	1.205		

Note:

Sig. = Significant at  $p < 0.05$ .



**Table 3: Unadjusted X–Y mean scores and adjusted Y–mean of corruption scores based on treatments: locus of control, self-efficacy and control (rows) and status level (columns)**

<i>Rows</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Non-commissioned</i>		<i>Commissioned</i>	
		<i>X–X</i>	<i>Y–X</i>	<i>X–X</i>	<i>Y–X</i>
Locus of control	100	64.680	36.840	62.720	33.420
Self-efficacy	100	57.460	28.400	56.020	30.660
Control	100	63.920	62.600	62.960	62.100

**Table 4: Analysis of covariance summary of the participants (commissioned and non-commissioned) in the two experimental conditions**

<i>Source of variation</i>	<i>Sum of squares</i>	<i>DF</i>	<i>Mean squares</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Treatment	29.972	1	29.972	22.67	0.05*
Commissioned status	0.302	1	0.302	0.23	NS
Interaction	8.039	1	8.039	6.08	0.05*
Within	12954.926	196	1.322		

*Note:*

Sig. = Significant at  $p < 0.05$ .

**Table 5: Unadjusted X–Y mean scores and adjusted Y–mean of corruption scores based on status in the two treatments (locus of control and self-efficacy)**

<i>Rows</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Non-commissioned</i>		<i>Commissioned</i>	
		<i>X–X</i>	<i>Y–X</i>	<i>X–X</i>	<i>Y–X</i>
Locus of control	100	64.680	36.760	62.720	33.375
Self-efficacy	100	57.460	30.736	56.020	28.450

commissioned and non-commissioned participants. In Table 6, the results show that there was a significant difference in their corruption measures  $F(1,196) = 22.67$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Hence, the hypothesis is rejected. The adjusted y-mean scores of the two groups in the columns indicated that commissioned participants in the two interventions had lower scores (33.375 and

28.450) than non-commissioned participants (36.760 and 30.736).

## DISCUSSION

The results of the study confirmed the therapeutic potency of the two techniques in the reduction of corruption in the Nigerian police, or at least upon attitudes

**Table 6: Analysis of covariance summary of the participants (commissioned and non-commissioned) in the two experimental conditions**

<i>Source of variation</i>	<i>Sum of squares</i>	<i>DF</i>	<i>Mean squares</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Treatment	29.972	1	29.972	22.67	0.05★
Commissioned status	0.302	1	0.302	0.23	NS
Interaction	8.039	1	8.039	6.08	0.05★
Within	12954.926	196	1.322		

Note:

Sig. = Significant at  $p < 0.05$ .

**Table 7: Unadjusted X–Y mean scores and adjusted Y–mean of corruption scores based on status in the two treatments (locus of control and self-efficacy)**

<i>Rows</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Non-commissioned</i>		<i>Commissioned</i>	
		<i>X–X</i>	<i>Y–X</i>	<i>X–X</i>	<i>Y–X</i>
Locus of control	100	64.680	36.760	62.720	33.375
Self-efficacy	100	57.460	30.736	56.020	28.450

facilitating corruption. This showed that locus of control and self-efficacy existential-phenomenological counselling could be explored further to test their potency as a factor to be utilised to reduce corruption in the Nigerian police. The inference from our findings is that the two counselling methods appealed to the emotions of the participants, which enable them to make appropriate decisions and change their outlook on their job and their interactions with citizens. It can therefore be claimed that the two counselling interventions provided emotional insights to the problem of corruption in the police.

As earlier posited in the present study, there is a dearth of research on the impact of existential-phenomenological counselling on police corruption. Although this limits the tone of the discussion on this finding, there is, however, the submission that the existential-phenomenological approach has increased awareness of treated

police personnel of the need to reduce corruption. Given the psychological utility of the two approaches in relation to the criterion (police corruption) measured, it will not be out of place if the management of the Nigerian police could utilise the approach in its efforts to curb corruption.

The results further indicate that self-efficacy counselling is more effective than locus of control in the reduction of corruption among the police personnel. Participants exposed to self-efficacy counselling might have found the components of the programme to be more directly relevant to police ‘institutionalised’ culture. Similarly, unlike locus of control counselling which is more attributional (internal versus external), self-efficacy counselling addressed self-capabilities towards achievement. The counselling approach is more of feeling, thinking and motivation towards a desired goal (Bandura, 1997).



Although this finding is not directly supported by any previous studies due to the paucity of literature in the area, there is a small amount of literature that supports the significant influence of self-efficacy on other areas of police studies (Aremu, 2005; Aremu & Lawal, in press). The import of the referred studies underscores the fact that self-efficacy is germane to policing.

Finally, commissioned personnel in the two interventions demonstrated an improved significant reduction on the corruption measure over the non-commissioned police personnel. Officers are more influenced by the programme than junior staff. That is ironic as the latter represent the 'real' police with whom the public relate in almost every encounter. They are also less educated and are oriented by the police culture to obey their superiors' instructions. It is not unlikely that the commissioned police personnel in the study manifested a significant reduction in corruption because they are better educated and are perhaps more predisposed to the skills in the two programmes. It is possible that education might have reinforced their understanding of the counselling programmes.

Without a doubt, these findings have implications for police reformation and practice in Nigeria. The findings reported have the potential to facilitate knowledge of counselling of a special nature in bringing about positive behavioural change in the police. Literature on police corruption reformation has always centred on conventional training, education and punitive measures (Homel, 2002; Manion, 2004; Punch, 2000). If the management of the Nigerian police could adopt the existential-phenomenological counselling approach in its efforts to curb corruption among the police, this will not only help to shore up the battered image of the police, but in addition, it will allow the police to pursue a positive, evidence-based agenda in tackling corruption. That agency must embrace a

holistic approach and the current study suggests that psychological counselling techniques deserve a place within that strategy.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The findings of this study have really opened a new opportunity of practical research in the police. This notwithstanding, a number of limitations are observed in the study. In the first place, the findings of the study are limited to three State Police Commands used in the study. This places obvious limitation in generalising the findings to the remaining 33 State Police Commands and Federal Capital Territory Police Command. Although the 300 participants investigated in the study fall within an acceptable number in a quasi-experimental study, caution is equally called for in generalising the findings of the study to the entire population of the Nigerian police, which was estimated to be about 365,000 in mid 2007. Second, we must emphasise that the current study has not established to what extent the changed attitudes are permanent, whether they could permeate through the organisation through these 300 individuals and, most importantly, whether the established change in attitude actually translates in behavioural change. This poses a challenge to researchers to explore this fruitful area of research.

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