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Checkpoint Policing and the Crisis of Extortion: A Sociological Analysis of Public Trust in the Nigeria Police Force

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Abstract

Police checkpoints are established to prevent crime, regulate traffic, detect security threats, and protect citizens. However, allegations of extortion at checkpoints have increasingly complicated police–citizen relations in Nigeria and may undermine public confidence in law-enforcement institutions. This study examines the relationship between checkpoint extortion and public trust in the Nigeria Police Force, with particular attention to citizens' willingness to cooperate with the police. A quantitative cross-sectional survey design was adopted, using a structured questionnaire administered to 400 respondents sampled through accidental sampling procedure. Data were analyzed using frequency and percentage distributions, cross-tabulation, and Pearson's Chi-Square test at the 0.05 significance level. The illustrative findings indicate that 77.25% of respondents had experienced checkpoint extortion, while 60.0% reported low or no trust in the police. Furthermore, 77.5% agreed that checkpoint extortion diminishes public trust. Chi-Square results indicate significant relationships between checkpoint extortion and public trust ($\chi^2 = 88.89$, df = 1, $p < .001$). The study concludes that checkpoint extortion constitutes a significant threat to trust in police and weakens the citizens' perception of the police legitimacy. This can subsequently undermine effective and sustainable policing of the society.

Keywords: Checkpoint Policing; Police Extortion; Corruption; Procedural Justice; Public Trust; Police Legitimacy; Nigeria Police Force.

Introduction

The police are among the most visible agencies through which citizens encounter the state. Effective policing therefore depends not only on the capacity to prevent crime and respond to insecurity, but also on whether citizens consider police authority lawful, fair and legitimate. Research on procedural justice argues that people's assessments of fairness, neutrality,

respectful treatment and trustworthy motives influence their acceptance of police authority and their willingness to cooperate with law-enforcement institutions (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler, 2006). Legitimacy is consequently relational: it is shaped partly through the everyday interactions in which state authority is exercised.

In Nigeria, police-citizen relations have long been affected by allegations of bribery, extortion, arbitrary arrest, excessive force and poor service delivery. Agbiboa (2015) describes corrupt policing and related abuses as embedded in everyday encounters, while Human Rights Watch (2010) documents allegations of roadside extortion and human-rights abuses. Afrobarometer reporting has also described widespread perceptions of police corruption and low public trust in Nigeria (Kweitsu, 2023). Such evidence provides a broader context for investigating how road users interpret police checkpoint encounters.

Checkpoints may serve legitimate security purposes, including vehicle inspections and the detection of threats. Yet where officers are perceived to demand unofficial payments or use intimidation to secure them, the encounter can be experienced as predatory rather than protective. This distinction matters sociologically because the meaning of a police encounter extends beyond the immediate payment: it can shape how citizens assess institutional integrity and whether they expect police authority to be exercised predictably and lawfully. The Nigeria Police Act 2020 sets out principles relevant to accountability, transparency and respect for rights (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2020), making the gap between formal standards and reported experience an important policy concern. This study examines reported experiences of checkpoint extortion and levels of public trust among surveyed road users in four Nigerian urban centers. Given the sampling design and the limitations in the statistical information supplied, the study does not claim to represent all Nigerians or establish that checkpoint extortion causes distrust. Rather, it describes respondents' reported experiences and perceptions and considers their implications for police legitimacy and reform.

Statement of the Problem

The first problem concerns the apparent contradiction between the security purpose of police checkpoints and public road users' experiences of checkpoint extortion. Checkpoints are theoretically established to prevent crime, identify wanted persons, inspect vehicles, recover illegal weapons and enhance public safety. However, evidence from Nigeria indicates that some checkpoints have become associated with demands for unofficial payments. Human Rights Watch (2010) documented checkpoint extortion in several Nigerian locations and reported that motorists who refused to pay could face delay, harassment, detention and physical abuse. Nnaeto (2019) similarly concluded that many police roadblocks in southeastern Nigeria were motivated more by pecuniary interests than by genuine security objectives.

The second problem is the consequence of repeated extortion for public confidence in the police. Trust is a sociological resource that permits institutions to exercise authority without relying excessively on coercion. When citizens repeatedly experience an institution as unfair, corrupt or predatory, they may withdraw trust and cooperation, avoid reporting crime or resort to informal mechanisms of dispute resolution. Recent Afrobarometer evidence is particularly concerning: only 15% of Nigerians surveyed expressed some or a lot of trust in the police, while 73% considered most or all police officials corrupt Kweitsu (2023). Research on Nigeria has also found that perceptions of procedural justice and police effectiveness matter for compliance, demonstrating that police-citizen relations cannot be understood simply through coercion and punishment.

The third problem is the limited integration of checkpoint extortion into sociological analyses of police legitimacy. Much public discussion treats roadside extortion as individual misconduct by "bad officers."

Such an explanation may overlook the institutional and social conditions that reproduce the behaviour. If extortion becomes normalized at checkpoints, citizens may interpret it as evidence of institutional corruption rather than isolated misconduct. This produces a potentially self-reinforcing cycle: police demand money, citizens lose trust, cooperation declines, police-citizen relations become more adversarial, and the legitimacy of the state is weakened. UNODC identifies human-rights violations, poor service delivery, and actual or perceived corruption as major contributors to the trust deficit affecting Nigeria's police and other law-enforcement agencies (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2022,).

Objectives of the Study

i. To examine the prevalence and Frequency of Public Experience or encountered of Police Checkpoint Extortion.
ii. To assess the level of trust of the public road users in the Nigeria Police Force.
iii. To test hypotheses concerning the association between checkpoint extortion experienced by the public road users and their trust in the Nigeria Police Force
iv. To provide relevant sociological theory to diagnose and explain the Police checkpoint extortion and the public trust in the Nigeria Police force.

Research Hypotheses

H_{01}: There is no statistically significant relationship between public experience of police checkpoint extortion and public trust in the Nigeria Police Force.

Significance and Justification of the Study

The study is significant theoretically because it connects the sociology of policing with contemporary debates on legitimacy, procedural justice and institutional trust. Rather than viewing extortion exclusively as an economic crime, the study treats it as a social interaction through which citizens evaluate state authority. This approach is consistent with procedural-justice scholarship, which demonstrates that citizens' assessments of fairness, respect and lawful treatment influence their evaluations of police legitimacy. It is also relevant to Nigerian evidence showing that procedural justice and police effectiveness are associated with citizens' compliance behaviour.

The study is also important for police reform and public policy. The Nigeria Police Act 2020 establishes accountability, transparency, human-rights protection, fairness and responsiveness as important principles of policing. Evidence concerning checkpoint extortion can therefore assist police leadership, the Police Service Commission, Ministry of Police Affairs, civil-society organizations and policymakers in identifying areas where official policing objectives are undermined by everyday practices. The findings may also contribute to the development of better checkpoint supervision, complaint mechanisms, body-camera or digital-monitoring systems, transparent disciplinary procedures and stronger community-policing arrangements.

Finally, the study has broader sociological significance because trust in the police is closely connected to trust in the state itself. Where citizens perceive police officers as demanding unauthorized payments, the encounter can become symbolic of a wider failure of governance. This is particularly important in Nigeria, where insecurity requires high levels of citizen-police cooperation. UNODC (2022) identifies legitimacy and public trust in law-enforcement agencies as critical to addressing crime, while Kweitsu's (2023) Afrobarometer evidence shows a strong relationship between police encounters, bribery and distrust. Consequently, reducing checkpoint extortion is not merely about improving police conduct; it

is about rebuilding the social relationship between citizens and the Nigerian state.

Policy Implications of the Study

This study has important policy implications for police reform in Nigeria. It provides evidence that can inform strategies to improve police conduct and performance, restore public trust, strengthen the legitimacy of the Nigeria Police Force and address checkpoint extortions. The findings indicate that police reform should extend beyond increasing the number of officers on checkpoints to include effective oversight, transparency, accountability, human-rights protection, respectful treatment and institutional integrity. Improving police conduct and rebuilding public trust are therefore interconnected components of strengthening the relationship between citizens and government institutions.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on multiple theoretical frameworks. First, Procedural Justice Theory, developed principally by Tyler (2006), explains why citizens accept or reject the authority of legal institution like the police. The theory argues that public evaluations of police are influenced not only by police effectiveness or the outcomes of police encounters but also by the fairness of the procedures through they exercise their authority. Four dimensions are particularly important: respectful treatment, neutrality, opportunities for citizens to express themselves, and perceptions that authorities act with trustworthy motives. In the context of Nigerian checkpoint policing, an encounter in which an officer stops a motorist lawfully, explains the reason for the stop and treats the individual respectfully can strengthen perceptions of legitimacy. Conversely, arbitrary stopping, intimidation, harassment and demands for unauthorized payments can communicate unfairness and abuse of authority, thereby weakening citizens' confidence and trust in the police.

Second, the Police Legitimacy Theory, developed by Tankebe (2013) which explains legitimacy as a multidimensional relationship between citizens and police institutions involving lawfulness, procedural fairness, distributive justice and effectiveness. That this legitimacy is important because policing cannot depend indefinitely on coercion; sustainable police authority requires citizens to regard police power as appropriate, lawful and morally justified. Checkpoint extortion represents a direct challenge to these dimensions because the extraction of unofficial payments can make police authority appear privately motivated rather than publicly oriented. Consequently, repeated encounters with extortion may produce a generalized perception that the police are corrupt, unfair or untrustworthy. This perspective provides the theoretical basis for examining checkpoint extortion as the independent variable and public trust in the Nigeria Police Force as a central dependent variable.

Third, the above theoretical frameworks are complemented by Merton's (1938) Anomie/Strain Theory, which permits the study to examine the institutional and organizational conditions that may facilitate the normalization of corrupt policing practices. Merton's argument suggests that deviant adaptations can emerge where institutional goals and legitimate means of achieving them become disconnected. Applied cautiously to policing, this theoretical argument shifts attention from individual officers to organizational pressures, inadequate resources, weak supervision, informal expectations, poor accountability and institutional cultures that may permit unofficial extraction of resources from citizens. Checkpoint extortion can therefore be understood not simply as the misconduct of isolated officers but potentially as evidence of Institutional Failure that reproduced organizational practice in which deviant behaviour becomes normalized. This perspective complements procedural justice by explaining why problematic policing practices may persist, while legitimacy theory explains how those practices affect citizens' perceptions of police authority.

Finally, the Luhmann's (1979) theory of social trust provides a sociological framework for understanding how citizens develop, maintain, or withdraw trust in the police as an institution of social control. In the context of policing, citizens ordinarily encounter the police as an institutional authority whose actions are expected to be lawful, predictable, impartial, and oriented towards the protection of life and property. Trust in the police therefore emerges when police conduct consistently confirms these normative expectations. Through repeated police–citizen interactions, individuals assess whether police officers exercise their authority in ways that are reliable, fair, accountable, and consistent with institutional rules. Police trust is consequently not simply an individual attitude; it is a socially produced relationship between citizens and an institution exercising legitimate authority.

Taken together, all these theoretical perspectives provide an integrated sociological explanation of the relationship between checkpoint extortion and public trust in the police. The theoretical frameworks propose that repeated extortionary encounters undermine procedural fairness and perceptions of police lawfulness; weakened perceptions of fairness and lawfulness subsequently reduce police legitimacy and public trust; declining trust can, in turn, reduce citizens' willingness to report crime, provide information and cooperate with police investigations. The theoretical framework therefore conceptualizes checkpoint extortion as both an organizational practice and a consequential social interaction through which citizens evaluate the legitimacy of state authority. This integrated perspective is particularly appropriate to the Nigerian context, where empirical studies have identified significant concerns regarding police corruption, procedural justice, professionalism and public confidence (Agbiboa, 2015; Akinlabi, 2017; Akinlabi & Murphy, 2018; Tankebe, 2013). It consequently provides a coherent theoretical foundation for testing the study's hypotheses concerning the relationship between checkpoint extortion and public trust.

Materials and Method

The study adopted a quantitative cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationship between police checkpoint extortion and public trust in the Nigerian Police. The study was conducted in four major Nigerian urban centers: Lagos, Abuja, Ibadan and Benin City selected to provide geographical, demographic and socio-economic variation and because of their extensive road networks, commercial activities and frequent police–public interactions at checkpoints. The target population comprised adult public road users aged 18 years and above who had encountered police checkpoints, including private motorists, commercial drivers, motorcycle and tricycle operators, passengers, traders and other road users. A total sample of 400 respondents was used, with 100 respondents selected from each city.

Accidental sampling technique was employed to sample respondents from eligible public road users (private and commercial vehicle drivers' motorcycle and tricycle operators, passengers, traders and other road users) in major public transport corridors, motor parks and bus stops in urban locations within the four cities. The questionnaire was structured into sections covering socio-demographic characteristics, checkpoint encounters, experiences of alleged extortion, police treatment, perceived fairness, public trust, police legitimacy and willingness to cooperate with the police. Attitudinal items were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree, while frequency of checkpoint encounters and extortion experiences was measured using categorical responses ranging from Never to Very Often. A pilot study involving 40 respondents, representing approximately 10% of the proposed sample, was conducted in a similar urban city outside the study areas to assess the clarity, reliability and administration time of the instrument. To confirm the validity of the content, the questionnaire was reviewed by experts in criminology and policing at the department

of sociology, Lagos State University (LASU), with their feedback incorporated into the final questionnaire administered.

Ethical standards were observed throughout the research process. Respondents were informed of the purpose of the study and participation was voluntary, with the right to decline or withdraw without any force or penalty. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured, no unnecessary identifying information was collected, and the information obtained was intended solely for academic purposes. Completed questionnaires were coded and analyzed using SPSS. Frequencies and percentages were used to describe respondents' checkpoint experiences and public trust, while cross-tabulation with the aid of chi-square (χ^2) were used to test the relationship between public experiences of checkpoint extortion and public trust; so as to explain the considerably effect of this on public perception of police legitimacy. The Pearson Chi-Square (χ^2) test of independence was employed to test the study hypotheses concerning the association between police checkpoint extortion experiences and public trust. In all, the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance: a p-value below.05 resulted in rejection of the null hypothesis, while a p-value of.05 or above resulted in failure to reject the null hypothesis.

Conceptual Framework

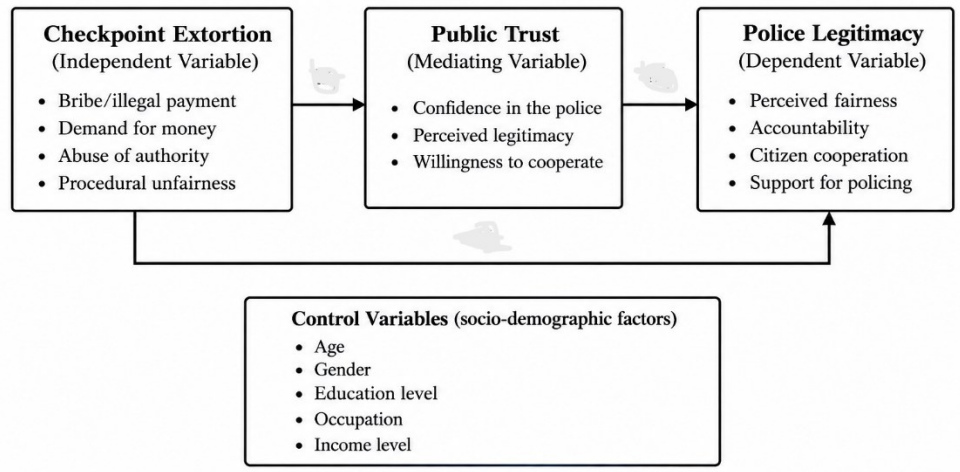


Figure 1: Conceptual framework showing the relationship between checkpoint extortion, public trust and police legitimacy.

Based on the study, the conceptual framework shows the relationship between:

Checkpoint Extortion → Public Trust → Police Legitimacy

Checkpoint Extortion — Independent Variable

The first box represents **checkpoint extortion**, which is the main explanatory variable in the study. It includes experiences such as:

i. demands for unofficial payments or bribes;
ii. arbitrary stopping of motorists;
iii. harassment and intimidation;
iv. abuse of police authority; and
v. other forms of unfair treatment at checkpoints.

The framework assumes that when public road users repeatedly encounter these practices, they may perceive police authority as unfair, corrupt, or improper conduct exercised. The theoretical framework specifically identifies checkpoint extortion as the independent variable.

Public Trust — Mediating/Central Variable

The second box represents public trust in the Nigeria Police Force. It captures the public road users' confidence in the police, perceptions of police reliability and honesty, and their willingness to cooperate with police authorities.

The framework proposes that checkpoint experiences can influence trust. In other words, the more the public road users experience extortion and unfair treatment, the more their confidence in the police may decline. This is consistent with Luhmann's (1979) social-trust perspective, which explains trust as developing through repeated interactions in which institutions are perceived as reliable, predictable and fair.

Police Legitimacy — Outcome Variable

The third box represents police legitimacy. Legitimacy concerns whether public road users regard police authority as lawful, fair, appropriate and deserving acceptance.

Where public road users perceive the police as legitimate, they are more likely to accept police authority and cooperate with policing activities. Conversely, repeated experiences of extortion may lead public road users to question the lawfulness and fairness of police authority. This follows the Tankebe (2013) perspective discussed in the paper.

Results and Discussion

The study was conducted in four major Nigerian urban centers: Lagos, Abuja, Ibadan and Benin City. Accidental sampling technique was employed to sample respondents from eligible public road users (private motorists, commercial drivers, motorcycle and tricycle operators, passengers, traders and other road users) in major public transport corridors, motor parks and bus stops in urban locations within the four cities. 400 respondents (100 respondents selected from each city) were sampled with questionnaire. Data collected from the field survey were carefully coded, entered, and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, percentages and Likert scale were applied. To meet the research objectives and test the hypotheses, the Pearson chi-square (χ^2) test of independence was employed to assess the association between checkpoint extortion experiences and public trust/legitimacy. The hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance: a p-value below.05 resulted in rejection of the null hypothesis, while a p-value of.05 or above resulted in failure to reject of the null hypothesis.

Prevalence of Public Experience of Police Checkpoint Extortion

Objective One: To examine the prevalence and frequency of checkpoint extortion of the Nigeria Police, experienced or encountered by private and commercial vehicle drivers of public road users.

The data presented in Table 1 show that majority (77.25%) of our respondents (private motorists, commercial drivers, motorcycle and tricycle operators, passengers, traders and other road users in major public transport corridors, motor parks and bus stops in urban locations) stated that they had experienced or encountered police checkpoint extortion, while 22,75% stated that they had not experienced or encountered any form of police checkpoint extortion.

Table1: Frequency Distribution of Respondents Based on Their Experience of checkpoint extortion

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	309	77.25%
No	91	22.75%
Total	**400**	**100.0%**

The most striking point here is that majority of our respondents (77.25) who had experienced or encountered police checkpoints, identity checks, particulars check or traffic stops, stated that they had to give bribe to avoid problem, delay or embarrassment. Since this finding reveals that significant number of our respondents had experienced or encountered police checkpoint extortion involving an unofficial demand for money, the finding broadly confirms Kweitsu (2023; Otodo, etal, 2023) report which provides empirical evidence concerning police encounters at checkpoints/traffic stops and extortion involving an unofficial demand for money. Similarly, the Human Rights Watch (2010) report reveals widespread corruption and human rights violations within the Nigeria Police Force, particularly focusing on the routine extortion of police at checkpoints. The report also highlights that police officers regularly demand for bribes from motorists, at illegal checkpoints. That this corrupt practice is deeply entrenched and severely undermines public trust, the rule of law, and the safety of Nigerian citizens (Human Rights Watch (2010)).

The data on table:2 reveals cumulatively 77. 25**%** of respondents had experienced or encountered checkpoint extortion either very often, often, sometimes, and rarely common while 22.75% had never experienced or encountered checkpoint extortion.

Frequency of Public Experience or Encounter of Police Checkpoint Extortion

The data presented in table 2 reveals that while majority (65.75%) of our respondents stated that they experienced or encountered police checkpoint extortion very often and often, 7.75%, 3.75%, and 22.75% stated that they sometimes, rarely and never experienced police checkpoint extortion respectively.

Table 2. Frequency Distribution of How frequent respondents encountered or experienced checkpoint extortion

Response Category	Frequency	Percentage
Very often	187	46.75%
Often	76	19.0%
Sometimes	31	7.75%
Rarely common	15	3.75%
Never	91	22.75%
Total	**400**	**100.0%**

This finding supports earlier study in Nigeria that most police checkpoints are primarily for financial gain rather than ensuring public safety. Nnaeto (2019) study confirm this, especially how most police checkpoints in Nigeria have shifted from their original purpose of crime control to becoming sites of routine extortion of motorists. His study further reveals that many police officers solicit for bribes from motorists under various pretexts, thereby using their authority for personal financial gain rather than

public safety. That this misuse of power not only undermines the legitimacy of law enforcement but also contributes to a pervasive culture of corruption within the Nigeria Police force (Nnaeto, 2019).

Level of Public Trust in the Nigeria Police Force

Objective Two: To assess the level of public trust of the road users in the Nigeria Police Force**.**

The data on table:3 reveals that 60% of our respondents had either low trust or no trust in the Nigerian Police Force while 5% had very high, 10% high and 25% moderate trust in the Nigerian Police Force.

Table 3. Frequency Distribution of Respondents' Based on Their level of public trust in the Nigeria Police Force

Level of Public Trust	Frequency	Percentage
Very high	20	5.0%
High	40	10.0%
Moderate	100	25.0%
Low	120	30.0%
No trust	120	30.0%
Total	**400**	**100.0%**

The most striking point here is that majority (60%) of our respondents had either low trust or no trust in the Nigeria Police Force. This finding strongly supports Akinlabi's (2020) view that police use of force and authority to solicit for bribes under various pretexts for personal financial gain can negatively affect citizens' trust in the Nigerian Police Force. This study however suggests that when citizens experience police misconduct, abuse of authority, or use of force or other forms of deviant policing conduct especially at the checkpoint, their confidence in the police as a legitimate and accountable institution is weakened (Akinlabi, 2020). Thus, negative police-citizen encounters at checkpoint extortion can reliably account for the declining public trust and legitimacy of the Nigerian Police Force. This view strengthens the argument that lack of public trust in the Nigerian Police Force is obviously not a reaction to one time experience or encounter of Nigerian Police checkpoint extortion. Especially, if extortion becomes normalized at checkpoints, public road users may interpret it as evidence of institutional corruption rather than isolated misconduct (Akinlabi 2020). This further confirms Merton's (1938) Anomie/Strain Theory that when extortion becomes normalized at checkpoints, checkpoint extortions can therefore be understood not simply as the misconduct of isolated officers but potentially as evidence of Institutional Failure that reproduced organizational practice in which deviant policing conduct becomes normalized. The important sociological issue in this is not necessarily the money demanded at the checkpoint but the interaction and the social action carried out by the police officers to which road users socially construct meanings. Central to this is the social definition of the action, interpretive understanding, meaning, and subjective judgments of the road users. Especially, when authority is exercised through intimidation, arbitrary demand or disrespect and false pretex, the public road users may interpret this as evidence of institutional corruption rather than an isolated misconduct

Whether Police Checkpoint Extortion is a Key Determinant of Public trust and Legitimacy in Nigeria Police Force

The data on table 4 shows that while 77.5% of our respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that Nigeria Police checkpoint extortion is a key social determinant of public trust and legitimacy of Nigeria Police force on the public roads, 10%, 7.5% and 5.0% of the respondents could not decide, simply disagree and strongly disagree respectively.

Table 4. Frequency Distribution of Respondents Based on Whether Police Checkpoint Extortion is a Key Determinant of Public Trust and Legitimacy in Nigeria Police Force

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	180	45.0%
Agree	130	32.5%
Undecided	40	10.0%
Disagree	30	7.5%
Strongly disagree	20	5.0%
Total	**400**	**100.0%**

The most striking point here is that majority (77.5%) of our respondents strongly agreed or agreed that Nigeria Police checkpoint extortions is a key determinant of trust and legitimacy of Nigeria Police force. This finding is significantly consistent with procedural-justice theory because it supports the procedural-justice argument that citizens do not judge police institutions only by whether officers catch criminals. They also judge the fairness and lawfulness of their encounter with the police. Similarly, Sunshine and Tyler (2003) found that procedural fairness was a key determinant of police trust and legitimacy, while Tankebe (2013) emphasizes procedural justice, lawfulness, distributive justice and effectiveness as dimensions of police legitimacy. In this case, the Nigeria evidence is especially relevant. Akinlabi (2017) found that procedural justice significantly contributes to police legitimacy among Nigerian youth, while Akinlabi and Murphy (2018) found that procedural justice and police effectiveness were associated with compliance in Southwest Nigeria. Thus, the Nigerian Police checkpoint extortion potentially damages the reputation, trust and legitimacy.

SPSS Pearson Chi-square (χ^2) Test Analysis

Research Hypotheses:

H_{01}: There is no statistically significant relationship between public experience of police checkpoint extortion and public trust in the Nigeria Police Force.

The empirical Report on Experienced Checkpoint Extortion and Level of Public Trust were tested

For SPSS analysis, respondents were grouped into two categories: *Experienced checkpoint extortion & Did not experience checkpoint extortion.*

Level of Public Trust was also grouped into: *Very high/high/moderate trust & Low/no trust.*

Table 5: Crosstabulation of Experienced Police Checkpoint Extortion and Level of Public Trust in Nigeria Police.

Experience of checkpoint extortion	Very high/ High/Moderate Trust	Low/No Trust	Total
Experienced police extortion	80 (26.0%)	229 (74.0%)	309 (100%)
Did not experience police extortion	80 (88.0%)	11 (12.0%)	91 (100%)
Total	160 (40.0%)	240 (60.0%)	400 (100%)

Table 6: Chi-Square Tests

Test	Value	df	Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	88.891	1	< .001
Likelihood Ratio	91.291	1	< .001
Total No of Valid Cases	400		

Interpretation

Among respondents who experienced police checkpoint extortion, about 74 out of every 100 had low/no trust in the police. Among those who did not experience police checkpoint extortion, only 12 out of every 100 had low/ no trust in the police.

The SPSS Pearson Chi-Square test produced a value of $\chi^2 = 88.89$, with 1 degree of freedom, and a significance value of $p < .001$. Because $p < .05$, the result is statistically significant.

Decision: Reject H_{01}.

There is a statistically significant relationship between public experience of police checkpoint extortion and public trust in the Nigeria Police Force. This illustrative data strengthens the argument that, people who experienced checkpoint extortion were considerably more likely to have little or no trust in the police. This finding is consistent with Obot, etal (2025), Nigerian evidence showing very low levels of public trust in the police and widespread perceptions of police corruption.

The test reveals that the public road users' experience of police checkpoint extortion significantly influences the level of trust they have for the police force. That is to say, individuals with strong convictions, experience or encounters of police checkpoint extortion will tend to be more wary to engage in more cautious relationships requiring trust in Nigeria police. These behaviors align with the broader sociological understanding that experience of police checkpoint extortion shape not only personal thought processes but also structure daily social trust that the public has in the police force. Luhmann (1979) theory of social trust demonstrates a strong explanation for why police misconduct can generate public distrust. At a checkpoint, citizens cannot be completely certain about what a police officer will do. If previous encounters have established an expectation that police officers will demand unofficial payments, intimidate motorists or exercise arbitrary authority, citizens may begin to anticipate such behaviour. Especially, repeated experiences of this kind of conduct can therefore transform uncertainty into distrust. Instead of assuming that the police will act lawfully and predictably, citizens may assume that police will exploit or demonstrate their usual arbitrary authority. This distrust can reduce or weaken the citizens' perception of the police legitimacy (Luhmann (1979).

Conclusion

The study concludes that checkpoint extortion constitutes a significant sociological and institutional challenge to public trust in the Nigeria Police Force. The descriptive findings indicate that 77.25% of respondents had experienced checkpoint extortion, while 60.0% reported low or no trust in the police. Moreover, 77.5% strongly or agreed that checkpoint extortion diminishes their confidence in the police. These findings suggest that the problem extends beyond the immediate financial burden imposed on motorists and other road users; repeated extortionary encounters shape citizens' broader perceptions of police integrity, reputation and legitimacy. In this sense, the checkpoint becomes an important site where citizens directly evaluate the character, trust and legitimacy of the state institution of police force. The inferential findings provide stronger evidence for this conclusion. The Pearson Chi-Square test revealed a $\chi^2 = 88.89$, $df = 1$, $p < .001$). Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected. Thus, respondents who experienced checkpoint extortion were considerably more likely to distrust the police. This distrust can consequently reduce or weaken the citizens' perception of the police legitimacy.

The overall conclusion is that checkpoint extortion can produce a cycle of institutional distrust; unauthorized demands for bribe thus can weakens citizens' confidence and perceptions of police fairness, reputation and integrity; diminish, reduce or weaken the citizens' perception of trust and legitimacy of police and this can subsequently undermine effective crime prevention, community security and can cause breakdown of law and order. The findings therefore support the central

proposition of procedural-justice and police-legitimacy perspectives that lawful, respectful and transparent treatment is essential to sustainable policing of the society. Addressing checkpoint extortion should consequently be regarded not merely as an internal disciplinary matter but as an essential component of rebuilding the social relationship between the Nigeria Police Force and the citizens it is mandated to protect.

Recommendations

i. **Strengthen checkpoint accountability and supervision:** The Nigeria Police Force should establish systematic monitoring of all authorized checkpoints. Senior officers and independent oversight bodies should conduct unannounced inspections, maintain registers of checkpoint locations and personnel, and investigate unusual patterns of complaints or roadside payments.

ii. **Eliminate unofficial cash transactions at checkpoints:** Police officers should not collect unauthorized cash from motorists or other road users. Where a legitimate statutory payment or penalty is applicable, it should be processed through an official, traceable electronic or government-approved payment system. This would reduce opportunities for informal financial extraction.

iii. **Introduce technology-based monitoring:** Body-worn cameras, GPS-enabled checkpoint registration, digital incident reporting and electronic supervisory systems should be progressively introduced. Such measures can create an auditable record of police–citizen encounters and discourage misconduct while also protecting responsible officers against false allegations.

iv. **Establish independent and confidential complaint mechanisms:** Citizens should have simple mechanisms for reporting checkpoint extortion through telephone hotlines, online platforms and independent complaint offices. Complaints should be assigned tracking numbers so that complainants can monitor their progress without having to approach the allegedly offending officers.

v. **Strengthen procedural-justice training:** Police training should place greater emphasis on respectful treatment, neutrality, lawful searches, explanation of police actions, citizens' rights and non-coercive communication. Officers should understand that professional conduct at checkpoints is directly connected to public perceptions of police legitimacy.

vi. **Improve police welfare while strengthening accountability:** Government should address legitimate operational and welfare challenges confronting police personnel, including transportation, accommodation, equipment and working conditions. However, improved welfare should be accompanied by strict enforcement against officers who exploit citizens for personal financial benefit.

vii. **Strengthen community-policing mechanisms:** Regular police–community forums should be established along major transport corridors. Motorists, transport operators, community leaders, civil-society organizations and police representatives should jointly identify recurring checkpoint problems and develop locally appropriate solutions.

viii. **Publish citizens' rights at checkpoints:** Clearly visible notices should indicate the purpose of authorized checkpoints, the rights of motorists, what police officers are legally permitted to request, and how citizens can report misconduct. Public awareness reduces the information imbalance that can facilitate extortion.

ix. **Link police promotion to professional conduct:** Police performance assessment should include indicators such as citizen complaints, professionalism, procedural fairness, community

cooperation and integrity rather than relying predominantly on arrests or crime-control statistics. Officers who consistently demonstrate ethical conduct should receive institutional recognition.

x. **Institutionalize periodic public-trust surveys:** The Nigeria Police Force, Police Service Commission and relevant research institutions should conduct regular independent surveys measuring public trust, experiences of extortion, perceived police corruption, procedural fairness and willingness to cooperate with police. Such evidence would allow policymakers to determine whether reforms are actually improving police–citizen relations.

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