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The Impact of Police Corruption on National Security in Liberia

Yontonson Deddeh Kollie Kesselly
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Health Sciences and Public Policy

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Yontonson Deddeh Kollie Kesselly

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Walden University
2026

Abstract

The Impact of Police Corruption on National Security in Liberia

by

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MBA, Kaplan University, 2015

BSc, Cuttington University, 2010

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

May 2026

Abstract

African countries are grappling with policies and laws to mitigate widespread police corruption. However, for decades, corruption within the police force has drawn intense criticism from citizens. Prior research has indicated that state officials are likely to benefit from police corruption, including bribery, thereby undermining Liberia's economic and social stability and prosperity. The issue that prompted this research is that despite extensive police reforms in Liberia's national police, corruption cases remain prevalent, raising national security concerns. The purpose of this generic qualitative study was to investigate Liberians' perceptions of the impact of police corruption on national security in Liberia through the lens of the rent-seeking theory. The research question guiding this study focused on the perceptions of Liberian citizens residing in a suburban city in a northern state of the United States, regarding the impact of police corruption on Liberia's national security. Data collected from interviews of 12 participants were analyzed through the inductive thematic approach based on Braun and Clark's framework. Five key themes were identified: (a) police reform and training, (b) salary increase, (c) international assistance, (d) equipment and logistics, and (e) bribery and resource constraints. This study is significant because it potentially contributes to positive social change by enhancing public trust, improving law enforcement effectiveness, fostering integrity within law enforcement agencies, and ultimately strengthening national security in Liberia. Policy makers can use these findings to develop strategies to combat corruption within the Liberian National Police. Lawmakers may introduce legislation to reduce police corruption, helping the Liberian national security recover from it.

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Dedication

I am grateful to my dear wife, Gifty Monger-Kesselly, and my children, Ishmael B. Kesselly, Yontonson D.K. Kesselly Jr, Wilton Saylay Kesselly, Leemu Sarah Kesselly, Emmanuel Kesselly, and Priska Kesselly, whose unwavering support and love have guided and motivated my dedication to this work. I sincerely thank my father, Atty. Yonton Ballah Kesselly Sr., for his unwavering support, and my cousin, David Karpilee, whose ongoing encouragement has helped me overcome every obstacle. This endeavor reflects your unwavering faith in me. I want to express my gratitude for being a pillar of support in my life.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

In this study, I explored the perceptions of Liberian citizens residing in a suburban area in a northern state in the United States, regarding the impact of police corruption on national security in Liberia. Worldwide, police corruption is perceived as a threat to national security, as it fosters crime and activities that endanger citizens' safety and compromise a nation's stability (Hope, 2023; Singh, 2022). While examining the causes of corruption in conflict-affected countries, Singh (2022) found that police corruption correlated with increased instances of politically motivated killings, drug trafficking, and terrorist activities. Singh explained that when police engage in corruption for example, in Afghanistan young people join the Taliban to fight against the corrupt government, resulting in loss of life and poor economic outcomes. In Mexico, Aldana et al. (2022) asserted that corruption within the police force led to the protection of organized criminal syndicates by police officers. In Liberia, police collusion with criminals not only accelerates crime but also undermines the quality of governance and public trust in law enforcement institutions.

Amid rising cases of police corruption, African countries, including Liberia, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone, are grappling with policies and laws aimed at mitigating widespread corruption within their police forces (Diallo et al., 2023). For 2 decades, from 2005 to present however, corruption has drawn sharp criticism from Liberian citizens, most of whom highlight the mismanagement of public resources for personal gain by politicians and public servants (Effiong et al., 2023; CENTAL, 2024). Several

researchers, including Singh (2022), report that police corruption benefits those in leadership positions while undermining public trust in law enforcement institutions, highlighting institutional accountability. (Fallah & Benmamoun, 2021; Morse, 2022). For example, in Liberia, corruption has hindered economic development as police and other public servants take a significant portion of local earnings as bribes for services they provide (Diallo et al., 2023; Fallah & Benmamoun, 2021; Hunnicutt, 2023).

Previous research indicates that state officials frequently engage in police corruption, including bribery, which undermines economic and social welfare in African countries, including Liberia (Fallah & Benmamoun, 2021). Investigations into reported corruption among state officials have yielded minimal success in securing convictions. This results in political influence on the judicial system, while police officers remain largely overlooked (Morse, 2022). Although police are responsible for ensuring justice, their involvement in corrupt practices erodes public trust in law enforcement (Fallah & Benmamoun, 2021). Despite extensive research on police corruption in various countries, there is a lack of similar studies specifically focusing on Liberia (Fallah & Benmamoun, 2021; Hunnicutt, 2023). Thus, examining police corruption in Liberia and its implications for national security helps bridge the existing research gap and informs the development of policies to promote police integrity. The results of this study may provide policymakers and law enforcement agencies with valuable insights into addressing community concerns and promoting the transparent and ethical implementation of anti-corruption initiatives.

In this chapter, I review the background literature on the topic. This is followed by a discussion of the study's problem statement and purpose. Next, I present the research question, theoretical framework, nature of the study, and definitions of key terms. Other sections discussed in the chapter include assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study.

Background

To achieve the desired economic growth of a country, governments have to focus on major economic growth factors, including state expenditure, foreign direct investments, and other macroeconomic indicators (Effiong et al., 2023; Krawczyk, 2021; Morse, 2022). Corruption affects a country's economic growth and social well-being despite the economic impacts of foreign direct investments and prudent government expenditure (Diallo et al., 2023). Researchers, including Singh (2022) and Aldana et al. (2022), have linked corruption to crime, including money laundering and poor enforcement of a country's policies.

In Liberia, corruption has emerged as a destructive component of socioeconomic development (Fallah & Benmamoun, 2021; Kromah & Srisuk, 2022). Socioeconomic projects have failed to materialize owing to corruption (Effiong et al., 2023). Agreeing with Effiong et al. (2023), other researchers have established that police corruption has led to judicial and political interference, including disregard for the rule of law, which has stalled national economic projects (Harnois & Gagnon, 2022; Roberts, 2023). In the context of the Liberian police force, bribery, lobbying, and judicial interference are the primary forms of police corruption in the public sector (Diallo et al., 2023). While

researchers have established the impacts of corruption in the public sector (Kromah & Srisuk, 2022), they have yet to investigate how police corruption influences Liberia's national security (Bawole & Adjei-Bamfo, 2020; Lee-Jones, 2022; Morse, 2022).

The police force plays a crucial role in mitigating corruption. However, their participation in and perpetration of corruption, compounded by factors namely inadequate funds, political interference, weak legal framework, weak accountability framework, and a corrupted judiciary, proliferate corruption (Bawole & Adjei-Bamfo, 2020; Blum & Rogger, 2021; Gross et al., 2024; Nebo Sr, 2024). The scarcity of resources hinders the recruitment of personnel for investigations, thereby impeding the functioning of anticorruption agencies (Bawole & Adjei-Bamfo, 2020; Harnois & Gagnon, 2022; Roberts, 2023). Furthermore, the current anti-corruption laws in Liberia may be manipulated by individuals with the assistance of police officers to perpetuate corruption (Adams et al., 2020; Emelonye et al., 2020; Hanson-DeFusco, 2024).

Incidents of corruption have compromised the integrity and effectiveness of the Liberian police. For instance, Berg (2020) investigated the impact of external influence on the security of Liberia and Sierra Leone post-civil war. Berg noted that while external influence would promote resilience and the effectiveness of the security forces through training and resources, some leaders may use this opportunity to infringe on and influence the autonomy of the security organs for personal gains. Comparable to Berg (2020), Nebo Sr. (2024) explained that politicizing the Liberia National Police undermines its professionalism and frustrates its effort to combat corruption. Morse (2020) reiterated that despite the current police reforms, corruption in Liberia's national

police and other sub-Saharan African countries has resulted in vigilantism, organized crime, and a loss of trust between the police and the community.

While researchers have extensively investigated the impacts of corruption on the public and on Liberia's national police, there is a gap in research on its effects on national security (Berg, 2020; Morse, 2020; Nebo Sr., 2024). Therefore, in this qualitative generic study, I addressed this gap in the literature by examining how citizens describe the impacts of police corruption on national security in Liberia. Addressing the gap in the literature is significant because this research contributes new insights into police corruption and its impact on national security in Liberia. The study's findings can inform the development of laws and policies to reduce police corruption and strengthen national security.

Problem Statement

The problem that prompted this research is that, despite extensive reforms within the Liberian national police, corruption cases remain high, posing a risk to national security (Morse, 2020; Nebo Sr., 2024). While Berg (2020) did not directly investigate how police corruption affects national security, their findings indicated that corrupt police officers reduced the efficiency of the police in combating crime associated with corruption. Singh (2020) explained that in conflict-prone states, corruption within the police perpetuated the rise of organized crime, which is a national security threat.

Rampant corruption within the police force has eroded public trust. Among police officers, corruption may result in a breach of public trust and compromise law enforcement's ability to operate within the citizens' trust (Gök, 2020). Additionally,

corruption in the local police negatively impacts trust at the local level (Hope, 2020; Hoinaru et al., 2020). In the public sector, researchers, including Fallah and Benmamoun (2021) and Hunnicutt (2023), have established that corruption hinders the delivery of quality services to the public and hampers Liberia's economic growth.

However, despite research examining the impacts of corruption on public trust, service delivery, and economic growth, its influence on national security remains largely unexplored. Although Singh (2020) associated corruption with increased drug trade, organized crime, and terrorism activities in conflict nations, such research has not been conducted in Liberia. Similarly, Nebo Sr. (2024) linked police corruption to the development of organized crime in Liberia, but did not examine how corruption affects national security. Therefore, I explored how police corruption impacts national security in Liberia. The lack of investigation into this issue and the increasing incidence of organized crime may trigger another civil conflict, potentially resulting in loss of life and obstructing Liberia's economic development. However, addressing this issue resulted in the formulation of policies designed to deter police corruption, promote police integrity, and strengthen national security.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative generic study was to understand citizens' perceptions of the impact of police corruption on national security in Liberia. The objective of this study was to establish how the public perceives and describes the impacts of police corruption on Liberia's national security. I employed a generic qualitative research method to describe participants' perceptions of corruption within the

Liberian National Police and its impact on national security. A purposive sample of 12 Liberian citizens residing in a city in a northern state, who had previously lived in Liberia, was recruited for this study. I used semistructured interviews as the data collection instrument and followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis steps during data analysis.

Research Question

RQ: What are the perceptions of citizens impacted by police corruption in Liberia, and how do they view its effect on Liberia's national security?

Theoretical Framework for the Study

The theoretical framework underpinning this research was rent-seeking theory. Rent seeking is an economic concept that occurs when an entity seeks to gain wealth without making any reciprocal contribution to society (Hartle, 1983). An example of rent seeking is when a company lobbies the government for grants, subsidies, or tariff protection but fails to contribute to society's growth (Hartle, 1983). The different forms of rent seeking include lobbying and donations in exchange for government favors. According to rent theory pioneers, rent seeking negatively affects socioeconomic growth because it interferes with the free market principles by imposing unfair prices and barriers on individuals or companies (Hartle, 1983). The rent seeking theory was used to describe the effects of lobbying, bribery, and donations on police accountability and effectiveness in maintaining public safety, enforcing laws, and investigating criminal activities. I employed rent-seeking theory to explain how bribes, favors, and

donations may compromise national security by inducing laxity among police and collusion with criminals.

Nature of the Study

In this generic qualitative study, I explored how citizens perceive police involvement in corruption and its influence on national security. I employed a generic qualitative research method to investigate citizens' perceptions of the impact of police corruption on Liberia's national security. Additionally, a generic qualitative design was used to explore participants' perceptions and experiences of events in their natural settings in the outside world (Percy et al, 2015). A generic qualitative design best suits my intent to explore how Liberian citizens living in a northern state of the United States described the impacts of police corruption on national security. A qualitative design is employed when the aim is to provide a systematic and accurate representation of a research phenomenon through rich descriptions (Kahlke, 2014). Qualitative methods are employed when the objective is to acquire comprehensive descriptions of research phenomena, thereby augmenting understanding. Given that I aimed to delineate in detail how police corruption influences national security, a qualitative descriptive research design was appropriate (see Sandelowski, 2000).

I chose a pragmatic paradigm. Pragmatism includes research designs that incorporate operational decisions grounded in what proves most effective in addressing the research questions (Simpson, 2018). The core of a pragmatic approach was to comprehend the factors influencing individuals' behaviors within specific contexts. For this research, the pragmatic paradigm was used. (Simpson, 2018).

The target population was Liberian citizens residing in a suburban area of a northern state in the United States. A sample size of 12 participants was recruited for the study. The data were collected through semistructured interviews that lasted 45-60 minutes. Participants' identities were protected using alphanumeric codes, including p1, p2, etc. The thematic analysis steps developed by Braun and Clarke (2009) were used to analyze the data.

Definitions

Corruption: Corruption is a form of dishonesty or criminal offense committed by a person or organization entrusted with a position of authority to acquire illicit benefits or to abuse power for personal gain (Fallah & Benmamoun, 2021).

Illicit Drugs Trade: The illegal drug trade encompasses the worldwide illicit commerce involved in the cultivation, production, distribution, and sale of substances that are prohibited by drug laws (Rajora, 2022).

Law enforcement: The activity of making certain that the laws of an area are obeyed (Gök, 2020)

National Security: National security entails the safeguarding of a nation's sovereignty, territory, citizens, and interests against both external and internal threats (Kitler, 2021).

Organized Crimes: Organized crime refers to structured criminal organizations that systematically engage in illegal activities for profit (Lampe, 2021).

Elite Theory: Elite Theory is a concept in social and political science that examines the distribution of power within society (Toscano & Stolz, 2024).

Police: The police are a government body tasked with maintaining law and order and enforcing the law by investigating crimes, making arrests (Whitaker, 2023).

Rent-seeking: As defined by Hartle (1983), rent seeking involves manipulating economic conditions or public policies to increase profits.

Assumptions

Assumptions refer to various aspects of a study that the researcher believes to be true but cannot prove (Levitt, 2021). This study has two main assumptions. The first assumption relates to the trustworthiness of data collected through interviews. I assumed that the collected data will be credible and reliable in addressing the phenomenon (see Poth & Shannon-Baker, 2022). To mitigate this assumption, I provided participants with all the information about the study and encouraged them to be honest. This enabled me to trust that the data collected through interviews accurately addressed the research questions.

I also assumed that the interview instruments accurately evaluated participants' perceptions of police corruption in Liberia and its impact on national security. The accuracy of the interview in capturing participants' thoughts on the research phenomenon is key in guaranteeing the validity and credibility of the findings (Dodgson, 2017). The research ensured that the questions were valid and reliable through pilot study testing.

Scope and Delimitations

Delimitations refer to the study's description and boundaries (Levitt, 2021). The scope of this study was limited to examining the public's perceptions of the impact of police corruption on national security in Liberia. Although the topic could be studied

from multiple perspectives, this study focused solely on Liberian citizens residing in a suburban area in a northern state. The decision to limit the scope to Liberians in this area was intended to facilitate an in-depth discussion of police corruption, its causes, and its impacts on Liberia's national security.

Limitations

Limitations are weaknesses in a study that arise from limited control (Poth & Shannon-Baker, 2022). This study could have been limited by the sampling technique used to identify and recruit study participants. Using purposive sampling may be challenging, given criticisms that researchers select participants who are close to them (Palinkas et al., 2015). However, this limitation was prevented by applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, thereby enabling the recruitment of knowledgeable participants for the study (Poth & Shannon-Baker, 2022).

The sample size is another limitation. Given that qualitative studies often use small sample sizes, the results may not be transferable to other settings. This research conducted interviews with 12 Liberian citizens residing in a suburban area of a northern state. To some extent, the sample size is small, and the reported findings may not generalize to other study settings. Qualitative studies are inherently subjective and, as a result, are prone to researcher bias (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Incidents of researcher bias may influence the study's credibility (Patton, 2014). The risk of researcher bias was mitigated through member checking and an expert panel. With member checking, participants were allowed to review their responses to ensure that their answers were

captured verbatim. An expert panel assisted in identifying and rephrasing interview questions that appeared biased.

Significance

I addressed the void in scholarly literature on the impact of police corruption on national security in Liberia. This is significant as it fosters positive social change by enhancing public trust, improving law enforcement effectiveness, promoting integrity within law enforcement agencies, and ultimately improving national security.

Policymakers may use these findings to develop strategies to combat corruption within the Liberian National Police (see Nebo Sr., 2024). Lawmakers can pass legislation to help end police corruption. When the government enacts these policies, it could help Liberia recover from police corruption.

This study contributes to existing literature in different ways. First, the study's findings offer a multilayered perspective on corruption, specifically from a public perspective (Morse, 2020). In addition to contextual factors, the study included participants' descriptions of their experiences with police corruption to better situate it as a risk to National Security (Singh, 2022). Collecting and analyzing public views on police corruption sheds light on how this form of corruption threatens Liberia's national security, given that, in other countries, corruption has been linked to organized crime, considered a national security risk.

Summary

In this chapter, the existing literature on the topic was reviewed in the background section. This is followed by a discussion of the study's problem statement and purpose.

Next, the research question, theoretical framework, nature of the study, and definitions of key terms were discussed. Other sections discussed include assumptions, scope, delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study. Chapter 2 presents a review of relevant literature supporting the need for this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The problem that prompted this research is that, despite extensive police reforms in Liberia's national police, corruption cases remain high, posing a risk to national security (see Morse, 2020; Nebo Sr., 2024). While researchers have extensively investigated the impacts of corruption on the public and in Liberia's national police, there is a gap in research concerning the impacts of police corruption on the nation's security (Berg, 2020; Morse, 2020; Nebo Sr., 2024). Therefore, in this generic qualitative study, I addressed the gap in the literature by examining how Liberian citizens describe the impact of police corruption on national security in Liberia. However, despite research examining the impacts of corruption on public trust, service delivery, and economic growth, its influence on national security remains largely unexplored.

In this chapter, I reviewed the existing literature on corruption in Liberia. I examined key studies on the causes and effects of corruption to evaluate current knowledge and identify gaps that this study addressed. The literature review begins with an overview of the search strategy, detailing how sources were retrieved and the parameters used for selecting articles. The theoretical framework, rent-seeking theory, and its relevance to this study are discussed (Hartle, 1983). Following this, a review of literature related to key variables and concepts highlights relevant themes and emerging ideas. The chapter concludes with a summary of the main sections, a conclusion, and a transition to Chapter 3.

Literature Search Strategy

Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive review of the existing literature on police corruption and its impact on national security and criminal investigation. I searched several databases, including JSTOR, Springer, ResearchGate, EBSCOhost, Emerald, SAGE, PubMed, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar, DiVA portal, and the World Wide Web, for relevant literature. I searched for different databases through Walden University's online library. I used several key terms to identify and retrieve relevant literature from the selected databases. The keywords and search terms used included *corruption, police corruption, police bribery, Liberia corruption, types of corruption, the effects of corruption, sources of corruption, forms of corruption, Corruption and economic growth, and corruption and social growth.*

Other keywords were *corruption implications on national security, police corruption, and national security.* All searches were limited to a 1-year period after the article's publication to ensure that only current sources were used. Using current literature to study the topic was crucial in ensuring that only recently published sources were used to investigate the phenomenon of interest. All articles, exempted from seminal sources for a theoretical framework, were published between 2020 and 2024.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation for this study is the rent-seeking theory. Rent seeking is an economic concept that occurs when an entity seeks to gain wealth without making any reciprocal contribution to society (Hartle, 1983). An example of rent seeking is when a company lobbies the government for grants, subsidies, or tariff protection but

fails to contribute to society's growth (Hartle, 1983). The different forms of rent seeking include lobbying and donations in exchange for government favors. According to rent theory pioneers, rent seeking negatively affects socioeconomic growth because it interferes with the free market principles by imposing unfair prices and barriers on individuals or companies (Hartle, 1983). In addition, by participating in corrupt activities through lobbying and donations, leaders fail to honor their responsibility to the citizens. I employed rent-seeking theory to analyze the effects of lobbying, bribery, and donations on police accountability and effectiveness in maintaining national security. I used rent-seeking theory to explain how bribes, favors, and donations may compromise national security through police laxity and collusion with criminals.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts

In this section, I elaborate on unfamiliar concepts concerning how police corruption impacts national security Liberia. I present insights into the current topic, identifies gaps, and explains the need for the current study. The standard concepts or subsections that were discussed in subsequent sections include types of corruption in the Liberian police and public service, effects of police corruption on service delivery in Liberia, effects of corruption on Liberia's national security, causes of corruption in the police and public service in Liberia, and challenges in addressing corruption in Liberia. The chapter concludes with a summary and conclusion, transitioning into Chapter 3.

Types of Corruption in the Liberian Public Service

Corruption has manifested in different forms in the Liberian public service, especially in the police service. This has resulted in persistent problems, including

national security challenges, erosion of public trust, and poor governance. The common types of corruption in the Liberian police service are discussed below.

Bribery

Bribery has undermined the effective delivery of services in Liberia's public sector. The procurement process has been disrupted by corrupt practices, with key public officials demanding bribes in exchange for approving government contracts (Alabi & Adisa, 2024; Nyei, 2020). Unqualified contractors are awarded tenders, resulting in the provision of substandard services to the public. Competent bidders who are unwilling to pay bribes are denied the opportunity to offer services, as they are excluded from the approval process. Additionally, entrepreneurs willing to join the business must obtain the necessary permits and licenses to operate (Boakai & Phon, 2020). Failure to pay bribes prevents innovative entrepreneurs from joining the business, which reduces foreign investors' market competitiveness and willingness to do business.

Key administrative processes are affected, leading to delays and increased costs in acquiring them. The efficiency of accessing crucial services like healthcare is impeded by certain public officials, leading citizens of Liberia to resort to bribery to expedite the process (Fallah & Benmamoun, 2021). Citizens who cannot pay bribes are disadvantaged as they are required to wait longer to acquire the same services, which leads to the ruin of public trust (Gross et al., 2024). Similarly, the judicial process, including law enforcement, is affected by bribery, leading to sabotage of the rule of law, which, in addition, affects the country's national security. The process of issuing essential documents to Liberian citizens is often delayed or withheld, prompting them to pay

bribes in exchange for documents. Acquisition procedures for documents like passports become expensive, leading to vulnerable individuals' inability to acquire them through normal processes.

Public officials in Liberia often favor their family members, friends, and close political allies, even though they may not possess the requisite qualifications to provide services. Liberian officials undermine meritocracy by favoring their close family members, which supports continued nepotism (Gobewole, 2020). Dynastic control of government institutions in Liberia is achieved through the practice of nepotism, perpetuating power inequalities across various regions within Liberia (Fallah & Benmamoun, 2021). Resentment is created among other deserving employees within the public sector, reducing productivity. Nepotism limits the country's ability to diversify its workforce and weakens public institutions, creating a cycle of corruption.

Failure to consider merits in decision-making and favoring close political allies and friends perpetuates a culture of cronyism. Ignoring individuals' competency over loyalty reduces public administration efficiency as government operations tend to be delayed or important deadlines are missed (Tytko et al., 2020). The political elites in Liberia have continued to dominate the government institutions, leading to increased political interference with their administrations. Additionally, cronyism contributes to increasing corruption in public tendering and contract awarding processes as the institutions offering tenders are managed by close political allies with limited control in such processes (Xu et al., 2024). There are instances where contracts are intentionally inflated, allowing for the diversion of government funds through personal networks

without proper scrutiny. The opportunities for competitive and qualified bidders are limited; as such, chances are granted based on personal connections rather than merit, as seen in tenders to extract oil and other minerals, which are often issued based on favoritism (Holcombe, 2020). Poor-quality work tends to be performed when the necessary expertise is not allowed to undertake projects. The cronyism and nepotism perpetuate the corruption in Liberia as they contribute to economic inequality and poor political culture, creating national security challenges.

Political Corruption

Liberia's political and senior officials often utilize state power and other institutions for personal and political gain. Public institutions are weakened by political corruption, and democratic processes are undermined (Sadik-Zada et al., 2022). Political leaders in Liberia often divert public resources to finance their election campaigns, depleting government funds that are intended for essential services. Senior political leaders utilize state infrastructure and personnel to campaign for themselves, leading to the misuse of power (Fallah & Benmamoun, 2021). Additionally, government agencies are transformed into campaign tools to rally their support. The suppression of political opponents in Liberia contributes to political corruption, as government leaders utilize various government agencies (Ceva & Ferretti, 2021). Law enforcement agencies are often used to suppress political opponents during campaigns and electioneering processes, which can hinder national security operations. Similarly, selective enforcement of laws is used to harass companies that are financing the political opponents, leading to the weakening of the opponents' power.

The political elites use vote-buying, especially in economically hard areas, to manipulate the voters' behavior during the electioneering period (Nyberg, 2021). Violence is used as a tool for threatening and intimidating supporters of opposition leaders, resulting in the discouragement of voters from participating in the voting process. Political leaders have bribed various electoral officials to influence the electoral process. Furthermore, Liberia's electoral commissioners tend to ally closely with political leaders, leading to their favoritism during electoral disputes (Fallah & Benmamoun, 2021). On the other hand, political leaders capture key economic sectors to control public resources, reducing overall economic benefits for Liberia (Raya-Quero et al., 2024). Similarly, political elites use their power to create patronage, distributing benefits exclusively to their supporters rather than the entire country.

Corruption leads to the embezzlement of infrastructure funds, causing delays, project abandonment, or incomplete construction. (Gross et al., 2024; Hope, 2020). The projects are left incomplete or are completed sub standardly. Other sectors, for instance, health, are mismanaged, resulting in inadequate health services provision and a poor state of health in the country (Fallah & Benmamoun, 2021). Government financial capacity is diminished through the embezzlement of revenues by senior public officials. Additionally, international aid and other development funds from international donors are often siphoned into the accounts of government officials, resulting in the incomplete or non-completion of the intended project funded by aid and donations (Kuwali, 2024). Misappropriation of aid meant to some sectors, like health, in combating Ebola in

Liberia, led to a crisis in the management of such illness as frontline workers were not provided with essential supplies.

Government properties, including vehicles and land, are used by some political leaders, who have depleted their value and increased maintenance costs (Valiquette, 2022). Similarly, some political leaders sell government assets without authorization, reducing government revenues. Regulatory systems often tend to be manipulated, resulting in the evasion of accountability and oversight (Yasmirah et al., 2021). In Liberia, the Anti-Corruption Commission contributes to increased embezzlement of resources, as prosecutors often avoid conflicts with the political class (Armenian Lawyers Association, 2021; Gross et al., 2024).

Political rewards for supporters contribute to overstaffing in public offices in Liberia as political leaders make irrelevant appointments to government ministries and departments (Gobewole, 2020). Unnecessary positions are created, leading to the misuse of government resources and the creation of redundant positions across institutions to accommodate loyal supporters. Inappropriate appointments leading to overstaffing result in an increased financial burden on the government, which necessitates the reallocation of funds from essential projects to cover salaries (Fallah & Benmamoun, 2021). The appointment of unqualified individuals to key roles in government institutions contributes to inefficiency in service delivery and resource mismanagement. Services tend to be delayed because of inefficiency, resulting from excessive patronage.

Effects of Police Corruption on Service Delivery in Liberia

Despite being one of the oldest African republics, Liberia remains one of the poorest and least developed countries. The Transparency International Corruption Perception Index, with a score of 28 out of 100, ranked the country in a similarly low position, 137 out of 180 countries (Klutse, 2020). Rampant corruption, failure to adhere to the rule of law, and bad governance have been significant setbacks to Liberia's social and economic growth (Yelloway, 2020). Governance has been a significant challenge in Liberia owing to the lack of transparency and accountability, which are crucial aspects of good governance and essential for ensuring adherence to the rule of law (Lee-Jones, 2022). Good governance fosters a viable and enabling environment for economic growth, promoting collaboration between the public and private sectors to enhance infrastructure development (Lee-Jones, 2022). Adherence to the rule of law encourages public and private participation in decision-making.

Police corruption has been identified as a significant hindrance to the public-private partnership process for developing concession agreements and partnerships between the Liberian government and private companies, which aim to create jobs and improve living standards. Runde and Metzger (2020) noted that the fight to minimize or eradicate corruption may lead to the enhancement of good governance, the rule of law, and public-private partnerships, thereby reducing poverty in most African nations, including Liberia. Legislation is passed in most countries, including Liberia, to combat corruption; however, each country has its own approach to fighting it.

Corruption in Liberia remains a significant challenge to efficient resource management. It negatively impacts economic growth and private sector development and contributes to the high levels of inequality and poverty witnessed in the country.

Corruption is prevalent in both sectors of the economy, hampering the development and progression of Liberian society (Fallah & Benmamoun, 2021). Allegations and scandals like looting state coffers, misappropriation of development funds by politicians, and manipulation of contract bidding are prevalent in Liberia (Klutse, 2020).

Corruption has compromised the integrity of the police and the army. Because of corruption, law enforcement agencies have become aligned with the political class, negatively impacting their neutrality and equal application of the law. Kromah and Srisuk (2022) established that the police's failure to uphold the anti-corruption laws equally resulted in the embezzlement of funds meant for delivering quality healthcare, security, and education to the public. Citizens' efforts to seek justice through the legal system and courts remain futile, as they are often frustrated by corruption within the system designed to combat it (Nebo Sr., 2020).

Corruption in both public and private sectors was a primary reason for the sustained and prolonged civil war witnessed in Liberia, which destroyed infrastructure, leaving the country's economy in total ruins (Sandholtz, 2023). Liberia recently emerged from a 14-year civil war that hurt the country's economic and social aspects (Gallo-Cruz & Remsberg, 2021). The existence of civil war in Liberia resulted in its gross domestic product dropping by 90% between 1987 and 1995 as the mining and export of resources like timber, rubber, and iron ore dwindled. Similarly, financial services and the financial

system were negatively impacted owing to the termination of foreign investments, suspension, and shutdown of private businesses, and the sanctioning of all of Liberia's resource exports (Robinson, 2024). In addition to the negative impacts of civil war, corruption has continually drained Liberia's economy as only a few influential people benefit from the sale of public natural resources (Gross et al., 2024).

Corruption among Liberian government officials has resulted in system failures for lacking accountability and transparency (Chang et al., 2021). Liberian government officials have often prioritized individual interests and desires over the long-term benefit of the country (McMullin, 2022). Similarly, corruption impacts the relationship and trust between society and the government, feeds political division and unrest, leading to insecurity and exposing a country to civil war (Bloe, 2023). As a result of corruption, Liberians have failed to fulfill their tax obligations, leading to persistent underfunding of government agencies and creating an environment where officials accept bribes for personal gain (McMullin, 2022). However, building accountable and transparent systems over public financial management contributes to mitigating corruption, which should be the primary concern for any country's survival, growth, and development.

Effects Of Corruption on Liberia's Social and Economic Aspects

Corruption is a common phenomenon in government institutions across Liberia. Corrupt behaviors are deeply rooted in Liberia's culture and undermine the government's development planning (Hoinaru et al., 2020). Such detrimental conduct has been witnessed among public officers who hold top government positions. (Hoinaru et al., 2020). Corruption in Liberia has been entrenched across all government institutions, with

elected leaders and civil servants contributing to the increased social acceptance of corruption as a norm in Liberian society, including among police officers (Kayuni, 2024). Therefore, corruption can have significant social and economic impacts in Liberia, as discussed below.

Poor management of Liberia's natural resources is closely linked to widespread corruption in the country (see Sandholtz, 2023; Smillie, 2024). Liberian war factions used profits from the sale of timber, diamonds, rubber, and sometimes coffee and cacao for years from 1990 to 2004, to buy weapons and exacerbate cases of violence in Liberia (Woody, 2023). For instance, President Taylor embezzled and diverted millions of dollars in public funds from the exploitation of gold, local timber, rubber, and diamonds (Woody, 2023).

Corruption witnessed in Liberia exacerbates the challenges of weak financial sector, poor business environments, low human resource endowment, and poor infrastructure (Mohammed et al., 2022). Corruption in Liberia further affects economic governance as a result of low domestic and foreign investment and limited economic growth (Mohammed et al., 2022). Liberia consistently ranks extremely low globally for ease of doing business. Businesses, banks, and international organizations identify cross-border trade, construction permits, contract enforcement, investor protections, and inadequate electricity services as significant challenges in Liberia (Nyeleker & Prasetyo, 2023). Corruption has increased the challenges experienced by employers and employees in the informal sector, stunting the country's growth (Yelloway, 2020).

In Liberia, corruption has contributed to the decline in investment. According to Thede and Karpaty (2023), a society with increased corruption deters investors who take their investment to other countries with favoring business environment. African countries like Liberia have adverse business environment caused by increased levels of corruption among government officials who demand payment before permitting investors to do business (Fallah & Benmamoun, 2021). Such behaviors have contributed to limited investment opportunities and increased poverty levels in Liberia. Other researchers have demonstrated that most investors are more likely to avoid countries with high levels of corruption owing to the lack of transparency in issuing business licenses (Kromah & Srisuk, 2022; Mohammed et al., 2022).

As a result, the lack of investment opportunities has thus had a tremendous impact on the economic activities of different regions within the Liberian economy. While the government has tried to minimize corruption in different departments to spur economic growth, such behaviors are still a menace that has deteriorated the economic aspects of Liberians' lives (Nugroho et al., 2022). Thus, increased levels of corruption retard Liberia's economic growth, leading to elevated poverty levels.

Liberians are denied investment opportunities because of a high level of corruption. In Liberia, corruption has affected foreign direct and local investment (Obiagu & Ossai, 2020). Zouaoui et al. (2022) investigated the causes of the low rate of local investment in Liberia; corruption was found to hinder Liberians from investing in their own country. The results indicated high rates of business permit charges, a lack of goodwill from public officials in charge of investment, and a lack of infrastructure that

can foster investment among local investors. Zouaoui et al. further stated that most Liberians do not have the money to bribe public officials who demand hefty sums to provide business permits. This pattern of corruption has adversely impacted various sectors of the Liberian economy, resulting in hindered economic growth (Kumar, 2021).

Economic development and growth are anchored in a transparent society where people can freely do business and pay taxes to their governments, contributing to sustainable economic growth. However, that is not the case in Liberia, where a high level of corruption has contributed to economic retardation, as investors prefer neighboring countries to investing in Liberia. A corrupt society may lead to increased costs of doing business (Zander, 2021). The level of corruption in Liberia should be equivalent to a criminal act because of the increased embezzlement of funds and abuse of power by public officials who demand bribes to offer business licenses to investors, contributing to retarded investment (Fufa, 2024). Along this line, some studies have established that some investors shy away from the high cost of investment they may incur when investing in Liberia as compared to other nations where there is a low level of corruption with favorable conditions for investment, including low fees for business permits and developed infrastructure that enable positive environment for their investment (Lawal et al., 2020; Urbina, 2020).

Liberia has the highest investment costs with more taxes that scare away investors, especially foreign direct investors who may prefer cheaper countries with favorable business conditions. Such circumstances have made Liberians lag in terms of economic development opportunities. Diallo et al. (2023) suggested addressing

challenges that scare investors from investing in Liberia to save the economy. Addressing these challenges will attract investment and enhance the economic well-being of Liberians, experiencing low living standards. Conversely, the high levels of corruption prevalent in Liberia may hinder the creation of a favorable business environment, thereby impeding investment and economic growth.

Increased corruption in Liberia may have led to inequality and inefficient allocation of resources. For any country to register improved economic growth, allocating national resources plays a significant role, including infrastructural development, namely roads, dams for agricultural activities, schools, hospitals, and other social services, and important development projects (Olabiyi, 2022). However, corruption has become a significant hindrance to achieving such milestones for African countries like Liberia, where corruption is rampant in government offices and departments (Karim et al., 2023). As a result, development funds are siphoned to offshore accounts, while the country is left to suffer economic hardships, creating an unfavorable environment for economic growth.

Corrupt government leaders may not prioritize economic welfare of their constituents (Karim et al., 2023). However, they prioritize making themselves rich at all costs, often at the expense of dilapidated roads, hospitals, and schools (Mbabazize et al., 2022). These behaviors from corrupt leaders contribute to inefficiency and inequality in allocating resources to different regions of Liberia for development and economic growth. The allocation of resources is thus affected by the rampant corruption in Liberia, which has led to a limited number of developmental projects that can improve the

economic lives of Liberians (Mbabazize et al., 2022). Instead, corrupt public officials siphon public funds into personal accounts.

In Liberia, ineffective and inefficient allocation of public resources leads to inadequate food production. Hope (2020) conducted a qualitative study to investigate the causes of increased hunger in Liberia. The result indicated that Liberian economy depends on agricultural activities, and the failure of the government to allocate adequate resources, like farm inputs, including subsidized fertilizer and seeds to farmers, contributed to low food production in the country (Hope, 2020). According to Hope, funds meant to purchase farm inputs and subsidize fertilizer were embezzled by the public officials in charge of agriculture.

Despite evidence of such corruption, Hope (2020) reported that no prosecution was brought against these corrupt government officials. Such a scenario demonstrates that, despite the ability to produce enough food for its citizens and for export to generate government revenue, corrupt leaders have crippled the food sector in Liberia, resulting in slow economic growth. However, Liberian government officials have consistently blamed global economic conditions and international organizations, including the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, for the country's lack of development, citing the increased debt repayment rates (Seward, 2021). On the contrary, corruption has led to the stealing of funds meant for road development, agricultural improvement, and the construction of social amenities for Liberians (Mensah et al., 2021). A corrupt government and the culture of corruption in Liberia are the root causes of inefficiency in

resource allocation and low economic development, which have affected Liberians' living standards.

A society with increased corruption may suffer from weak government services. Weak services from the Liberian government contribute to the economic hardship suffered by citizens. For instance, Krawczyk (2021) asserted that while citizens depend on the government for healthcare and education, lack of or ineffective services denies Liberian citizens their rights to learning and quality health. A similar sentiment was expressed by Mohammed (2022), who reported that poverty-stricken Liberians depend on government services as their hope for economic growth, including education and healthcare, which are key social services for every Liberian with aspirations to change their lives. Consequently, Liberians have more often received weak social services, for example, poor-quality healthcare owing to the lack of medicines in hospitals (Hlasny, 2020).

Most Liberians are forced to purchase medicines from private vendors who sell at exorbitant prices that they cannot afford. Despite these challenges, Liberian leaders have refused to take responsibility for the low level of healthcare. However, these leaders have siphoned funds allocated to healthcare services through overpriced tenders awarded to their businesses, allowing them to loot funds from government accounts (Hassan, 2024). In this regard, an unhealthy Liberian society lacks the necessary skills and capacity to develop substantial human capital for economic growth. In addition, the use of resources for medication limits investment opportunities for Liberians who end up living in abject poverty.

The culture of corruption linked with the Liberian government has a detrimental impact on the education services for Liberians. Corruption among senior government officials reduces access to education among Liberians who rely on government-sponsored educational services (Prowd & Kollie, 2021). Because of corruption in government departments, including the education sector, resources allocated for educational services are often misappropriated and embezzled by corrupt leaders (Njangang et al., 2024). Thus, this misallocation of funds for education contributes to a lack of learning resources in schools and a shortage of teachers, given the large number of students who need and depend on government educational services.

Public schools in Liberia are deprived of educational resources, including trained teachers and learning materials, including books and teaching materials, and lack specialized teachers for students with special needs (Vorvornator & Mdiniso, 2022). Arguably, the lack of specialized teachers and learning materials contributes to an increased illiteracy rate in Liberia, leading to limited human capital development, which is key for economic growth. In some cases, corrupt government officials award themselves with government tenders to supply educational resources to schools. At the same time, they end up undersupplying the required resources, leading to school dropouts and a low number of graduates (Nageri & Gunu, 2020). Corruption has thus deteriorated educational services in Liberia, affecting the economy by reducing the amount of available skilled labor.

Besides its economic effects, corruption may have a social impact, eroding trust in the government. Amegavi (2022) reported that most Liberians do not trust their

government and public officers. Most Liberians believe public officials, especially elected leaders, are corrupt and may not fulfill their promises to citizens. According to most Liberians, elected leaders aim to loot public funds to compensate for the funds they used in their election campaigns for public offices (Amegavi, 2022). At the same time, some Liberians attributed the increased distrust to hatred towards the government's lack of development activities, including road infrastructure and agriculture (Gök, 2020).

The lack of faith in the government indicates that corruption contributes to the erosion of trust in government departments or institutions, particularly the law enforcement department, which is often perceived as the most corrupt because of the high levels of bribes on traffic roads and from arrested suspects (Tambe & Monyake, 2023). Such a lack of trust in government institutions may be attributed to insufficient resources and substandard infrastructure, leading Liberians to lose confidence in the leader's resolve to address the challenges they face, including poor road networks that make economic activities more difficult (Bernal, 2022). The culture of corruption in Liberia has, therefore, led to negative perception and distrust among Liberians towards diverse governmental institutions that tolerate corrupt activities.

In terms of the social aspect of the corruption effect, political tension has been a significant issue in Liberia. When people feel excluded from public appointments and employment opportunities, they are more likely to engage in civil unrest to resist a corrupt regime and its system of corruption (Effiong et al., 2023). Public officials offer government job opportunities to their relatives through nepotism, denying other Liberians the opportunity to improve their lives through employment in public office (Ankenbrand

et al., 2021). In addition, corruption, public servants solicit bribes to offer jobs to citizens. These acts of corruption create rage and anxiety among civilians who may resolve to protest against the government of the day.

Empirical evidence demonstrated that most political unrest in nations like Liberia is attributed to increased levels of corruption among public officials, including law enforcement (Domashova & Politova, 2021). Corruption among public officials and law enforcement may not allow important activities like sports and investment to prosper, contributing to limited social interaction and socioeconomic inequality (Domashova & Politova, 2021). Thus, the corrupt system contributes to many Liberians feeling isolated and neglected by their leaders. As a result, isolation and neglect may contribute to increased fight against the government through constant protests and increased crime rates within the country.

The culture of corruption in Liberia may encourage drug trafficking into and out of the country. The system of corruption in Liberia has led to increased harm to society, including increased drug addiction, resulting in the high level of drug trafficking that happens across the borders of Liberia, as public servants at these borders are bribed by drug traffickers (Saha & Sen, 2023). While some studies have associated increased drug trafficking in Liberia with a lack of effective enforcement of anti-trafficking laws and immigration laws that lead to infiltration of drug traffickers into the borders of Liberia (Amegavi, 2022; Otusanya & Adeyeye, 2022), other researchers found that the laws are not adhered to because of rampant corruption experienced at border posts in Liberia (Hlasny, 2020; Ngumbi, 2020). Drug traffickers bribe border patrol officers to enter the

country and end up distributing drugs to the Liberian community and society. Such drugs can cause more harm to the users, with the majority being youths, leading to an increased rate of crime within the Liberian society (Espejo, 2021). Along these lines, when public officers at the border are corrupt, they are more likely to be bribed by drug smugglers. These drug smugglers buy their way into Liberia to illegally introduce drugs into the communities within Liberia, leading to increased mental health issues and loss of direction in life among the users.

The high poverty level in Liberia may be attributed to increased bribery among public servants. The extortion of bribes from citizens for various social services and employment opportunities may increase poverty among Liberians, especially those from low socioeconomic status families who need favors to improve their lives (Woody, 2023). Although most Liberians apply for jobs and other social services, like medical insurance in government institutions, they are less likely to access these services or employment opportunities without paying substantial bribes to public officers (Armah & Armah, 2020). Still, paying bribes may not guarantee jobs or other services, as most officers may extort funds from them and fail to provide the jobs or services they applied for. This situation strains these Liberians financially, contributing to an increased level of poverty because some of them had to sell their only prime properties, like land, to bribe officers for jobs. However, the culture of corruption among public officers led to extortion of funds from Liberians, further exacerbating their poverty levels (Morse, 2022). The findings suggest the need to mitigate corruption in government institutions

and channel funds to create jobs for Liberians to reduce poverty, social inequality, and class divisions.

Regarding social effects, corruption in Liberia leads to low living standards for Liberians. Previous research has shown that Liberians live low-quality lives because of increased social corruption, including within government institutions, which leads to limited access to essential services, including healthcare and education (Gallo-Cruz & Remsberg, 2021). The reduced public services affect the quality of life among the Liberians who rely on these government services as their sources of education, health, and even living through employment. Therefore, if Liberians are denied important public services, including education and healthcare, through corruption, they live a deteriorated lifestyle (Hunnicut, 2023). Public officers' diversion of public funds meant for social services, including education, healthcare, and sports activities, to personal accounts in Liberia has contributed to increased poverty and a deteriorated quality of life among Liberians (see Campbell White & Campbell White, 2023). Therefore, the existing empirical evidence has associated low quality of life among Liberians with the high level of corruption that denies them essential services.

Causes of Corruption in Public Service in Liberia

Corruption pervades every level of Liberian society, making Liberia one of the most corrupt nations in the world. Under Liberian law, corruption is not explicitly classified as a crime; rather, it is inherent in the country's fabric (Mochtar & Afkar, 2022). When President Johnson was sworn into office, she identified corruption as the

nation's primary issue (Mochtar & Afkar, 2022). The following are key factors contributing to corruption in the Liberian public service.

Weak Institutions and Governance

Ineffective checks and balances in Liberia's public institutions significantly contribute to the persistence of corruption. The weakness stems from a combination of factors, including the historical legacy of civil war, inadequate separation of powers, and limited institutional capacity (Kaydor Jr, 2024). The executive branch often wields disproportionate influence over the legislative and judicial branches, undermining their ability to provide adequate oversight. Key watchdog agencies, like the General Auditing Commission and the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission, frequently lack the necessary resources, independence, and political backing to fulfill their mandates effectively (Fallah & Benmamoun, 2021). Moreover, the media and civil society organizations, which are meant to serve as external checks on government power, often face restrictions, intimidation, or co-optation (Harbeson, 2023). The systemic imbalance creates an environment where corrupt practices can flourish unchecked, as there are insufficient mechanisms to detect, investigate, and punish misconduct within the public service.

Local public institutions in Liberia have poor internal audit and investigation functions, which hamper efforts to combat corruption. One challenge that may be observed is a potential scarcity of highly qualified and skilled workers familiar with forensic accounting principles and forensic investigation, including up-to-date audit techniques (Campbell White & Campbell White, 2023). Similarly, the technological enablers for audits and investigations, including data management systems and analytical

tools, are either inadequate or lacking (Nagirikandalage et al., 2022). The technological gap hinders the identification of overstated, emerging, or systematic fraud or an embezzlement scheme. In addition, internal audit departments are not entirely autonomous within the respective organization, and auditors encounter coercion or pressure from top management of the institution while evaluating such essential issues (Plantinga, 2024). Thus, corrupt and unlawful activities are never investigated, and culture of defiance and impunity is fostered while the credibility of public institutions is undermined even further.

Inadequate legal frameworks significantly undermine Liberia's ability to combat corruption in public service. Liberia's laws and regulations governing public administration, procurement, and financial management date back to the pre-civil war era and have not been sufficiently updated to address current needs (Islam, 2021). The legislative weakness creates loopholes that corrupt officials can exploit. Additionally, the legal framework often fails to adequately protect whistleblowers or facilitate asset recovery in corruption cases (Amegavi, 2022). The lack of harmonization between various laws and regulations can lead to confusion and inconsistent application (Gobewole, 2020). The legal inadequacy not only hampers prosecution efforts but also complicates the implementation of comprehensive anti-corruption strategies, perpetuating weak governance structures.

Low Public Sector Wages

Salaries below the living wage in Liberia's public sector create opportunities for corruption. The financial strain is particularly acute in urban areas, where higher housing,

transportation, and food costs are driving costs (Nebo, 2023). Inadequate pay compels public employees to seek alternative sources of income, often through corrupt practices like bribery, embezzlement, or the misuse of public resources. Low wages contribute to low productivity as the employees stay away from work to seek other sources of income (Misganu et al., 2022). The challenge not only demeans the professionalism of public service but also causes a brain drain as competent professionals transition from the public sector in search of better-paid professions in the private sector or other countries (Sucuoğlu & Nyenatoh, 2023). Brain drain, due to corruption, deteriorates institutional integrity and service delivery, diminishing public trust in government institutions.

Another factor that contributes to corruption in organizations is the wage disparity between Liberia's public and private sectors. Employees in the private sector receive much higher wages than their counterparts in the public sector (Keneck-Massil et al., 2021). The discrepancies lead to a system where two sets of wages are paid to two different groups of workers, most unfair to those in the government sector. According to Batuo et al. (2022), top talent may consider other organizations with better payout structures, reducing human capital in government organizations, or receiving substandard human capital. The employees may feel they are being paid inadequate wages and, therefore, may have a certain level of dissatisfaction with the organization they work in and, hence, look for any chance to get as much as they can from the organization, even if it means embezzling funds. The outcome sustains the perception that working in public organizations is a temporary stop before finding a better-paid job in the private sector. This leads to short-termism and selfish attitudes among the employees (Sigman, 2022).

While civil servants are poorly remunerated, those in the private sector are well endowed, creating social pressures that compel them to embezzle to meet the social pull.

Irregular or delayed payment of salaries in Liberia's public sector significantly contributes to corruption and undermines the integrity of government institutions. The payment issues, often stemming from budgetary constraints or administrative inefficiencies, create severe financial hardships for civil servants who rely on consistent income to meet their basic needs (Kabia et al., 2021). In most cases, delayed salaries lead public-sector employees to resort to corrupt practices, including asking for bribes or embezzling public funds, to meet basic needs like paying bills, buying food, and covering school fees. The unpredictable nature of payments contributes to short-termism, as officials prioritize personal gains over the common good (Mataywa & Makhasi, 2023). In addition, employees are demotivated by irregular payments, and their willingness to serve the public with integrity diminishes, leading to low productivity and high truancy rates (Robinson & Wyatt, 2023). The challenge results in a vicious cycle in which poor-quality services offered to the public exert more pressure on the government to seek funds for the necessary payments, and this may lead to the emergence of payment-related issues and corruption.

Patronage Networks

Hiring and promotion based on nepotism are common in Liberia's patronage system and have severely eroded the credibility and efficiency of public service. The practice demands hiring family members, close friends, or associates in organizations regardless of their qualifications compared to other qualified applicants (Mkhize et al.,

2021; Omasanjuwa & Phebean, 2020). Leaders often employ relatives in their offices without considering their capabilities in the positions they are hired for (Quest, 2022). Discrimination not only diminishes the quality of service delivery in the public sector but discourages diligent and capable employees because of the apparent promotion of incompetent relatives of politicians. The problem of nepotism ensures that the standards of efficiency and addressing corruption are lowered, and those who benefit from such practices can continue once they assume authority.

Another cause of corruption in Liberia is political influence and interference in civil service recruitment, which is influenced by patronage networks. The system distorts meritocracy and professionalism because the success of an official does not depend on their performance, knowledge, and experience but on political loyalty (Nyeleker & Prasetyo, 2023). Patronage can lead to situations where appointees have a duty to their benefactors, resulting in decisions that prioritize the provision of certain perks to specific individuals, with the public good not being the primary focus (Kuwali, 2024). Similarly, this system facilitates corruption, as it is easier for a person of influence to secure a job, regardless of their skills or deficiencies (Berg, 2020). Patronage prevents qualified individuals from considering public employment, decreases the capacity of government institutions to operate, and combats corruption.

Ethnic or clan bias is one of the most common forms of patronage in Liberia's civil service, which can be easily explained by the nation's sociopolitical structure and its divisional history. The problem involves favoritism in awarding jobs and contracts to individuals from the same tribe as the high-ranking officials (Mousseau & Mousseau,

2023). Favoritism is a common form of workplace discrimination, characterized by biased hiring and promotion and the unequal distribution of organizational resources and opportunities among regions or groups of people. Discrimination not only violates the rights of citizens and democratic principles like fairness and equality in employment opportunities but also enhances social vices, including corruption (Brierley, 2021). Favoritism exacerbates the political and social entrenchment of certain clans or ethnic groups, often to the exclusion of others, in a manner that systematically discriminates against the latter (Abebe et al., 2022). Thus, favoritism tends to lead to the hiring or promotion of individuals based on their ethnic identity, resulting in inefficiency within public entities and undermining Liberia's efforts to combat corruption.

Legacy of the Civil War 1989-2005

The legacy of Liberia's civil war has profoundly impacted its public institutions, mainly through the breakdown of institutional memory and procedures. The protracted conflict devastated the country's governance structures and disrupted the continuity of public administration (Liu, 2022). Experienced civil servants were displaced, fled the country, or lost their lives during the war, resulting in a significant loss of institutional knowledge and expertise. The brain drain left a vacuum in understanding and implementing established procedures, policies, and best practices, like addressing corruption (Blair & Morse, 2021). In the post-war period, 2004 to 2024, rebuilding these institutions was challenging, as knowledge transfer between generations of civil servants was severely disrupted. The loss of institutional memory has led to inefficiencies, inconsistent policy implementation, and increased vulnerability to corruption (Gallo-Cruz

& Remsberg, 2021). New officials often lack the historical context and understanding of proper procedures, making it easier for unethical practices to manifest and harder to maintain accountability and transparency in government operations.

The civil war in Liberia made formal economic structures more vulnerable, thereby consolidating the informal economy. In addition to destroying infrastructure and formal institutions during the conflict, society had to find a new way of living, a means of survival in conditions of irregularity and illegality (Young, 2023). The illegality was succeeded by developing a highly effective informal market of illicit buying, small-scale markets, and workaround delivery networks. The informal structure has been maintained in the post-war period and is now an integral part of the Liberian cultural landscape (McMullin, 2022).

As such practices have become routine, and no separation can be made between legal business and illicit operations, it becomes challenging to define and enforce strict monetary laws. The environment makes corruption possible by making it difficult to distinguish between legitimate and illegal business activities (Pailey & Harris, 2020). The growth of the informal economy reduces the likelihood of legal framing of economic activity, tax collection, and compliance with the legal regime, thereby degrading the state's capacity to provide vital services and curb corruption.

The Liberian people did not have much confidence in their government even after the civil war was over. The years of conflict, which involved the use of brutality, human rights abuses, and erosion of essential services, diminished the role of the state as a caretaker of society (Kalu & Kieh Jr, 2021). The mistrust was compounded by the fact

that different stakeholders, including government forces, had been implicated in acts of brutality and exploitation during the war. In the post-conflict reconstruction phase, Liberians harbor apprehension and skepticism toward any governmental authority (Arthur et al., 2023). Mistrust is not conducive to anti-corruption policies because the public is less inclined to fight corruption or support measures for proper governance (Adelopo & Rufai, 2020). The lack of trust can become a vicious cycle, as corrupt officials may continue to hold office while leveraging public skepticism.

Poverty and Economic Instability

The rise in unemployment in Liberia, combined with poverty and economic instability, lays the foundation for corruption in the public sector. Liberians are limited in their opportunities in the formal labor market and struggle to secure their livelihoods (Gobewole, 2020). The desire to secure a steady income motivates individuals to pursue a career in the public sector. A candidate for a civil service position may be compelled to offer bribes or other corrupt incentives to secure the job, given intense competition and limited posts (Gök, 2020). When acquired, the threat of losing a valuable opportunity to earn a living can prompt people to engage in corrupt practices to retain their jobs (Adu, 2020). Altogether, the reviewed evidence suggests that desperation resulting from high unemployment rates makes citizens susceptible to suffering corruption, with officials using their positions to extort bribes for services or opportunities.

High levels of poverty and economic uncertainty in Liberia have led to the reliance on the informal economy and patronage networks as significant sources of income, influencing corruption in public service. Considering limited legal sources of

income, many citizens engage in the informal economy to make a living and are not subject to legal requirements or taxes (Jappah & Smith, 2022). Although some people earn their incomes and sustain their households through informal sector activities, the informal economy continues to foster an environment where people engage in informal business deals and corruption. In this context, people rely on recommendations from friends or relatives who are in a position to help them get a job or access essential services (Quest, 2022). The outcome leads to dysfunctional bureaucracies in which decision-making patterns favor informal coalition structures at the expense of the public good (Nyeleker & Prasetyo, 2023). Based on the reviewed evidence, the informal economy and patronage reinforce corrupt practices, hindering any efforts to transform the civil service and institute sanity, thereby curbing corruption.

The Liberian case of corruption in the public service system can be attributed to historical, economic, and institutional influences. The antecedents include weak and unstable government institutions, inefficient and ineffective legal frameworks, low wages or remuneration paid to civil servants, and widespread patronage (Fallah & Benmamoun, 2021; Islam, 2021; Kaydor Jr., 2024). The civil war eroded institutional capacities and diminished institutional memory, particularly in government ministries and agencies (Blair & Morse, 2021; Liu, 2022). There is an evident influence of patronage networks and informal sectors, indicating that hasty decisions often favor patronage over professionalism (Nyeleker & Prasetyo, 2023; Quest, 2022). The measures against corruption should address these multifaceted issues with solutions that enhance the primary structures, laws, and financial resilience.

Challenges in Addressing Corruption in Liberia

In Liberia, corruption in the public sector remains prevalent and continues to hinder development, primarily because of entrenched issues that make its eradication difficult. A lack of capital and manpower significantly hampers the functioning of anti-corruption agencies, while political influence prevents corrupt officials from being apprehended. In addition, remaining legal loopholes enable corrupt practices to continue, especially when there is no judicial accountability. The complexities are intertwined to produce a cycle of impurity, in which the government's credibility is undermined, making it almost impossible to address corruption within Liberia's institutions.

Limited resources

One of the primary challenges in combating corruption in Liberia's public service is the scarcity of resources, particularly financial resources. Due to a limited budget, the government's ability to implement adequate measures against corruption is significantly restricted (Roberts, 2023). A lack of funds affects the development of various facets of anti-corruption work, including the creation of dedicated investigative divisions, the acquisition of requisite technology and equipment, and the attraction and retention of qualified employees. Such financial constraints result in underfunded and understaffed anti-corruption agencies that are unable to detect, investigate, and prosecute complex corruption cases (Bawole & Adjei-Bamfo, 2020). In addition, a lack of funds results in a lack of proper training of the existing staff, making it hard for them to counter new emerging corrupt practices and better techniques in forensics. The scarcity of resources affects public awareness campaigns, which are crucial for informing citizens about their

rights and the importance of reporting cases of corruption (Harnois & Gagnon, 2022).

The funding constraints generate a cycle that leads to the exhaustion of public funds and a lack of adequate measures against corruption

A shortage of qualified personnel in Liberia's fight against corruption is a significant factor in the public sector's efforts to combat corruption. The shortage of trained personnel, especially investigators, significantly hinders the government's ability to effectively investigate and prosecute complex corruption cases (Kieh Jr, 2010). The anti-corruption agencies lack the financial resources to attract and retain forensic accountants, lawyers, and qualified investigators due to competition from the private sector. This shortage means that the current staff is overworked, leading to backlogs and exacerbating corruption cases (Zhu, 2022). Likewise, the absence of professional knowledge hinders the disclosure of complex fraud and the international tracking of embezzled money (Aziani et al., 2022). Therefore, the lack of qualified staff to handle corruption cases hinders the efficient delivery of justice in the country and can lead to citizens' skepticism about anti-corruption measures.

One of the key challenges to the anti-corruption drive in Liberia is the underdevelopment of its investigative wing. The constraint is apparent in various areas, for example, the absence of sufficient technological equipment in digital forensics and data analysis to expose complex financial fraud schemes (Mataywa & Makhasi, 2023). Although there is an acknowledgment of the difficulty, there is little emphasis on the training that would equip the investigators to address intricate corruption systems that invariably possess cross-border characteristics. Similarly, due to resource constraints, it is

challenging to conduct the extensive investigations typically required to obtain sufficient evidence against influential corrupt officials (Obicci, 2024). A capacity constraint deprives agencies of the ability to prevent or investigate corruption efficiently; hence, they rely solely on public reporting (Richards & Eboibi, 2021). Thus, limited resources hinder the efficiency of anti-corruption investigations in Liberia, as investigative agencies are underdeveloped.

Political Interference

Protecting the political elite remains a major obstacle to combating corruption in Liberia's public service, mainly because of political interference. The phenomenon refers to elites who protect themselves and their associates from prosecution (Blum & Rogger, 2021). The political elites often achieve such protection through controlling legal procedures, tampering with evidence collection, and pressuring anti-corruption organizations and the judiciary. The practice of elite protection hampers whistleblowers and witnesses from reporting wrongdoing, as they fear their efforts will be in vain or they will be retaliated against (Betz, 2023). Political interference undermines public trust in governmental institutions and anti-corruption measures, as citizens perceive the justice system as selective in its operations (Nebo Sr, 2024). The systemic problem ensures that people in authority continue to embezzle and misuse resources without fear of accountability, as they can easily evade the law.

Political interference in the fight against corruption obstructs justice in Liberia's public service. The practice involves the highest levels of authorities actively preventing investigations and cases related to corruption crimes (Bahouli, 2023). For instance, some

tactics may involve tampering with or losing incriminating material, intimidating potential witnesses, and influencing police, lawyers, and jurors. In more severe instances, it may employ threats or force against individuals who attempt to report cases of corruption (Gross et al., 2024). Bribery, influencing, undermining justice, preventing large-scale investigations, and eroding the morale of anti-corruption institutions are all consequences of obstructing justice (Turner, 2020). The culture of obstruction of justice erodes the public's faith in the government's capacity and commitment to fighting corruption, thereby exacerbating the problems in the Liberian public service.

The challenge of political interference has diminished the independence of Liberia's anti-corruption programs. The problem manifests when oversight organizations, investigative agencies, and the judiciary tasked with combating corruption are not genuinely free from interference by politicians (Ebekozi et al., 2022). The challenge can happen in practice by appointing people allied with politics to critical positions, directing decision-makers, or directly altering institutional workflows. A lack of independence usually results in selective enforcement of anti-corruption laws, where the initiation or conclusion of investigations and prosecutions relies more on politics than on merit (Carothers, 2022). The interference undermines the credibility and effectiveness of anti-corruption efforts, leading the public to perceive them as political maneuvers rather than genuine efforts to combat corruption (Davis et al., 2021). Developing public trust in these institutions, discouraging corrupt acts, and promoting a culture of accountability can be challenging. The lack of independence fosters an environment in which political interests shape strategies to combat corruption in Liberia.

Inadequate Legal Framework

In Liberia, the public service may encounter challenges in combating corruption because of shortcomings in its legal framework. The gaps represent instances where existing legal frameworks are inadequate, outdated, or nonexistent, which permit loopholes that corrupt individuals can exploit (Emelonye et al., 2020). Additionally, prevailing anti-corruption policies may fail to encompass all types of corruption cases or have ambiguous terms, thereby complicating enforcement (Adams et al., 2020). Legislative shortcomings may lead to instances where illegal activities are, in fact, lawful or where prosecutors lack the necessary legal resources to build comprehensive cases against those accused (Hanson-DeFusco, 2024). Thus far, it is necessary to examine and update the legal system so that anti-corruption laws are comprehensive and transparent, shut down channels for corruption, and enhance the government's ability to enforce against corrupt individuals.

Legal uncertainties in Liberia's legislative structure undermine the fight against corruption in the public sector. Loopholes are the vices or escape clauses in the law that allow rogue individuals to evade the law despite engaging in unethical or corrupt practices (Kuwali, 2024). There may be statutes of limitations that could result in some cases being dismissed before they can be investigated. The loopholes may impact plea bargaining or settlement provisions, whereby corrupt officials are often set free with minor sanctions (Olmos et al., 2022). Likewise, there may be no legal framework to show how this can be achieved; hence, it might lack the legal means to recover the stolen cash from the public. The loopholes can be legal technicalities that lawyers can exploit to have

cases dismissed for reasons unrelated to corrupt charges (Senu, 2020). Eradicating these enforcement gaps may require a systematic approach to legal drafting that closes the loopholes in anti-corruption laws and enhances their effectiveness in the public service.

Limited Accountability

Impunity hinders Liberia's efforts to combat corruption in the public sector. Impunity culture occurs when specific individuals in high-ranking positions or those with close ties to politicians are unable to be charged or prosecuted for their corrupt actions (Han & Rosenberg, 2021). Some factors that explain this include political interference in the appointment of judges, weak enforceable law, and political reluctance to handle cases involving high-profile personalities. Impunity lowers the morale of the public and other junior civil servants because of seemingly freeloading corruption with a low risk of getting apprehended (Nebo Sr, 2023). Impunity creates a cycle whereby officials who profit through corruption can then use their wealth to entrench themselves, making it even harder to prosecute them in the future (Lewis, 2021). Impunity demoralizes people's perception of their government and law institutions, thus escalating corruption cases.

Deterrence failures in Liberia's public service are a significant vulnerability in the anti-corruption policies. The failures occur when the perceived risks and consequences of engaging in corrupt activities are insufficient to deter individuals from engaging in such practices (Dean & Waris, 2020). In Liberia, institutions that prevent corruption and impose penalties on offenders are generally weak, so corrupt officials are likely to go unpunished. The irregularity of anti-corruption laws weakens their deterrent effect (Kromah & Srisuk, 2022). When such incidents of corruption go unpunished or are

punished lightly, it sets a precedent that corruption is acceptable. In addition, when corruption is viewed as a means to ensure economic viability because of low public sector wages, the potential gains of corrupt activities tend to outweigh the perceived costs (Mostaghimi & Zagaris, 2022). The imbalance undermines the use of deterrence as a countermeasure against corruption.

Weak Judiciary

The Liberian judiciary has been facing numerous challenges that threaten the independence of its judges, thereby weakening its capacity to combat corruption. Interestingly, the courts, which are supposed to counter corruption, are not immune to external influence (Kelly, 2020). Such interference hampers the functioning of the justice system by compromising its autonomy, resulting in a loss of public faith (Blum & Rogger, 2021). Similarly, the few independent judges in high-profile corruption cases may be threatened, harassed, or negatively impacted in their careers (Adjolohoun, 2023). Being a constant risk and not knowing what is allowed and what is prohibited may deter judicial members from making decisions that might offend high-ranking officials. As a result, the lack of judicial means prevents courts from performing their tasks in addressing corruption cases.

Liberia's judiciary has limited capacity to adjudicate cases, hindering its ability to address corruption-related cases. Strong and qualified personnel like judges and legal practitioners are scarce, resulting in congestion and numerous backlogs of cases (Kieh Jr, 2010). Another issue is the lack of funds for human capital development and training. This may indicate that the judiciary is inefficient in addressing the complex legal issues

in corruption cases. Additionally, the courts often lack sufficient technological support, which can lead to problems with cash flow and documentation (Bawole & Adjei-Bamfo, 2020).

The absence of technology tools results in issues like delayed workflow, lost files, and tracking issues on the status of cases. Corruption cases are complex, involving numerous financial transactions and substantial evidence, which places pressure on the system. Judges and other court members may lack the specialized knowledge required for today's complex cases, including forensic accounting and cybercrime (Lassou et al., 2021). Consequently, the case may take years to be heard, witnesses may be difficult to locate, or some evidence may deteriorate, all of which hamper anti-corruption work through the courts.

A high level of corruption is facilitated by weak enforcement structures, inadequate enforcement mechanisms, and anti-corruption laws that criminals exploit (Dean & Waris, 2020; Han & Rosenberg, 2020; Kromah & Srisuk, 2021). Similarly, the judiciary is not autonomous and has a limited capacity for adjudication, greatly limiting its ability to combat corruption (Adjolohoun, 2023; Kelly, 2020; Lassou et al., 2021). The problems are synergetic, and only the development and strengthening of the entire system of combating corruption in Liberia will restore the population's trust.

Summary and Conclusions

The lack of strong legal restraints in Liberia's legal framework primarily frustrates efforts to combat corruption in the public service. The weaknesses appear as inadequate, outdated, or lax regulations incapable of regulating the conduct of the public

sector (Young & Nkuintchua, 2023). Rules regarding the financial disclosure of public officers may not be specific or have few means of confirmation. Likewise, the rules against conflicts of interest can be vague, allowing officials to enrich themselves at the public's expense (Kalokoh & Kochtcheeva, 2022). Further, a lack of controls and remedies in managing state-owned enterprises may lead to mismanagement and embezzlement (Louis et al., 2020). The regulators may not be independent or have limited powers to investigate and punish corrupt officials. The weaknesses contribute to the fact that conditions exist for such actions to remain unpunished, as the regulatory framework designed to counteract them is flawed.

While several researchers have explored various issues associated with corruption in Liberia, they have yet to examine citizens' perceptions of the effects of police officers' corruption on Liberia's national security. While researchers have extensively investigated the impacts of corruption on the public and on Liberia's national police, there is a gap in research on its effects on the nation's security (Berg, 2020; Morse, 2020; Nebo Sr., 2024). Therefore, I addressed the gap in the literature by examining how Liberian citizens describe the impact of corruption on national security. However, despite research examining the impacts of corruption on public trust, service delivery, and economic growth, its influence on national security remains largely unexplored. Therefore, in this study, I explored how police corruption influences national security.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

In this study, I employed a generic qualitative approach to understand citizens' perceptions and experiences of police corruption and its impact on national security in Liberia. A generic qualitative method is used to explore individuals' perceptions and experiences of events in their external environment (Percy et al., 2015). I addressed the rising incidents of police corruption in Liberia's public sector, which erode public trust and hinder effective service delivery. Despite extensive reforms to Liberia's national police, corruption cases continue to pose a significant threat to national security (Morse, 2020; Nebo Sr., 2024). Although researchers have studied the impacts of corruption on the public and within Liberia's police, there is a gap in research about its effects on national security (Berg, 2020; Morse, 2020; Nebo Sr., 2024). Therefore, I helped fill the gap with this qualitative study by examining how citizens perceive the impact of police corruption on national security. Although research exists on the impact of corruption on public trust, service delivery, and economic growth, its influence on national security remains largely unexplored. I explored citizens' perspectives on how police corruption affects national security in Liberia.

Chapter 3 is divided into several subsections. First, I explain the chosen research method and design, and how they address the research problem. Next, my role in this study is described, followed by a section on methodology. The methodology section included subsections on participant selection logic, instrumentation, recruitment and participation procedures, data collection, and data analysis. In the next section, I examine

trustworthiness, covering credibility, transferability, conformability, and dependability. The final section outlines ethical procedures, concluding with a chapter summary and a transition into Chapter 4.

Research Design and Rationale

I employed a generic research method to investigate citizens' perceptions and descriptions of police corruption and its impact on national security in Liberia. A generic qualitative method was employed, enabling me to explore participants' views and opinions in their natural environments (see Poth & Shannon-Baker, 2022). The purpose of a generic qualitative research method is to provide participants with the opportunity to describe their experiences and perceptions of the phenomenon studied (Percy et al., 2015). In doing so, generic qualitative researchers strive to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). A generic qualitative research method aims to provide systematic, in-depth descriptions of phenomena or areas about which there is limited knowledge, using human experience.

A generic qualitative research method aligned with this research problem, exploring participants' perceptions of the effects of police corruption on national security in Liberia. Drawing on participants' perceptions, a key feature of the generic qualitative method, I provided detailed insights into how participants described the effects of corruption within the Liberian National Police Service on the country's national security. Another reason for choosing a generic qualitative method for this study is its focus on collecting and analyzing non-quantifiable data. Since qualitative researchers emphasize

providing in-depth descriptions of research phenomena, the data collected are descriptive rather than quantitative (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The purpose of employing descriptive data is to facilitate participants in sharing their diverse perceptions of the research phenomenon (Patton, 2015). This is consistent with the constructivist paradigm, which asserts that meaning differs among individuals and that knowledge is socially constructed within natural environments. In this investigation, non-quantifiable data were collected from participants through interviews (Roulston & Choi, 2018). Given that the research gathered non-quantifiable data, this study deemed it appropriate to examine the current research issue via a qualitative methodology, emphasizing the collection of non-quantifiable data from participants.

Before selecting a generic qualitative methodology, I evaluated alternative research methods and their suitability for addressing the current research problem. The first method considered was quantitative. The focus of quantitative research is to examine a phenomenon by collecting and analyzing numerical data (Patton, 2015). As a result, quantitative methods enable researchers to test hypotheses using numerical data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, they investigate the relationship between independent and dependent variables (Roulston & Choi, 2018). Given the decision to conduct a study on participants' perceptions concerning the impact of police corruption on Liberia's national security, quantitative methods were not used. Therefore, the quantitative approaches were rejected because this study does not involve collecting numerical data to test hypotheses or examine relationships between variables.

The second approach considered but rejected was mixed methods. I tried to collect and analyze both qualitative and quantitative data in a mixed-method study (see Brinkmann, 2013). The goal of combining these data types was to address the weaknesses of one method with the strengths of the other, thereby enhancing the credibility of the results. However, a mixed-methods approach was dismissed in this study because the study did not intend to collect and analyze both types of data (see Roulston & Choi, 2018). After evaluating alternative methods, I determined that only the generic qualitative method was suitable for exploring the current research problem, focusing on providing detailed descriptions of citizens' perceptions of how police corruption impacts Liberia's national security. The inappropriateness of mixed and quantitative methods for this study supported my decision to use a generic qualitative research approach (see Levitt, 2021).

The selected methodology for this investigation was a generic qualitative or descriptive approach. A qualitative methodology is employed when researchers seek to characterize a research phenomenon through systematic, non-quantitative data collection (Brinkmann, 2013). Furthermore, an essential qualitative researcher investigates a research phenomenon by enabling participants to accurately describe its various aspects; comprehensive descriptions afford investigators opportunities to derive new meanings and insights necessary for a profound comprehension of the phenomenon (Roulston & Choi, 2018). Consequently, I adopted a generic qualitative design to examine the perceptions of Liberians regarding police corruption and its implications for national security.

The motivation behind my research on this subject is the rising number of corruption cases involving public officials in Liberia. Since this phenomenon is complex and not fully understood, a qualitative approach is suitable to fill this knowledge gap. According to Kahlke (2014), a qualitative research design allows investigators to explore a complex research problem: citizens' perceptions of police corruption in Liberia and its effects on national security. The fundamental qualitative approach enabled me to focus on the 'what' and 'how' questions, thereby deepening my understanding of the factors shaping public perceptions regarding the influence of police corruption on Liberia's national security.

I evaluated alternative qualitative methodologies, including phenomenological design, ethnographic techniques, and grounded theory. A phenomenological research approach concentrates on participants' lived experiences concerning a particular research phenomenon (Larkin et al., 2019). This approach assists researchers in collecting data to comprehend the meanings that participants ascribe to their daily experiences related to the specific research phenomenon (Larkin et al., 2019). Nonetheless, the qualitative phenomenological design was ultimately rejected, as the study focused not on participants' lived experiences but on their perceptions of police corruption and its implications for national security in Liberia.

I considered an ethnographic design for this study. In ethnographic research, investigators immerse themselves in the target culture to explore participants' culture and lifestyle (Randall & Rouncefield, 2018). However, since I aimed to explore citizens'

perceptions of police corruption and its effects on national security in Liberia rather than their culture, the ethnographic research design was rejected.

I considered a grounded theory design. In grounded theory design, the focus is to develop a hypothesis (Patton, 2014). However, I did not aim to develop a hypothesis and therefore did not adopt a grounded theory approach (see Poth & Shannon-Baker, 2022). The incompatibility of phenomenological, ethnographic, and grounded theory research designs justifies the use of a generic qualitative or descriptive research design to explore and describe citizens' perceptions of the impacts of police corruption on Liberia's national security.

Role of the Researcher

As the principal investigator in this generic qualitative study, my role was pivotal in ensuring the research's success. In qualitative research, the researcher undertakes multiple roles during the study (Poth & Shannon-Baker, 2022). The initial role I assumed was in data collection and analysis. In standard generic qualitative studies, researchers function as the primary research instruments, actively participating in the research process through data collection and analysis. In this investigation, the primary instrument involves engaging in research through data collection and analysis.

Another responsibility of mine was to build a collaborative relationship with participants. Researchers should develop a rapport with participants to ensure collaboration and maximum participation in the study (Patton, 2014). Developing a maximum relationship helps to build trust in the research process. A high level of trust between participants and researchers is crucial in ensuring that participants feel relaxed

and open to participating in interviews without undue influence (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

My third role was to minimize any personal bias. Researcher bias occurs when researchers use their own opinions and experiences to influence the data collection and analysis procedures (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). If not carefully checked, researcher bias can skew the findings, making them less credible, as they will not accurately reflect the participants' views but rather the researcher's perspective (Roulston & Choi, 2018). One potential source of researcher bias in this study was that I have been involved in corruption activism within the Liberian community, advocating for public accountability. Such views may have influenced the study on corruption and its effects in Liberia. However, the primary instrument openly disclosed this information to all participants to avoid its inclusion in the data analysis.

I used member checking and maintained a reflexive journal. Through member checking, participants were allowed to verify the accuracy of the data prior to analysis (Brinkmann, 2013). I used an expert panel to review the research and interview questions, assessing their credibility in addressing the research problem. The expert panel was vital in identifying biases and recommending their deletion.

The final role I played in my research study was to uphold ethical standards. I adhered to all the ethical requirements in this study, including obtaining permission and authorization (Brinkmann, 2013). I obtained and maintained institutional review board (IRB) approval at Walden University before commencing data collection. Participants were asked to sign an informed consent form to participate voluntarily in the study. All

participants' identities and privacy concerns were addressed by using pseudonyms. Research data were stored safely on a personal computer and protected using a unique password. No information from the study was linked to actual identity, even after the 5 years needed to store all research data have elapsed.

Methodology

Participant Selection Logic

The study's target population was comprised of Liberians residing in a suburban area of a northern state in the United States. With the rise in police corruption cases in Liberia, citizens abroad have become increasingly skeptical of police officers' trustworthiness and their duty to fulfill their obligations to the public. This study, therefore, aligned with the research's primary purpose by examining how the public perceives and describes police corruption and its effects on Liberia's national security. Using inclusion criteria, the research sample was recruited from the target population.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a technique in which researchers recruit participants with direct knowledge of the research phenomenon (Campbell et al., 2020). In doing so, researchers are more likely to recruit participants with direct knowledge about the study, thereby increasing the credibility of the findings (Andrade, 2021). Purposive sampling was selected to recruit individuals who had experienced the effects of police corruption in Liberia. Participants were aged 18 years or older and residing in the same city in a northern state. Participants were excluded from this study if they were public servants, senior officers, or under 18 years old.

To determine the appropriate sample size, I used the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The sample size was guided by established recommendations and data saturation. A systematic literature review on suitable sample size conducted by Hennink and Kaiser (2022) indicated that nine to 17 interviews are sufficient for qualitative studies to reach data saturation. Data saturation occurs when no new information emerges from the collected data, indicating that the data are sufficient to draw credible conclusions and references regarding the research phenomenon (Sarfo et al., 2021). Braun and Clarke (2021) suggested that a sample of five to 25 participants is adequate for qualitative studies. Following these guidelines, 12 Liberian citizens were interviewed to gather their perceptions of how police corruption affects national security in Liberia.

Instrumentation

Semistructured interviews were used as the primary data source for this research (Appendix A). According to Roulston and Choi (2018), focus groups and interviews are the primary data sources in qualitative studies. Therefore, I used a generic qualitative research methodology and employed interviews to collect the research data. Interviews are effective in collecting information from participants because they are open-ended (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Using semistructured interviews, I posed probing questions and sought clarification from participants.

Interviews are considered the best data-collection method because they allow researchers to develop working relationships with participants. Qualitative researchers build mutual trust by directly engaging with the participants (Patton, 2014). Trust is crucial in conducting interviews because participants are more relaxed and more likely to

be honest. Virtual interviews were conducted with 12 participants via Zoom audio calling. Each interview session lasted 45 to 60 minutes. Participants' identities were concealed to guarantee their privacy. Alphanumeric codes, for example, YAM1 and YAM2, were used to ensure that participants' real identities were hidden. An expert panel was used to verify the credibility of the interview questions. The expert panel included two Ph.D. professionals with vast research experience. These experts were responsible for reviewing the wording of the research questions, minimizing any potential bias, and verifying that the questions aligned with the problem's purpose.

Procedures For Recruitment, Participation, And Data Collection

Participant recruitment was an important step in the data collection process. To recruit participants, the IRB approval of the research was obtained, and no contact was made until IRB approval was secured at Walden University. Therefore, the first step was to seek IRB approval from Walden University. To obtain IRB approval, a formal request was submitted to the Walden University IRB. The study summary, including research and interview questions, problems, data collection instruments, ethical concerns, potential risks, and significance, was presented to the IRB for evaluation. The next step was to contact the participants. A flyer was developed and posted at churches and community centers to invite the public to the study. The flyer was posted at each location, giving participants the option to contact me to participate. Additionally, the flyers were posted in public squares throughout the selected recruitment area. The flyers included participation requirements, and those who met the criteria were contacted to participate in the study.

The flyer contained information about the research, activities, and contact details to participate.

Participation in the study necessitated that individuals satisfy the predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Specifically, participants were included if they met the inclusion criterion of being at least 18 years of age and residing in a suburban area of a northern state in the United States. Individuals under the age of 18, and those not residing in a suburban area of a northern state in the United States, or who were public servants or officers, were excluded from participation. To participate in this study, individuals were required to meet the specified criteria and to participate in virtual interviews, which are expected to last 45-60 minutes. The selected timeframe ensured that all participants had sufficient time to respond to the interview questions courteously.

Data were collected through virtual interviews. After screening participants for eligibility, the next step was to organize virtual interviews. In consultation with participants, interviews were scheduled at a time convenient for them. Before the interview sessions, participants were reminded of their voluntary participation in the study and asked to provide their approval to the informed consent form. Additionally, participants were informed that no monetary compensation would be provided for their participation in the study. Upon acknowledgment of the informed consent form, data collection via Zoom commenced. I used an interview protocol (Appendix A) during the interviews to ask questions in a standardized manner.

Participants' identities were anonymized through the use of alphanumeric codes, specifically YAM1 and YAM2, throughout the interview sessions. Permission to audio

record the participants was obtained at the commencement of each interview. In cases where participants declined to be audio recorded, I took notes manually during the sessions, and reminded them that audio recording was required in order to include their response in the study. Following the interviews, sincere gratitude was expressed to the participants for their time. Subsequently, I securely stored the data on a personal computer with a unique password. I kept hardcopies of the interview sessions at a private residence in a secure cabinet. The data remained confidential and stored for a period of five years, after which they will be appropriately destroyed.

Data Analysis Plan

The first step in data analysis was to transcribe interviews. This process was conducted using NVivo, and the audio was manually transcribed to align it with the responses. After the process was completed, the next step was to clean the data by asking participants to countercheck the transcription for accuracy, a process known as member checking. Participants were sent their corresponding findings and provided with four days to review and countercheck the accuracy of the interview transcripts. After this period, participants emailed their results back. Upon receiving the counter-checked transcripts, data analysis commenced using Braun and Clarke's (2019) six-step thematic analysis approach.

The initial phase of the data analysis involved gaining familiarity with the dataset. The purpose was to understand the various patterns within each dataset. The interview transcripts were reviewed thoroughly, listening to recordings and reading the transcripts to identify recurring patterns or phrases (Braun & Clarke, 2019). During this stage, each

interview transcript was read at least three times. Throughout this process, potential patterns in the data were noted for subsequent analysis.

Step 2 involves the generation of initial codes. This stage encompasses the identification of common words or phrases within each data set (Braun & Clarke, 2019). This procedure is referred to as code generation. In this study, NVivo software was used to develop codes. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software employed by researchers to analyze, organize, and present qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The interview transcripts were imported into NVivo, and initial codes were generated through systematic reading and rereading of these transcripts.

Step 3 involved amalgamating codes into overarching themes. Following the identification of initial codes in Step 2, standard codes were consolidated into themes or categories (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Related codes were grouped, while unrelated codes were discarded. In Step 4, the themes generated in the previous step were reviewed and organized according to commonalities. Minor and nonconsequential themes were eliminated. The study ensured that the themes directly addressed the research problem and questions. During Step 5, the assignment of appropriate names to the developed themes aligns them with the research questions. The final step entailed composing a report wherein each theme was discussed in relation to the respective codes and their connection to the relevant literature.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness pertains to the degree to which the research findings are credible. Consequently, various criteria may be employed to evaluate the rigor of research

outcomes. Some of the criteria used to assess the study's trustworthiness include credibility, transferability, reliability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Credibility

Credibility refers to how the study findings accurately represent the participants' experiences of the sample under study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Different strategies have been recommended to address credibility in research, including member checking and thick descriptions (Stahl & King, 2020). Member checking is where participants countercheck the accuracy and authenticity of the interview transcripts (Kyngäs et al., 2020). This process ensures that the final transcripts accurately represent the participants' thoughts. In this study, I achieved credibility by allowing participants four days to countercheck the accuracy of the transcripts (Kornbluh, 2015). Interview transcripts were emailed to participants, after which they responded with potential comments.

The second aspect pertains to researcher reflexivity. Reflexivity enabled me to maintain an awareness of the study findings and to document them without undue influence (Adler, 2022). I practiced reflexivity by bracketing each personal viewpoint. Bracketing is a technique whereby the researcher records personal opinions to prevent them from affecting the analytical process. The criteria for establishing credibility include the use of thick descriptions (Stahl & King, 2020). Thick descriptions involve allowing participants to articulate the research phenomenon in rich, detailed terms (Adler, 2022). Such detailed descriptions were facilitated by providing participants with ample time to respond to open-ended questions, thereby enabling them to offer comprehensive insights into their perceptions of police corruption and its impact on national security in Liberia.

Dependability

Dependability refers to the degree to which the research procedures are well-documented and reliable for replicability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The audit trail, the existence of raw evidence, and an in-depth methodological description are some strategies for demonstrating the dependability of the research (Adler, 2022). The audit trail is where detailed documentation of the research process is provided. The aim is to ensure the strategies are well-defined to allow the study's future replicability. In this study, I achieved dependability by keeping an audit trail of all research processes, including participants, descriptions, research methods, data collection, and analysis procedures. The procedures are well-detailed to facilitate future replication of the findings. In addition, I provided a detailed, comprehensive methodological description of the coding process. A thick description of the research process enhances the study's findings.

Transferability

Transferability pertains to the extent to which research findings are applicable to policy, practice, and future investigations, or the degree to which the outcomes of a rigorous study are generalizable to other individuals or contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). One effective strategy for attaining transferability is through the use of detailed descriptions, known as thick descriptions (Stahl & King, 2020). Such detailed descriptions are fundamental in qualitative research, as they provide valuable insights applicable to varying contexts (Adler, 2022). Specifically, this description pertains to the phenomenon of police corruption and its implications for national security in Liberia.

Another strategy to enhance transferability is to ensure sample sufficiency. Sample sufficiency refers to the appropriateness of the sample size in relation to the research phenomenon (Stahl & King, 2020). In this study, sample sufficiency was achieved through adherence to seminal recommendations and data saturation. I determined that a sample size of 12 participants was adequate once data saturation was reached.

Confirmability

Confirmability pertains to objectivity or the capacity of an external party to verify or corroborate the findings of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It can be achieved through coding, which offers a systematic procedure for naming patterns identified within the data (Adler, 2022). These patterns may include ideas and phrases. In this research, NVivo software was utilized to present all codes and their generation processes.

Ethical Procedures

I conducted this study in accordance with Walden University's ethical guidelines. Before contacting participants to collect data, I sought and obtained IRB approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board. After IRB approval was obtained, flyers were posted, and potential participants were contacted. Belmont reports that justice, beneficence, and respect will be upheld (Pietilä et al., 2020). The principle of justice requires that participants be free from discrimination in the study. No study participant was excluded on the basis of discrimination.

The principle of beneficence requires researchers to weigh the benefits for participants. In this case, expected issues like discomfort during the interview are anticipated. The benefits of understanding the effects of police corruption outweigh the

minimal risks. The principle of respect for individuals mandates that participants' rights be honored. One way to respect participants' rights is to protect their identities throughout the study. I concealed participants' identities using alphanumeric codes. Respect for participants was demonstrated by obtaining their consent to participate in the study.

Regarding data storage, I stored all data on a password-protected computer. All hard copies were stored at a home in a secure cabinet. All data related to the study were stored for a minimum of five years, after which they will be securely destroyed. The process of destroying is deleting data from hard disks and shredding hard copies.

Summary

I used this generic qualitative descriptive study to explore how police corruption may influence national security in Liberia. I subdivided this chapter into the following sections: the selected methodology and design, and how it applies to addressing the research problem. Subsequently, I elaborated the researcher's role and provided a detailed section on methodology. The methodology section included subsections on participant selection logic, instrumentation, procedures for recruitment and participation, data collection, and a data analysis plan. I used this chapter to address the study's trustworthiness, demonstrating how credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability were achieved. The final section focused on ethical procedures, culminating in a chapter summary and transition to Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: Results

In this chapter, I present the findings of this generic qualitative study exploring the impact of police corruption on Liberia's national security. The research was conducted within the context of public policy and administration, and I focused on addressing the research question:

RQ: What are the perceptions of citizens impacted by police corruption in Liberia, and how do they view its effect on national security?

To explore the research question, a purposive sample of 12 Liberians residing in a suburban area in a northern state was selected. Data was collected through semistructured interviews. Participants provided detailed accounts of their thoughts and perceptions, facilitating the identification of common patterns and themes. The generic qualitative approach provided a comprehensive examination of participants' perceptions. As Creswell and Poth (2018) noted, qualitative research is particularly well-suited to investigating complex social issues. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework for thematic analysis facilitated data coding and interpretation, thereby ensuring that the themes accurately reflected participants' experiences. Through this rigorous methodology, five principal themes emerged: police reform and training, salary increase, international assistance, equipment and logistics, and issues related to bribery and resource constraints.

The chapter begins with an overview of the study's setting and demographic makeup, followed by a presentation of the thematic findings. It includes direct quotations from participants to support key points and enhance the credibility of the analysis. The

findings are organized to highlight both specific codes and their connection to broader themes, providing a comprehensive understanding of how police corruption undermines institutional legitimacy and endangers national security in Liberia. By presenting these findings, this chapter contributes to the broader discourse on governance and security in post-conflict states, offering insights that may inform policy reform and international collaboration.

Pilot Study

Before beginning the data collection, a pilot study was conducted to assess the feasibility, clarity, and reliability of the research plan. This approach is valuable in qualitative research because they allow researchers to refine interview questions, identify potential issues, and improve their methods before launching the full study (van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001). In this dissertation, the pilot study served as an initial test for the semi-structured interview guide and the thematic analysis framework.

Purpose of the Pilot Study

The primary objective was to assess whether the interview questions generated valuable insights on police corruption and national security in Liberia. The pilot, in addition, evaluated the appropriateness of the sampling method, the functionality of virtual interview platforms, and the researcher's management of ethical concerns, including confidentiality and informed consent. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), pilot studies enhance confidence in the findings by confirming that the research instruments align with the objectives and that participants understand the questions clearly.

Participants and Procedures

Two Liberian citizens residing in recruitment area participated in the pilot study, selected using the same purposive sampling criteria. Both were over 18, engaged in civil society, and knowledgeable about Liberia's policing system. Interviews were conducted virtually via Zoom and lasted approximately 30 minutes each. Participants provided feedback on the clarity of the questions, the length of the interview, and their comfort with the virtual format.

Findings from the Pilot

The pilot study offered important insights. Participants found the interview questions clear and relevant, with no requests for modifications. The virtual setup was effective, making participants comfortable and secure when discussing sensitive topics. It additionally confirmed that purposive sampling was appropriate, as participants shared rich, detailed accounts of their experiences. Lastly, the study underscored the importance of establishing rapport early in interviews to foster openness and trust.

Adjustments Made

Based on the feedback received, no further changes were made to the interview guide, or the research question I kept the original materials and proceeded with recruiting participants for the semi-structured interviews. This process significantly boosted confidence in the research and confirmed the validity of the initial approach. These experiences and interactions helped strengthen the instrument's reliability and enhanced the overall quality of data collection.

Contribution to the Main Study

The pilot study played a crucial role in the success of the primary research. It validated the use of virtual interviews, confirmed the appropriateness of the sampling strategy, and ensured the interview guide aligned with the research goals. According to Yin (2014), pilot studies help refine case study procedures and improve methodological rigor. Conducting this initial phase ensured that the main study would produce credible, reliable, and contextually relevant results.

Setting

This study was conducted among Liberian residents in a suburban city in a northern state that hosts one of the largest Liberian diaspora communities in the United States. This setting provided a unique opportunity to examine views on police corruption and its effects on Liberia's national security. Engaging with this community provided participants with strong cultural, social, and political connections to Liberia, even while living abroad. The diaspora context supplied valuable insights into perceptions of corruption within the Liberian National Police (LNP) by citizens who remain highly committed to the country's stability and governance.

Interviews were conducted via Zoom's secure platform, safeguarding participant confidentiality and providing convenience. Virtual interviews are increasingly popular in qualitative research because they help researchers overcome time constraints while maintaining methodological rigor (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By focusing on the Liberian diaspora in the chose area, I gathered diverse insights that reflect experiences from Liberia and offer critical reflections shaped by distance and comparison.

Demographics

I included 12 participants chosen through purposive sampling to ensure diversity in age, gender, and professional background. Participants were divided into four groups: Group A had three adult males (AM) aged 40–60 or older; Group B had three adult females (AF) aged 40–60 or older; Group C included three young adult males (YAM) aged 18–39; and Group D consisted of three young adult females (YAF) aged 18–39. This setup provided a balanced representation of perspectives across age groups and genders.

Participants ranged in age from 18 to over 60, providing diverse perspectives across Liberian generations. Age diversity significantly shaped the findings. Younger participants expressed frustration with systemic problems, including inadequate training, low wages, and insufficient equipment and logistics. They perceived police corruption as a barrier not only to Liberia's security but also to their individual career advancement in law enforcement. This perspective emphasizes the challenges that young Liberians face in pursuing professional careers in policing.

Older participants, reflecting on their lived experiences, stressed the recurring patterns of governance failures and the necessity of institutional reforms to disrupt entrenched cycles of corruption. They underscored the significance of international support and identified resource shortages that often foster bribery and corruption as survival strategies. Their insights provided historical and structural context to the problem, adding depth to the frustrations voiced by younger participants.

Gender diversity strengthened the study by incorporating insights from both male and female participants, mirroring Liberia's social composition. This range of perspectives ensured the findings encompassed a wide array of experiences, supporting Creswell and Poth's (2018) assertion that including multiple viewpoints enhances the credibility and richness of qualitative research.

The demographic diversity allowed for a multifaceted exploration of research questions. Participants' diverse backgrounds contributed a wide range of data, fostering a comprehensive understanding of how police corruption affects national security in Liberia. This approach aligns with best practices in qualitative research, emphasizing the importance of diversity in obtaining detailed insights into complex social issues. Participants' demographic information is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1*Participant Demographics*

Category	Participant code	Gender	Career
Young Adult	YAM1	Male	University student
Young Adult	YAM2	Male	Businessman
Young Adult	YAM3	Male	Private citizen
Young Adult	YAF1	Female	CNA, Health worker
Young Adult	YAF2	Female	Group Home, CNA
Young Adult	YAF3	Female	Student, Parent
Adult	AM1	Male	Group Home
Adult	AM2	Male	Factory Worker
Adult	AM3	Male	Medical Assembly
Adult	AF1	Female	CNA, HHA,
Adult	AF2	Female	Medical Assembly
Adult	AF3	Female	Medical Assembly

Data Collection

Data collection forms the foundation of qualitative research, supplying the essential raw data for identifying themes, interpretations, and conclusions. (Sutton & Austin, 2025). In this study, the process was carefully structured to explore Liberian citizens' lived experiences and perceptions of police corruption and its effects on national security. Following Creswell and Poth's (2018) qualitative research principles, I prioritized methodological rigor, ethical considerations, and active participant involvement. Semi-structured interviews were the primary method, allowing participants to share their stories freely while ensuring exploration of the research topics.

Research Design and Rationale

I employed a generic qualitative approach, well-suited to examining complex social issues that require contextual insight. Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative research gathers detailed, descriptive data showcasing participants' lived experiences (Yin, 2014). Semistructured interviews were selected because they balance between structure and flexibility, enabling participants to share personal insights while ensuring key topics like training, salaries, equipment, international assistance, and bribery are covered (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

Sampling Strategy

Twelve Liberian residents from a suburban city in a northern State, were purposively sampled. This approach involved selecting participants based on specific criteria: Liberian nationality, age 18 or older, and residency in the chosen location. As Patton (2015) noted, purposive sampling enhances credibility by selecting individuals

with relevant knowledge and experience. The sample was deliberately varied in age and gender, divided into four categories: adult males, adult females, young adult males, and young adult females. This setup enabled exploration of both generational and gender differences, ensuring the results reflected a wide range of experiences.

Interview Procedures

Semistructured interviews were conducted remotely via Zoom, lasting 30-45 minutes each. This approach balanced flexibility with structure, allowing participants to speak freely about sensitive topics. Archibald et al. (2019) observed that virtual interviews are becoming increasingly common in qualitative research, offering greater accessibility and convenience while maintaining methodological rigor.

Each session started with obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and building rapport. Participants were reminded that participation was voluntary and they could withdraw at any point. The interviews were audio-recorded with permission and transcribed verbatim using NVivo, followed by manual transcription to verify accuracy.

Recording and Transcription

Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, ensuring accurate capture of participants' words. NVivo software was used for initial transcription, complemented by manual transcription to verify accuracy and capture nuances, including pauses, emphasis, and tone. For the coding process, I followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework. Manual transcription enabled thorough engagement with

the data, helping to identify subtle insights. Castleberry and Nolen (2018) highlighted that systematic transcription improves both transparency and reproducibility.

Data Validation and Trustworthiness

Ensuring trust in the results was crucial for the robustness of this study. I used Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework to validate my work across four essential aspects: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

Credibility

Credibility indicates trust that the findings accurately reflect participants' views (Stahl & King, 2020). In this study, credibility was established through prolonged engagement, triangulation, and member checking. Prolonged engagement enabled me to build rapport and elicit authentic responses. Triangulation across different age and gender groups enhanced the authenticity by representing various perspectives. Member checking involved inviting participants to review how their interviews were interpreted, ensuring the interpretations aligned with their intended meanings (Birt et al., 2016).

Dependability

Dependability guarantees that the research process remains consistent and reproducible (Adler, 2022). To facilitate this, a comprehensive audit trail was meticulously maintained, documenting all decisions and procedures. Koch (2006) highlighted that audit trails offer transparency, allowing external reviewers to trace the researcher's methodology from data collection to analysis. Additionally, peer debriefing with advisors further strengthened dependability by challenging assumptions and refining interpretations.

Confirmability

Confirmability underscores the objectivity of the findings, ensuring they are grounded in data rather than in researcher bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Reflexivity was essential, with the researcher critically examining personal assumptions and possible influences (Finlay, 2002). Employing verbatim transcripts and systematic coding minimized subjectivity, grounding the results in participants' voices. Direct quotations were incorporated into the results to support interpretations with concrete evidence.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which findings generalize to different contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I ensured transferability by including comprehensive descriptions of the research environment, participant demographics, and results (Geertz, 1973). Although I focused on Liberians in a specific area, providing detailed context helps readers assess whether the findings generalize to similar contexts in Liberia and other postconflict regions.

Ethical Considerations

The entire process was guided by ethical sensitivity. Participants signed informed consent forms that detailed confidentiality and voluntary participation. Instead of names, I used these codes, YAM1 and AF2, to safeguard identities. Data were securely stored on password-protected devices. Lincoln and Guba (1985) highlighted that maintaining ethical transparency strengthens credibility.

Challenges Encountered

Several challenges arose during data collection. Coordinating interviews across work schedules demanded flexibility. Technical issues, including unstable internet connections, occasionally disrupt virtual sessions. Addressing sensitive topics like corruption necessitates gentle rapport-building to help participants feel at ease. Despite these obstacles, the strategies used ensured that data collection was effective and conducted ethically.

Contribution of Data Collection to Findings

The data collection yielded a comprehensive dataset that reflects diverse perspectives on police corruption. Younger participants focused on systemic issues and career obstacles, whereas older participants highlighted governance trends and called for reform. Including both male and female participants added gender diversity, enhancing the findings. The structured data collection method guaranteed credible, robust results that genuinely represent participants' voices.

I meticulously planned and carried out the data collection process while upholding methodological rigor, ethical standards, and trustworthiness. Through purposive sampling, semi-structured interviews, systematic transcription, inductive coding, and validation methods, I uncovered significant insights into how police corruption impacts national security in Liberia. The use of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability measures ensured that the results were solid, transparent, and relevant beyond this specific study.

Coding Process

I conducted the coding process manually to maintain close alignment with the data, resulting in a more personal and careful approach. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, data familiarization was followed by generating initial codes, identifying themes, and then reviewing, defining, and reporting the findings. The codes were developed inductively, ensuring they genuinely reflected the participants' voices rather than fitting into pre-made categories (Saldaña, 2016).

The codes included examples like "low salaries," "lack of training," "bribery," "international assistance," and "equipment shortages." I then organized the codes into broader themes, including police reform and training, salary increases, international support, logistics and equipment, and resource constraints related to bribery. This relational method helped make the findings cohesive and aligned with the study's goals. Table 2 summarizes the themes generated from the codes.

Table 2

Themes and Corresponding Codes

Themes	Associated Codes
Police Reform and Training	Training gaps, accountability, professionalism
Salary Increases	Low wages, survival needs, incentives
International Assistance	External support, United States (U.S.) partnership, and technical expertise
Equipment and Logistics	Lack of vehicles, radios, and modern tools

Bribery and Resource Constraints	Bribery, lack of resources, and a survival mechanism
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Data Analysis

I employed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework, renowned for its rigor and adaptability in qualitative research. The process began with familiarization, during which I repeatedly read the interview transcripts to gain a deep understanding of the data, paying close attention to details and context. Subsequently, initial codes were inductively derived from participants' authentic voices, avoiding preexisting categories. Examples of such codes include "low salaries," "lack of training," "bribery," "international assistance," and "equipment shortages." These codes were then grouped into broader themes during the theme searching stage.

When reviewing the themes, I focused on refining categories to ensure they were internally consistent and externally distinguishable. For example, "low salaries" and "bribery" were grouped under the broader theme of resource constraints. During the stage of defining and naming themes, five main themes were clarified: police reform and training, salary increases, international assistance, equipment and logistics, and bribery/resource constraints.

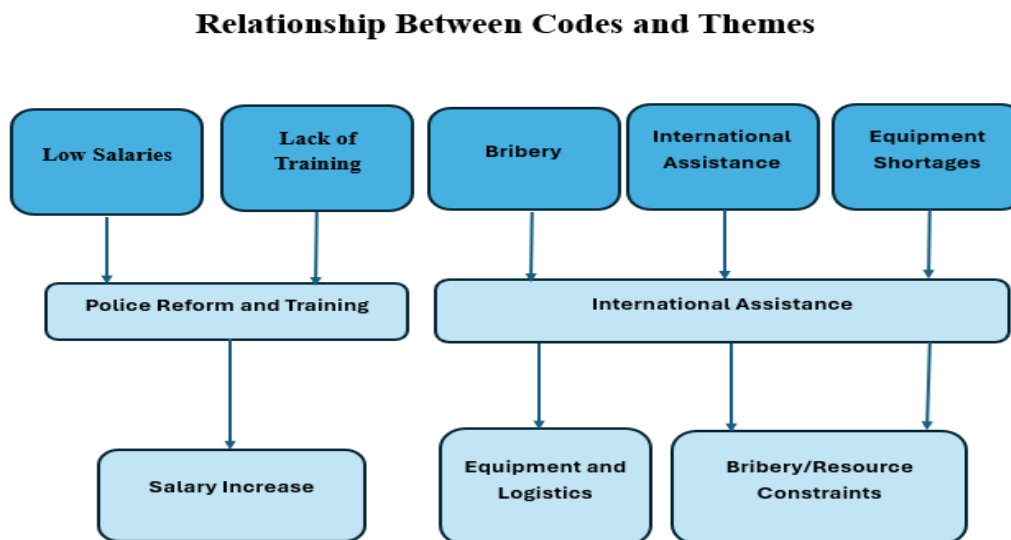
Finally, the reporting stage incorporated participant quotations to illustrate the findings, thereby enhancing credibility and anchoring interpretations in lived experiences. NVivo software facilitated the organization and retrieval of codes, whereas manual coding enabled close interaction with the data. Finally, I strengthened trustworthiness

through member checking, reflexivity, and thick description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These methods improved credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, ensuring that the results truly reflected participants' views on police corruption and national security in Liberia.

Relationship Between Codes and Themes

I conducted this qualitative generic study to demonstrate how individual responses were systematically categorized into broader themes. Specific codes like low salaries, lack of training, bribery, international aid, and equipment shortages were identified directly from the interview transcripts. These codes were subsequently grouped into five main themes: police reform and training, salary increases, international assistance, equipment and logistics, and bribery/resource constraints.

This process follows Braun and Clarke's (2006) advice that themes should represent recurring patterns across datasets, not merely isolated responses. Connecting codes to themes ensured that the analysis was rooted in participants' genuine voices while additionally revealing systemic issues impacting Liberia's national security. The link between codes and themes provided coherence, enabling the study to shift from merely describing the data to offering interpretive insights. Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between codes and themes.

Figure 1*Relationships Between Codes and Themes*

Results

Causes of Police Corruption

Participants highlighted several common causes of police corruption in Liberia, emphasizing the importance of police reform, enhanced training, salary increases, international assistance, improved equipment and logistics, and measures to address bribery and resource shortages.

Participant #1, YAM1, offered an in-depth analysis of the factors driving corruption, emphasizing both internal and external influences. YAM1 stated:

“There are both internal and external factors. Internally, the police have been a substantial presence in Liberian society, even in the period following the civil war. Poor governance and insufficient oversight for most police officers further fueled this issue. Our neighboring country does not even respect our police.”

YAM1's observations aligned with other participants' reports, highlighting the point that without outside support, reforms will not last. Corruption affects national security in Liberia. Several respondents noted that oversight failures and poor resource management foster instability. Participants likewise stressed the close link between corruption and political regimes. Drawing on their experiences and institutional knowledge, they described how government officials intentionally politicized police institutions by appointing loyalists to senior positions and allocating resources unequally based on ethnic or political considerations.

According to multiple participants, these practices generated widespread resentment among civilians and lower-ranking officers. The accounts collectively underscore systemic problems within Liberia's law enforcement agencies and emphasize the urgent need for governance reforms. Tackling these structural issues is vital for reducing future instability and enhancing national security.

Participant #2, YAM2, provided an in-depth view of police corruption, citing bribery and limited resources as key causes. YAM2 stated:

“The primary problem we face comes from the regimes in Liberia over the past decades. They have been corrupted, using the police to shield their illegal activities. As a result, young officers often feel that bribery is their only option to make ends meet, which can be really disheartening. This has led to widespread poverty and a large gap between the wealthy and the poor. The government shows little regard for citizens' concerns, creating conditions that can lead to instability and uprisings.”

YAM2 cited the Rice Riot of April 14, 1979, as an example where peaceful protests turned violent after police intervention, resulting in over 50 deaths and hundreds of injuries (Insights Liberia, n.d.). This highlighted how government neglect and police brutality can weaken legitimacy and cause political instability.

YAM2's argument is backed by evidence indicating that systemic mismanagement undermines the legitimacy of law enforcement and reduces institutional effectiveness. In the Liberian National Police (LNP), persistent corruption across various administrations has exacerbated socioeconomic disparities and caused dissatisfaction among civilians and officers. Additionally, favoritism toward certain police officers, often based on loyalty rather than merit, has further compromised the institution.

The events preceding the 1979 Rice Riot and the 1980 coup, led by Samuel Doe, exemplify this pattern, as favoritism and nepotism within the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) fueled resentment among marginalized officers. These corrupt practices eroded trust in leadership and set the stage for rebellion. Furthermore, YAM2 noted that external factors, including low wages, exacerbate instability. "Low salaries are contributing factors to police corruption, which undermines national security," YAM2 stated. The participant highlighted that government actors' involvement in corruption and favoritism creates an environment in which police cannot perform their duties effectively. This combination of systemic issues demonstrates how governance failures directly promote police corruption and harm national security.

Participant #3, YAM3, noted that police corruption and its threat to national security stem primarily from inadequate reforms, training deficiencies, a lack of

accountability, low professionalism, and bribery. YAM3 noted, “The main causes of police corruption in Liberia are that, often, the government does not ensure officers are held accountable.” Economic hardships and soaring commodity prices worsen these problems. He added,

“Citizens frequently feel they need to recover losses after paying bribes, which creates a ripple effect, increases dissatisfaction, and can lead to instability and unrest. We often see officers struggling because they do not even have the fuel to put in their vehicles.”

YAM3 highlights the link between police mistakes and accountability issues, a common theme in Liberia's corruption studies. The rise in commodity prices and the instability of the Liberian dollar, worsened by President George Weah’s ineffective economic policies, undermined government effectiveness and contributed to the defeat in the 2023 elections. Ceesay (2006) noted that economic difficulties amplify corruption, alienate citizens, and increase dissatisfaction in systems that lack funding and are poorly managed.

Economic pressures frequently result in resource disparities, thereby engendering divisions within law enforcement agencies and subsequently diminishing morale. Scholars observe that corruption, when coupled with economic hardship, heightens dissatisfaction among civilians and police officers, thereby amplifying the risk of civil unrest. Ineffective governance exacerbates these issues, complicating governmental efforts to address grievances or prevent protests. Collectively, governance failures, economic mismanagement, and police discontent constitute the root causes of persistent

corruption and underscore the urgent need for structural reforms to restore public confidence in law enforcement.

Participant #10 AF1 highlighted that police corruption in Liberia primarily stems from the ongoing lack of adequate equipment and logistics for law enforcement. She noted that “although police officers are responsible for safeguarding citizens, they lack the necessary tools to do so effectively. Another problem is that if the salary were fair enough, these officers would not depend on bribery.” This resource shortage diminishes their capacity and erodes public trust. AF1, in addition, noted that government leadership has repeatedly neglected to invest in equipment, reforms, and training to improve the police force's institutional and technical capabilities.

As a result, graduates of the police academy are often perceived not as professional officers but as potential bribe collectors. AF1 observed:

“The new police officers are not properly trained. Meaning, they start by demanding bribes on the get-go, with unprofessional leaders. Some of these officers were considered heroes for the way they started their jobs, shaping the safety of people on the street, but they changed overnight. When someone hears their pay, it is clear that they will steal. This cannot encourage anyone to send their child to the police.”

She furthermore observed that the current emerging leaders and administrators in the Liberian Police lacked the key skills, technical expertise, and legal knowledge required for their roles. This deficiency, compounded by limited reforms and inadequate training, caused inefficiency and increased corruption. The weak culture of accountability

and low salary levels created divisions and ethical issues, often leading to bribery and unprofessional conduct.

AF1 emphasized the need for external support, stating, “External support is needed. The United States (U.S.) partnership and technical expertise can help improve the reputation of the police.” She linked ongoing bribery and corruption to institutional weaknesses and a lack of proper training. Additionally, she noted that each new cohort of graduates from the Liberian National Police Academy tends to adopt the same corrupt practices as those who preceded them, thereby deepening citizens’ distrust and heightening unrest.

This analysis shows how inadequate training, limited resources, and low salaries are connected to systemic corruption in the police, which ultimately creates national security threats for Liberia.

Participant #6, YAF3, noted that police corruption in Liberia is deeply rooted in socioeconomic and political factors, a pattern typical in developing countries. She attributed this to why young people do not see the police as attractive. She noted,

“This issue may not be unique to our country; police corruption is a global phenomenon, particularly in so-called Third World nations. It might surprise people that almost all African countries face some level of police corruption, with only a few exceptions. The causes are mainly socioeconomic and political, including a lack of economic progress, weak government institutions, and a weak police environment. While each West African country has its specific reasons, it is safe to say that this trend is widespread. This is what discouraged us, the young

people, from joining the force. People do not want others to think that they are corrupt.”

Her statement highlights how systemic issues like underdevelopment and weak governance foster corruption in law enforcement. YAF3’s mention of the “lack of meaningful economic developments, including training opportunities for the police,” corresponds with regional trends of economic stagnation and inequality, which often lead to public frustration when faced with bribery requests. She additionally identified “weak and ineffective government institutions, like the justice system, are compromised too,” as a key cause, illustrating how fragile administrative systems fail to address the needs and concerns of the Liberian National Police. “We, the young people, do not see the police as a good option for joining, because the salary is so low,” she noted, underscoring the challenges of maintaining vigorous law enforcement, especially when reforms and training are ineffective.

Empirical evidence supporting YAF3’s points indicate that addressing police corruption and enhancing national security require wide-ranging reforms, including salary increases, improved equipment and logistics, and support from international partners, including the United States (U.S.). Studies indicate that countries that prioritize citizen safety and invest in robust law enforcement training generally experience lower corruption and fewer security problems. Conversely, when governments neglect to reinforce law enforcement, large parts of the population often feel neglected, leading to increased dissatisfaction and a higher likelihood of uprisings.

Research shows that police reforms focused on collective decision-making and community engagement improve public trust in law enforcement. Countries encouraging open dialogue, community policing, and specialized training tend to have more disciplined police forces. These forces are more effective at managing grievances, which reduces bribery and corruption.

These interrelated factors expose the fundamental causes of corruption in the Liberian National Police. Addressing systemic issues, namely training, resource distribution, and institutional accountability, while promoting inclusive community policing, can strengthen resilience and stability within Liberia's law enforcement sector.

The discussions highlighted the severe effects of police corruption and its threat to Liberia's national security. Participant #7 AM1 noted that corruption harms national security and citizens' safety, often causing more harm than benefit from a civilian perspective. AM1 stated:

“In my civilian understanding, the rule of law is the rule of law—no one is above the law. However, sometimes those responsible for enforcing the laws are the ones violating them. This begins with the lawmakers in Liberia. They break the laws, and no one can hold them accountable. If this situation persists, no change will occur, and ordinary Liberians will bear the brunt of these actions. The police need proper training; without that, they will not be able to serve effectively.”

This observation highlights the decline in accountability and respect for the rule of law, which are fundamental to good governance. AM1 noted that while some leaders

and officers strive to uphold the law, those who act ethically are often marginalized and face significant obstacles. He provided an example:

“For instance, at Roberts International Field, when someone follows proper procedures by checking in and presenting their documents, some senior officials will call and request that their family members, who are ordinary passengers, be allowed to jump the line. They call it ‘VIP treatment.’ We cannot expect change if we refuse to follow the correct procedures.”

AM1 linked these practices to broader governance issues, noting that under President George Weah’s rule, criticism often led to repression. He remarked: “In Liberia under George Weah, if someone criticized them while they were in the country, their action could lead to imprisonment, as seen in the case of Henry Costa and others who stood for the right things.” The example of Henry Costa, a radio talk show host and vocal critic who fled to Sierra Leone in January 2020, illustrates how government officials have used police power to suppress dissent and breach human rights.

AM1's analysis underscores the dangers of leveraging state security to target citizens exercising their constitutional rights. He points out that police corruption erodes public trust in the rule of law, obstructs good governance, and decreases citizen participation. While some governments may show short-term improvements in police integrity, the enduring harm caused by corruption—including the suppression of dissent and the undermining of institutional legitimacy—typically outweighs any quick gains. His perspective emphasizes the critical threat posed by police corruption, particularly when officials actively perpetuate it.

Consequences of Police Corruption

Participant #12, AF3, highlighted how police corruption in Liberia has unexpectedly undermined national security, thereby harming fundamental freedoms and citizens' rights. She highlighted the importance of equipment and logistics for the police. AF3 stated:

“During former President George Weah's administration, the police were used to target opposition voices, restricting free speech, press freedom, and peaceful assembly. Supporters of his government, who had not faced adversity themselves, did not grasp the full impact of their actions. The police pay is low, so if big people give them money to hunt a citizen, they will do it. Another problem is, without radios, vehicles, or basic equipment, how can the police do their work properly?”

This observation highlights a common misconception in societies prone to police corruption, where frustration with civilian governments and increased mistrust often leads to the mistaken belief that police can solve broader social issues. AF3's argument echoes a historical pattern in Liberia, in which successive governments have suppressed dissent and curtailed civil liberties, claiming to preserve order and stability.

Restrictions on freedoms of speech, press, and peaceful assembly not only suppress political discussion but also weaken democratic institutions and civil society. These practices promote authoritarian trends and diminish trust between citizens and the state. AF3, in addition, observed that citizens support government measures without fully grasping their implications, highlighting the need for civic education and awareness.

“When people lack understanding of good governance, they become blind to the deceit of corrupt officials, often backing policies that sustain human rights abuses, economic mismanagement, and institutional decline.”

AF3’s reflections align with documented instances of police corruption that infringed on citizens’ rights, indicating that promises of government reform will remain unfulfilled. Instead, cycles of repression and inefficiency persisted. This underscores the urgent need for significant police reforms, including improved training, more equitable resource distribution, and stronger accountability measures. Implementing these changes would help reduce corruption, enabling law enforcement to protect human rights better and serve as pillars of stability and progress in Liberia.

Converging Perspectives on Training and Resources

The accounts of YAF1 and AF1 highlight a shared view of the systemic flaws fueling police corruption in Liberia. Both participants noted that poor training and limited resources significantly hinder officers' ability to fulfill their responsibilities properly and ethically.

Participant #4, YAF1, emphasized the dangers of graduating officers without adequate training and expressed the need for international assistance. Saying: "In my view, police officers lack proper training. International training will make a big difference. Since the war ended, graduates of the police academy have not received sufficient training, often resorting to force against citizens. The only solution is to involve international partners like the United States (U.S.) to help train our police locally."

Similarly, AF1 emphasized that insufficient equipment and logistics are key factors in corruption, stating: “The police have a job to do, but they lack the necessary tools. The new police officers are not good... External support is essential. The United States (U.S.) partnership and technical expertise can help restore the police's reputation.”

These perspectives collectively emphasize how gaps in training, leadership, and resources contribute to corruption and damage public trust. Both participants emphasized the importance of international support, particularly from the United States (U.S.), to enhance police capacity through reforms, training, and logistical assistance. Their insights highlight that unless these structural issues are addressed, the Liberian National Police will continue to face challenges of inefficiency, corruption, and declining legitimacy.

Consequences of Police Corruption

Participant #5, YAF2, highlighted how police corruption hampers government efforts, despite leaders' intentions to serve citizens. She noted that police actions frequently undermine these efforts. She stated,

“Sometimes the government wants to do good for the citizens, but the actions of the police during the discharge of their duties tarnish the government’s performance. Some police officers in Liberia will make up their own laws and use them to discharge their functions. The government needs to pay attention and invest more in the police, especially in logistics, if they want the police to succeed.”

Her critique emphasizes that insufficient training and equipment create opportunities for corruption that bypasses societal standards. YAF2 observed that police promotions and appointments are frequently motivated by loyalty rather than merit, thereby undermining professionalism and institutional integrity. She mentioned the George Weah administration, in which untrained loyalists were recruited into the police, leading to promotions based on allegiance rather than competence. This strategy damaged public trust, stifled innovation, and reduced morale, ultimately weakening law enforcement institutions.

This view aligns with Participant #8 AM2, who highlighted the authoritarian traits of Liberia's police and the need to seek help from outside. AM2 explained: "The police in Liberia function in a command-and-control manner, often ignoring laws and acting as if they are above them. Looking at this, Liberia cannot fight police corruption alone; we need help from partners like the United States (U.S.)." "The fact that government after government uses the police against the citizens is a clear act of dictatorship in disguise.

AM2 highlights that individuals in crucial security positions were untrained and lacked proper equipment. This deficiency in preparedness jeopardized national security because decisions were frequently made without an understanding of established procedures or consideration of the rule of law. Such mismanagement led to inefficiencies and further undermined institutional systems, causing difficulties for ordinary Liberians.

These accounts collectively underscore the broader issues confronting the Liberian police, who frequently prioritize consolidating political influence over building institutional strength and effective leadership. As Ceesay (2006) noted, such practices

sustain corruption, undermine governance, and diminish public confidence in law enforcement.

Participant #9, AM3, strongly opposed police use of force or threats to suppress peaceful protests or critical voices. He stated,

“I do not believe in using violence to make people listen or respect the government. Weaponizing police to commit violence against critics, shutting down radio stations, or expelling fellow citizens is unacceptable. Police should fulfill their duties without causing harm; they exist to protect life and property. If they instead hunt and harm those they should be safeguarding, they have failed the people, and the government’s reputation suffers because of this.”

This viewpoint emphasizes AM3’s commitment to the rule of law, asserting that police must operate within legal and ethical boundaries. He stated that the obligation to protect and serve does not justify harming peaceful citizens or exposing them to danger; instead, it requires integrity and professionalism. AM3 shared a personal story about the harms of corruption: five years ago, in Liberia, he was arrested for filming a police officer accepting a bribe. His issue escalated, and on account of abuses of citizens' rights, he missed his flight back to the US. “I think because they do not get paid well, that is why the corruption continues to happen.” The incident strengthened AM3’s opposition to police misconduct, which he sees as undermining rights and deterring diaspora members from returning to help rebuild the nation.

He additionally emphasized that police lack proper training and expertise, stating, “In my opinion, the police should stay at their headquarters unless there are valid reasons

for them to be out there. They are not properly trained, period, and they need more training.” This view aligns with broader criticisms of police corruption, which undermine national security and public trust. AM3’s firm stance underscores the need to provide comprehensive training, along with improved logistics and equipment, to enable police to perform their duties responsibly. His position is grounded not only in principles but additionally in personal loss, highlighting the human toll of corruption and inefficiency in Liberia’s law enforcement.

Citizens’ Involvement in Reporting Acts of Police Corruption

Participant #11, AF2, highlighted the importance of citizens' active involvement in tackling police corruption in Liberia. She shared that making citizen participation a formal part of the law can really make a difference, giving people the confidence to speak up when they see misconduct. AF2 mentioned,

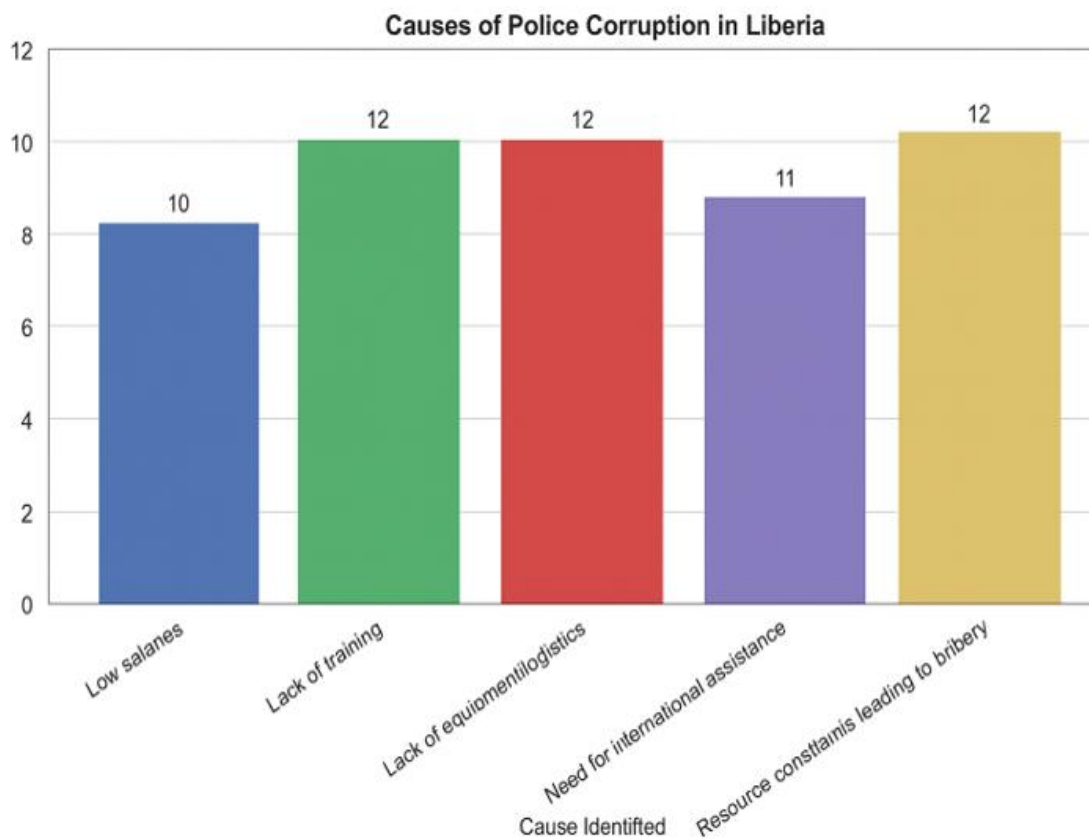
“Reporting the police to the lawmakers and inviting the police director and the justice minister to see the videos of their officers violating the laws or being involved with corruption will help reduce the act of police corruption in Liberia. Corruption is not only about greed, but it is additionally their way of survival in a broken system.”

Using examples from the United States of America (U.S.A.) and other nations, AF2 highlighted that civilian recordings of police misconduct often serve as accountability mechanisms, helping to monitor and regulate officers' behavior. She emphasized, “Let Liberia learn from America or other countries with better policing. We are few, and we should not have to endure mistreatment by the police.”

AF2 further referenced public discourse, recalling a statement from the president on Spoon Live, who remarked that “the police should not think the badge they carry is a hunting license for them to go after innocent citizens.” She highlighted that such sentiments reflect the need for stronger accountability measures in Liberia. To accomplish this, AF2 proposed establishing a specialized reporting system that would enable citizens to capture video and audio evidence of police misconduct and submit it to lawmakers for evaluation. She contended that this method would be an effective means of combating corruption, enhancing oversight, and restoring public trust in law enforcement agencies. Figure 2 illustrates the causes of police corruption mentioned by participants.

Figure 2

Causes of Police Corruption Mentioned by Participants



Evidence of Trustworthiness

Building trust in qualitative research is important because it ensures the results are trustworthy, reliable, confirmable, and can be shared with others. In this study, I used Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework to demonstrate the importance of conducting a study ethically.

Limitations of Trustworthiness

While this study employed rigorous methods to ensure trustworthiness, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, although virtual interviews were convenient,

they might have limited the depth of rapport and the capture of nonverbal cues, which are vital for qualitative insights (Archibald et al., 2019). Second, the member-checking process involved detailed transcript validation, which potentially extended the time required and imposed additional time constraints on participants (Birt et al., 2016). Third, despite maintaining reflexivity and audit trails, the researcher's Liberian background could have influenced the interpretation of the data. Finlay (2002) notes that even well-intentioned reflexivity cannot eliminate bias. Fourth, transferability is constrained because participants were Liberians living in the United States (U.S.), whose perspectives may differ from those in Liberia.

Despite these limitations, the study's credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability were strengthened through transparent methodology, diverse sampling methods, and comprehensive descriptions, aligning with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) standards for qualitative rigor.

Summary of Chapter Four

I use this chapter to highlight key findings obtained from the analysis of participants' responses to the interview questions. My analysis of semi-structured interviews revealed that poor reform, low pay, limited resources, international assistance, and bribery related to resource shortages contributed to police corruption in Liberia. Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, codes were repeatedly generated from data and grouped into themes based on frequency and importance. This clarified how corruption manifests in the Liberian National Police and affects public trust and stability.

I maintained methodological rigor using credibility checks like member checking and peer debriefing. Transferability was supported by detailed context descriptions, dependability through an audit trail and consistent coding, and confirmability via reflexivity and data triangulation. Visual aids like coding frameworks and conceptual diagrams improved analytical clarity. Overall, I used this chapter to lay the empirical groundwork for the study and set the stage for the interpretive analysis in Chapter Five. The subsequent chapter places these findings within relevant literature and theoretical frameworks from public policy, institutional theory, security studies, and corruption research, aiming to develop practical recommendations for sustainable police reform in Liberia.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

In this chapter, I provide a comprehensive analysis of the findings from Chapter 4, highlighting their significance concerning the main research question: The purpose of this qualitative generic study was to explore citizens' perceptions of how police corruption affects national security in Liberia. The study objective was to understand how the public perceives and articulates the impacts of police corruption on Liberia's national security. Using a qualitative research approach with a generic design allowed me to describe participants' views on corruption within the Liberian National Police and its repercussions for national security in Liberia, using the perceptions of Liberians residing in a suburban city in a northern state of the United States who have lived in Monrovia and other parts of Liberia, who volunteered to participate in the study. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews, and Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis steps were used to guide the data analysis.

RQ: What are the perceptions of citizens impacted by police corruption in Liberia, and how do they view its effects on Liberia's national security?

The study drew on insights from 12 Liberian participants living in the selected area to examine their perceptions of how police corruption manifests in everyday life among Liberians, and how it erodes trust in institutions, public safety, and national stability. I begin the chapter by exploring the five main themes identified through my analysis: police reform and training, salary increases, international assistance, equipment and logistics, and bribery and resource constraints. I examined these themes through the

lens of existing research, which clarified how structural issues within the Liberian National Police can lead to systemic corruption and pose challenges to national security. Throughout the discussion, participants' stories are included to provide real-world insights and to make the findings more relatable and meaningful.

Following the interpretation of the findings, I discuss the study's limitations, including sample size, geographic scope, and reliance on self-reported data. These limitations are transparently acknowledged to guide future research and facilitate comprehension of the applicability of the results. I provide detailed recommendations for policy reform, institutional development, and international collaboration. These suggestions are well supported by robust evidence and scholarly insight and aim to guide stakeholders, policymakers, and practitioners seeking to enhance Liberia's security sector.

I conclude the chapter by highlighting the broader significance of the study, underscoring the urgent need for systemic reforms and increased investment of resources to combat police corruption and safeguard national security. The findings contribute to the growing body of research on governance in post-conflict nations and offer practical recommendations for addressing corruption in fragile democracies. Throughout this final chapter, I transition from analysis to action by offering a reform roadmap grounded in the experiences of Liberian citizens and supported by comprehensive qualitative research.

Interpretation of the Findings

This research offers significant insights into how police corruption compromises Liberia's national security. By interviewing 12 Liberian participants residing in a

suburban city in a northern state, five principal themes emerged: police reform and training, salary enhancements, international aid, equipment and logistics, and bribery in conjunction with resource limitations. Each theme underscores systemic issues within the Liberian National Police (LNP) and accentuates broader concerns pertaining to governance, public confidence, and national stability.

Police Reform and Training

All participants highlighted the need for reform and better training in the LNP. Their views align with research indicating that professionalization is crucial for countries emerging from conflict. Bayley (2006) emphasized that democratic policing involves more than technical skills; it additionally requires accountability and transparency. In Liberia, inadequate training has led to misconduct and diminished trust in institutions. Danish Institute Against Torture (DIGNITY, 2018) further noted that weak legal frameworks and limited civilian oversight can foster corruption and abuse of power.

Participants' calls for reform highlight that corruption originates from institutional culture rather than from individual misconduct alone. Without comprehensive reform initiatives, corruption risks becoming ingrained, eroding public trust, and endangering national security. Griffiths (2023) observed that Liberia's security sector reforms have been inconsistent, undermining accountability and professionalism. Wonnawona (2025) stressed that reforms should be locally driven to be successful, as externally imposed changes often overlook key cultural and institutional factors.

Salary Increases

Low salaries are commonly recognized as a key factor contributing to corruption. Several participants observed that underpaid officers often feel compelled to accept bribes to meet their essential needs. This aligns with the Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (2021), which noted that low wages can encourage bribery. Similarly, Transparency International (2025) emphasized that in fragile states, underpaid officials are more vulnerable to corruption, thereby weakening governance and security.

Participants' emphasis on salaries highlights the deep-rooted corruption issues. It's crucial to recognize that officers may not act out of greed but to meet basic needs. Singh (2022) notes that in conflict zones, corruption often stems from economic difficulties and resource shortages. Raising salaries is not only equitable but additionally a strategic step toward enhancing national security. Adequate pay can diminish dependence on bribes and promote integrity, thereby increasing institutional trust and respect.

International Assistance

Eleven participants agreed that Liberia cannot address corruption on its own and requires international assistance, citing collaborations with countries like the United States for expertise, training, and resources. This view aligns with existing literature on capacity-building in fragile states. The World Bank (2013) highlighted the importance of aid in strengthening institutions after conflicts, while the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2025) underlines the role of partnerships in establishing sustainable policing in Liberia.

Participants' call for international assistance underscores Liberia's need for additional external support to supplement its efforts. While reform is essential, external assistance provides necessary resources and expertise for significant change. Griffiths (2023) observed that international partnerships have been crucial to Liberia's security reforms. Nonetheless, sustainable progress depends on local commitment. The participants suggest that Liberia can achieve more effective, durable reforms by integrating external aid with strong local commitment.

Equipment and Logistics

All 12 participants emphasized that the shortage of vehicles, radios, and modern policing equipment is a significant problem. This aligns with the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL, 2016) reports, which detail severe resource deficiencies in the LNP. Without appropriate equipment, officers cannot perform their roles effectively, resulting in reduced efficiency and increased risk of corruption.

Participants' emphasis on equipment underscores the practical challenges faced by law enforcement agencies in Liberia. The absence of essential tools hampers officers' ability to enforce laws and safeguard citizens. This resource deficiency fosters environments where bribery becomes an imperative means of survival. Rose-Ackerman (1999) highlighted that corruption frequently stems from institutional vulnerabilities, particularly when officers are deprived of vital resources. Rectifying equipment shortages is crucial for enhancing operational effectiveness and combating corruption.

Bribery and Resource Constraints

Participants viewed bribery more as a survival tactic than as mere greed. This view highlights how corruption arises from systemic problems, with officials acting unethically on account of structural weaknesses. Kaydor (2024) noted that corruption in Liberia is often linked to resource shortages, leaving officers without the support they need to perform their duties. Similarly, CENTAL (2025) emphasized that the police and health sectors are the most corrupt, indicating deeper systemic issues rather than isolated cases.

The participants emphasize the significance of tackling systemic corruption. Bribery is not solely an act of individual misconduct but is frequently a response to broader systemic issues. To effectively address corruption, initiatives should encompass comprehensive reforms, equitable remuneration, resource allocation, and international cooperation.

Synthesis of Findings

These findings demonstrate that corruption within the LNP constitutes both a cause and a consequence of weak governance. It undermines the rule of law, diminishes public trust, and creates vulnerabilities that may threaten national security. The insights provided by the participants corroborate broader research on corruption in fragile states, highlighting the importance of systemic reform and resource allocation (Rose-Ackerman, 1999; Transparency International, 2014).

The findings highlight the importance of including local perspectives in reform efforts. Participants emphasized the significance of reforms, salaries, equipment, and

international aid, recognizing both internal challenges and external opportunities. Their insights suggest that fighting corruption requires a comprehensive approach that combines local commitment with international support.

Limitations of the Study

In this study, I delineate several limitations that warrant consideration. The modest sample size of 12 participants constrained the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, the perspectives are confined to Liberians residing in a select area, who may possess viewpoints distinct from those in Liberia, directly experiencing police corruption. The reliance on self-reported data introduces potential bias, as participants may emphasize specific experiences over others. Demographic diversity was not a primary focus, thereby limiting insights into socioeconomic or regional variations. Additionally, although the qualitative approach provides detailed insights, it does not facilitate a statistical evaluation of the impact of corruption on national security. These limitations highlight the need for future research by employing larger, more diverse samples and mixed methods to enhance validity.

Recommendations

The findings of this study elucidate systemic challenges within the LNP that compromise national security and diminish public trust. Drawing upon participant perspectives and scholarly literature, several recommendations are proposed to mitigate corruption and enhance institutional capacity. These recommendations are systematically categorized into five areas: police reform and training, salary and incentives, international assistance, equipment and logistics, and anti-corruption strategies.

Police Reform and Training

The initial recommendation is to undertake comprehensive reform and training initiatives for the LNP. Participants collectively underscored the significance of reform, highlighting that officers are insufficiently exposed to contemporary policing practices. Such reform should prioritize professionalization, accountability, and adherence to international standards. Bayley (2006) contended that democratic policing necessitates both technical proficiency and transparency, while Griffiths (2023) noted that Liberia's security sector reform has been inconsistent, resulting in accountability deficiencies.

Training programs should incorporate modules on ethics, human rights, and community policing. Wonnawona (2025) emphasized that reforms must be locally owned to succeed, as externally imposed changes often do not account for cultural dynamics. Implementing accountability mechanisms, like internal affairs units and independent oversight bodies, would significantly enhance reform initiatives.

Salary and Incentives

The second recommendation is to raise police salaries and implement performance-based incentives. Ten participants indicated that low pay is a significant factor contributing to corruption, noting that officers often rely on bribes to make ends meet. The Liberia Anti-Corruption Commission (2021) found that poor pay systems encourage bribery. Singh (2022) suggested that corruption in fragile states frequently stems from economic struggles, with officials lacking sufficient resources to meet their basic needs.

Therefore, increasing salary levels would diminish dependence on bribes and serve as a motivator for integrity. Performance-linked incentives can appropriately recognize officers who demonstrate professionalism and accountability. Transparency International (2014) observed that equitable remuneration is vital for mitigating corruption and reinforcing institutional legitimacy.

International Assistance

The third recommendation is to seek international assistance to aid reform efforts. Eleven participants stated that Liberia cannot tackle corruption on its own and must collaborate with international partners. The World Bank (2013) stressed that international support is often vital for strengthening institutions in post-conflict situations. Similarly, UNDP (2025) underscored the significance of partnerships in developing sustainable policing systems in Liberia.

International assistance may offer technical expertise, training, and resources. Exchange programs with nations that maintain robust policing practices could familiarize Liberian officers with contemporary methods. Griffiths (2023) observed that international partnerships have historically been integral to Liberia's security sector reform; however, ensuring sustainability necessitates local ownership.

Equipment and Logistics

The fourth recommendation is to allocate resources to acquire equipment and logistical support for the LNP. All twelve participants emphasized the significant deficiency in vehicles, radios, and modern law enforcement tools as a critical concern.

UNMIL (2016) documented severe resource limitations within the LNP, noting that officers frequently lack essential tools necessary for their duties.

Investing in equipment would enhance operational capacity and decrease dependence on bribery. Officers equipped with the necessary tools are less inclined to engage in corruption as a means of survival. Rose-Ackerman (1999) contended that corruption frequently arises from institutional weaknesses, in which officers lack sufficient resources to perform their responsibilities. Ensuring a fair distribution of resources across both urban and rural regions would further bolster capacity.

Anti-Corruption Measures

The fifth recommendation is establishing independent oversight bodies dedicated to investigating police misconduct and fostering accountability. Participants underscored that bribery frequently functions as a survival mechanism, indicative of systemic deficiencies rather than individual greed. Kaydor (2024) argued that corruption in Liberia is associated with resource constraints, whereas Center for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia CENTAL (2025) identified police and health-sector workers as the most susceptible to corruption.

Independent oversight agencies have the capacity to investigate misconduct and ensure officers' accountability. Community policing initiatives may further enhance trust between citizens and law enforcement agencies. According to Afrobarometer (2023), Liberians identify corruption and a lack of professionalism as significant shortcomings of the police, underscoring the need for accountability measures. Future research should involve scholars conducting quantitative studies to measure the relationship between

police corruption and national security, complementing qualitative insights. These recommendations provide a roadmap for addressing corruption within the Liberian National Police and strengthening the institutional capacity.

Implications

The study's findings have important implications for social change in Liberia, particularly for governance, public trust, and national security. Police corruption is more than an institutional issue; it is a societal challenge that hampers democratic progress, weakens the rule of law, and sustains cycles of poverty and insecurity. Combining participants' perspectives with scholarly research, this section explains how tackling corruption in the LNP can promote meaningful social transformation.

One of the most urgent implications of the findings is the necessity to restore public trust in law enforcement institutions. Participants consistently characterized corruption as a survival mechanism used by officers; however, such behavior undermines public confidence in the police. Trust in law enforcement constitutes a fundamental element of democratic governance (Bayley, 2006). When citizens perceive police corruption, they are less inclined to cooperate with authorities, report crimes, or participate in civic activities. Such perceptions diminish the state's capacity to uphold order and ensure the safety of its citizens. Addressing corruption with reforms, higher salaries, and resource investment can restore the LNP's legitimacy. According to Transparency International (2014), reducing corruption in law enforcement bolsters the social contract between citizens and the state. In Liberia, rebuilding trust in the police

would improve security and encourage civic participation, thereby supporting democratic consolidation.

The findings underscore the critical role of equity in combating corruption. Officers from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to resort to corrupt practices on account of low salaries and insufficient resources, which compel them to engage in such behaviors for survival. This cycle of inequality undermines social justice. Singh (2022) noted that corruption in fragile states often widens socioeconomic gaps, with marginalized groups bearing the brunt. By raising salaries and supplying sufficient resources, Liberia can foster fairness within its police force. This approach would reduce dependence on bribery and ensure that officers receive just compensation for their work. Enhancing equity in law enforcement has broader social effects, as it demonstrates a commitment to fairness and justice across society.

Participants highlighted that corruption undermines national security by impairing the police's ability to enforce the law and safeguard citizens. This supports Rose-Ackerman's (1999) view that corruption diminishes institutional effectiveness, leading to vulnerabilities that jeopardize stability. In Liberia, still challenged by its civil conflict history, police corruption significantly endangers peace and security. Addressing corruption through systemic reforms can enhance national security by strengthening police capabilities to maintain order. UNDP (2025) emphasized that strong policing is vital for stability in post-conflict countries. By fighting corruption, Liberia can develop a police force that supports peacebuilding efforts and helps prevent future conflicts.

The participants' call for international aid underscores the critical role of global collaboration in promoting social change. Such support can provide technical expertise, training, and resources that Liberia cannot generate independently. Griffiths (2023) pointed out that international partnerships have traditionally been essential to Liberia's security sector reforms. However, for these efforts to be sustainable, local ownership is critical to ensure that reforms align with local culture and specific contexts.

International collaboration offers broader social advantages by fostering global solidarity and shared responsibility for peace and security. By partnering with international organizations, Liberia can access additional resources and expertise, while contributing to global efforts to combat corruption and promote democratic governance. The results further underscore the crucial role of community engagement in combating corruption. Participants noted that corruption erodes trust between citizens and the police, fostering a disconnect that undermines social cohesion.

Community policing efforts can help close this gap by encouraging cooperation between law enforcement and community members. Kaydor (2024) stated that community involvement is vital to enhancing accountability and curbing corruption. Fostering community engagement has broader social implications, as it strengthens social cohesion and promotes collective responsibility for security. By involving citizens in policing, Liberia can create a culture of accountability that reduces corruption and enhances trust.

Finally, the findings highlight the necessity for policy reforms to combat systemic corruption. Participants stressed the importance of improving salaries, training, and

resources, acknowledging the structural roots of corruption. Such policy changes have broader social impacts, demonstrating a commitment to tackling systemic issues and fostering good governance. According to the Center for Transparency and Accountability in Liberia (CENTAL 2025), corruption in Liberia is widely perceived, particularly in the police and health sectors. Implementing policy reforms to fight corruption can enhance transparency and accountability throughout society. This approach would not only improve law enforcement but also support broader initiatives to reduce corruption in other areas.

Conclusion

I conducted this qualitative study to explore how police corruption impacts Liberia's national security, based on interviews with 12 Liberian residents in a suburban city in a northern state of the United States. Using thematic analysis, five themes emerged: police reform, salary increases, international aid, equipment, and bribery. These systemic issues within the LNP weaken legitimacy, public trust, and security. The findings show corruption stems from structural problems like poor training, low pay, lack of equipment, and limited modern policing, which hinder law enforcement and stability. Addressing these issues requires domestic commitment and international support through reform, better training, higher salaries, technical aid, modern equipment, and anti-corruption measures. Without reform, corruption persists, damaging trust and security. Reform can create a police force that enforces laws, protects citizens, and boosts security. This research highlights that tackling corruption requires institutional reform, social change, democracy, and peace-building, especially in fragile states.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

- I. Introduce yourself to the participant(s).
- II. Present the consent form, go over the contents, and answer questions and concerns of the participant.
- III. Participant(s) sign consent form.
- IV. Give the participant a copy of the consent form.
- V. If you are using a recording device, turn it on.
- VI. Follow the procedure to introduce participant(s) with pseudonym/coded identification; note the date and time.
- VII. Begin the interview with the first question; follow through to the final question.
- VIII. Follow up with additional questions.
- IX. End interview sequence, discuss member checking with participant(s)
- X. Thank the participants for participating in the study. Restate contact numbers for follow-up questions to clarify responses and ensure my understanding of their answers, and address any concerns from participants.
- XI. End protocol

Appendix B: Interview Protocol/Interview Questions

Research Question

RQ. What are the perceptions of citizens impacted by police corruption in Liberia, and how do they view its effect on Liberia's national security?

Interview Questions

1. How old are you?
2. Are you aware of police corruption in Liberia?
3. How would you describe it?
4. In your opinion, what are the main ways police corruption affects the daily lives of citizens in Liberia?
5. What effect do you think police corruption has on Liberians' overall safety and security?
6. What are your thoughts on how police corruption could impact the country's efforts to maintain national security integrity?
7. What do you believe are the main causes of police corruption in Liberia?
8. What steps do you think could be effective in minimizing police corruption and enhancing national security?

Probing Interview Questions

1. Can you provide specific examples or incidents that demonstrate police corruption you have witnessed or heard about?
2. How do you think police corruption affects citizens' trust in law enforcement and government agencies in Liberia?
3. How can police corruption facilitate or back criminal activities that pose a threat to Liberia's national security?
4. How do various communities or regions in Liberia view police corruption?
5. What role do you think government reforms could play in tackling police corruption and improving security?
6. What role do you think international and regional organizations could play in helping fight police corruption and improve security in Liberia?