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Broken Silences: Breaking the Code of Silence to Hold Corrupt Traffic Police Officers Accountable in South Africa

Shaka Yesufu

PhD, Management Doctoral Candidate, The Da Vinci Institute of Business, Modderfontein, Johannesburg, South Africa

Corresponding Author: Shaka Yesufu

Abstract

Traffic police thrive in countries where anti-corruption strategies put in place are not working effectively. The driver who gives money to the traffic police officers are both corrupt under South African law. Traffic police officers are very scared to report their colleagues as some of them are protected by managers. Officers are concerned about the risk of harm and safety of their lives if they report their colleagues for corruptive and unlawful acts. This is a qualitative research study where thirty serving traffic police officers currently serving in Gauteng Province South Africa voluntarily took part in a tape-recorded interviews session. Some of the key findings of the research are:

Corruption is rife and spread very fast at a very high-velocity rate, making it difficult for anyone to mitigate or control it [21]; the management team and junior-ranking traffic police officers do not fully accept the blame for traffic police corruption; each blamed the other for it; traffic

police managers deliberately ignore corruption incidents whenever reported to them; managers protect corrupt traffic officials and, in some instances, are more corrupt than junior officers; traffic police officers stated that they will not report or arrest their colleagues for corruption for fear of any reprisals, sanctions, or the safety of their lives and do not want their colleagues to lose their jobs; poverty levels have increased among traffic police officers due to a high cost of living and salaries are not enough to provide for their families; greed has made it impossible for traffic police officers to resist the urge for corruption; the government needs to do more to fight corruption, and it puts too much effort into fighting it from the top to bottom levels. The author provided the reader(s) with eight key recommendations to promote a zero-tolerance environment within traffic policing environment in South Africa.

Keywords: Traffic Policing, Corruption, Bribery, Crime, South Africa, Police Culture, Code of Silence, Police Accountability

Introduction

Nearly three decades ago when I first joined the British police, it was a professional taboo and scarcely unheard about for one police officer to speak out against one's colleagues breaking the law because of fear of isolation. The few officers who did so ended up being isolated and severely victimized by their colleagues and managers. Most police officers knew a code of silence existed in the police service only after they joined the service. Though not legally enshrined in the police constable oath of office. Majority of police officers black or white subscribed to it either consciously or subconsciously. As police constable you expected to obey the order and dare not question those in position of authority who gave those orders. The police culture promotes a culture of Machismo; men do not cry or show emotions encapsulated in the belief that male officers are trained and conditioned to bottle things up, always want to be seen as tough, firm and with hardened image personality. The notion of the no nonsense policeman became a bravado trait to be able to arrest criminal or take in prisoner all by yourself with little or no assistance. One of the dangers of bottling things up and not been allowed to show one's emotions is that the officer is like a major incident waiting to explode in any giving situation. The police culture can make you forget your identity, values and believes system often replaced by cynicism, women sexual and misogynistic jokes become part of the job vocabulary, same way racist jokes flourished and funny name calling for very old people were all a common feature of policing. For many years, sensitive and derogatory jokes were seen as an officer having a good sense of humor regardless of who is the victim. How pathetic?

As a police researcher, I knew from my experience that researching policing was not going to be easy. First, was not only one of them but as part of the management team (Senior superintendent of police) equivalent to Colonel in the South African

Police service rank structure. I was not the best person for the research participants in this study to speak to about their perceptions of corruption and to give reasons why they have been protecting their corrupt colleagues for several years? This barrier led to the appointment of five field workers to interview thirty participants in my absence. First, I wish to commend every participant's voluntary effort in making time to take part in the interviews. Second, for voluntarily taken the high risk to speak against their colleagues. Third, is the hope that the public benefit from some of the shocking revelations. This study was not designed to punish traffic police officers but to make them provide for us a professional and better service.

Methodology

Justification of conducting a qualitative research design:

1. Qualitative research is better suited for the exploration of a social phenomenon such as human behaviour which is complex to quantify in numbers.
2. The researcher is persuaded that a more realistic feel of the social world of traffic police officers cannot be experienced using numerical data and statistical analysis alone. In order to fully understand the social world of traffic police officers and their lived experiences and more human engagement approach is needed provided by adopting the qualitative method.
3. Qualitative design by its nature is exploratory. Interviews are used to depict a true picture of the research problem and responses solicited are facts because the information given is from primary sources.
4. Qualitative research allows the researcher to have the opportunity of reflexivity which in most cases leads to reliable and valid research. For example, the use of semi structure interviews allows the researcher to have firsthand knowledge information, opportunity to probe the answers given to the researcher, and to verify facts as they are presented to the researcher.
5. The researcher acknowledges the distinction between conducting and qualitative or quantitatively as follows: the qualitative research is said to be exploratory by its nature of the design in the collection, analysing and interpretation of data facilitated by human behaviour. While quantitative research arises out of data collection, analysis of it and the interpretation of it by observing figures, statistical analysis and numerical patterns.

Assumptions on which Research is Based

The study is based on the following assumptions:

1. Police corruption is pervasive in South Africa [1-3].
2. General Systems Theory will assist us in finding a lasting solution to policing behavioural intent often manifested in systemic corruption [4, 5].
3. Traffic Police officers will voluntarily report their colleagues found soliciting a bribe from motorists [7, 8].

It became imperative for the researcher to use gatekeepers because participants were not coming forward for fear of reprisal. Some of them alluded to the field workers not wanting their managers to know what they said during the interview. The field workers and gatekeepers assured participants that the information given to them would be treated with strict confidence. The field workers and gatekeepers also interviewed both junior and senior traffic police officers to triangulate for any possible misalignment. Traffic police officers from Gauteng Province were selected.

Most of the participants were chosen from Gauteng Province for two reasons. First, Gauteng Province is the most populous province in South Africa. It has five traffic police departments NTP, JMPD, Tshwane Metro Police (TMPD), EMPD, and Gauteng Provincial Traffic Police. Second, this gave the researcher various participants from these departments. The age of participants varied from 25-65 years due to operational reasons. A three-year minimum length of service was set as a criterion. Due to the researcher's senior rank in the traffic police, the researcher had no direct contact with the participants as most of them would not be comfortable if the researcher conducted the interview. Corruption is a severe challenge in traffic policing, and most officers are unwilling to discuss it mainly due to fear of reprisal that may emanate from doing so. To overcome these challenges, the researcher appointed three field researchers and two gatekeepers to assist in interviewing all 30 participants. The confidentiality of all participants was protected, and interviews were conducted at venues to be determined by the participants. Their participation was voluntary, and there was no payment for their participation.

The author sent out letters to all five police departments, notifying them to nominate officers willing to participate in the research. Once the numbers are identified, the appointed field researchers conducted the interviews. The researcher trained all field interviewers in the PEACE interviewing techniques model popularly used in the British police detective units to conduct interviews. All field researchers attended a compulsory one-day short course interview training provided by the researcher before they commenced the interview session with the participants. The PEACE method of interview is an abbreviation standing for P- Planning and Preparation, E- Engage and Explain, A- Account, C- Conclusion, and E- Evaluation is PEACE. The cognitive interviewing techniques allow the participants to tell their stories uninterrupted and invite probes only, when necessary, at the end of the interview. Probes are only used for clarity and if the participant(s) have anything to add to what they have already said. The interview gives room for continuity, and participants can be re-interviewed later if any ambiguity arises. But first, the interviewer must build a good rapport with the interviewer to facilitate the free flow of information, balancing it with the conversational management skills of the interviewers. All interviews are taped and recorded, and all information gathered will be handed over to the researcher for complete analysis. Although the researcher's choice of sampling in this research is purposive sampling, other types of sampling will be briefly explained by the researcher as follows:

Purposive Sampling

According to [8], purposive sampling is a sampling technique in which the researcher relies on their judgment when choosing the number of people to participate in the study. Dahl (2023) and Gill (2020) suggest that purposive sampling is a non-probability method because samples are selected solely based on the researcher's judgment. It is designed to save time and money. It is the most generally used sampling technique in qualitative research. The researcher chose the purposive sampling technique and argued that all his participants were traffic police officers or had knowledge of working in a policing environment. First, the research is meant for a particular purpose, which is to

explore police corruption. Not all citizens can participate in this kind of research. Second, the researcher argues that purposive sampling is one of the most cost-effective and time-effective methods. Third, the sample units of my participants will be selected from mainly 30 serving traffic police officers and police managers from police departments in Gauteng Province. The researcher's list of criteria for choosing a person to participate in this study is as follows:

- Must be a South African national or hold a permanent residency status (it is a requirement under the National Road Traffic Act of 1996).
- Participants must be between the ages of 25-65.
- Consent must be given by participants (ethical clearance is a professional guide for researchers).
- 3-35 years of service (must be familiar with the research questions and traffic policing environment).

The size of the sample in this research is 30 in total. The researcher will conduct a pilot study with three participants to test the research strategies. The pilot study tests the researcher's ideas or methods and explores their implications. In qualitative research such as this, a pilot study can be used to create an understanding of theories and concepts that are held by the individuals that are being studied. It can also provide an understanding of the meaning of the phenomenon and events for those involved, as well as the perspectives that influence their behaviour.

Gate Keeper

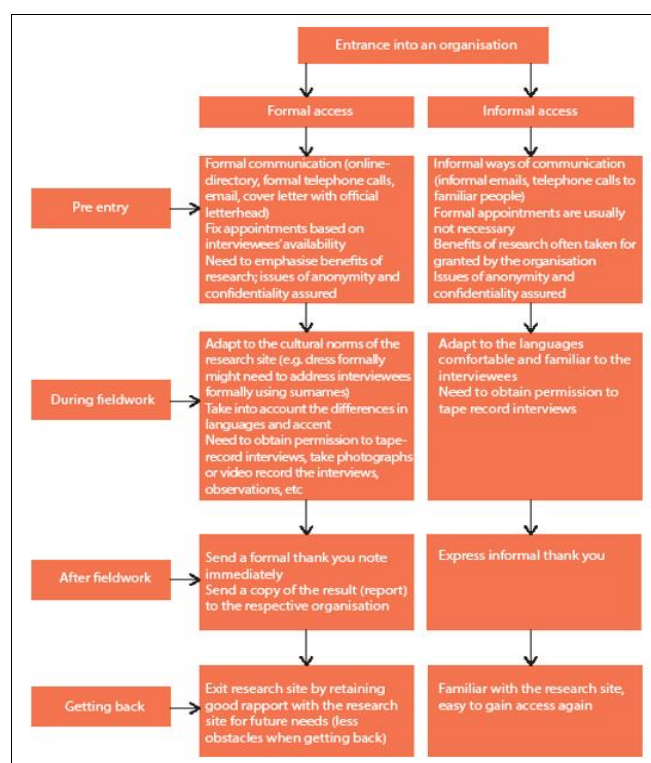


Fig 1: Gatekeeping and Strategies for Gaining Access

Adapted from: Johl & Reganathan, 2010 ^[11]

Accessing some organisations to research their data can sometimes be complex. Researchers can rethink their strategies for gaining access to a complex study site. They are allowed to place a careful, mutually respectful access agreement that considers the needs and vulnerabilities of the participants, field workers and gatekeepers ^[13]. The entrance into any organisation to conduct research can be formal or

informal. All organisations have an autonomous right to permit or deny access to their information, personnel, or clients to participate in research. Gatekeepers play an essential and undervalued role in generating good research data. Research within a policing environment presented three challenges: Field delays due to bureaucratic delays, Misapprehension, and trust-building challenges. Reports of fear and mistrust in the police underline the low public-police cooperation ^[14].

Gate Keeper Justification

After field workers conducted the pilot study, the researcher noted about ten serving traffic police officers (participants) withdrew their consent to participate in the study due to fear of reprisal. In one police department, one of the senior managers wrote to the researcher that one condition is to allow him to sit in during all interviews to observe. It turned out that most of the traffic officers who pulled out were predominately low-ranking traffic police officers. The author found this request intimidating and an abuse of power and position. The researcher declined this offer because the researcher must protect the participants, consider their fears, and respect their human dignity. Coupled with these challenges, the researcher received few hostile communications from traffic police chiefs. One can gather from this communication that traffic police officers trust researchers; whatever goes on with traffic police must be kept out of the public domain.

The atmosphere of fear made participants prefer speaking to field workers privately. In this study, the researcher followed informal access to traffic police departments, bearing in mind the characteristics associated with informal access to an organisation presented in the above table. In this study, each traffic police department had its appointed gatekeeper responsible for setting up meetings between the field workers and the participants. The gatekeeper is a serving traffic police officer tasked to look out for traffic officers who would voluntarily participate in the interview. While conducting interviews, the researcher encountered another problem: female traffic police officers were requested to be interviewed only by female fieldworkers. The researcher granted their request understandably because some female officers have been subjected to psychological abuse by corrupt male traffic police officers. Being asked to be interviewed by another male interviewer shows a lack of sensitivity to some of the problems affecting them as female traffic officers who live in fear of reporting their male colleagues even when they are seen soliciting and taking bribes from motorists. Many have learnt to look away from the problem of corruption among colleagues to keep peace in the workplace. One of the few lessons the researcher learnt is that traffic police officers do not trust researchers. They assume most researchers are on a fact-finding mission to expose their unlawful corruptive behaviour. This makes them very defensive and evasive when the word "research" is mentioned. Members of the public also mistrust traffic police officers. This identified fear and suspicion have created them and our society. The traffic police need the public to support them in the same way members of the public need traffic police officers to serve and protect them. The researcher argues that it is only when both fears are overcome that traffic police officers will be more effective in making our roads and community safer.

c. The participants gave short responses.

Most answers provided by participants were short. The fieldworkers used probes only for clarity and questions to solicit more answers from participants. As a result, some information withheld from the field workers was later divulged. Some of the questions were reworded to accommodate more open questions.

Data Collection

“The data collection steps include setting the boundaries for the study through sampling and recruitment; collecting information through unstructured or semi-structured observations and interview, documents, and visual materials; as well as establishing the protocol for recording information” [15]. First, the researcher carried out a qualitative research study with 30 participants as his sampling frame, all of whom are currently serving members of the NTP, Metro Police, and Provincial Traffic Police. The researcher will conduct a semi-structured face-to-face interview using a prepared questionnaire consistent with the research topic. In doing so, the researcher used open-ended questions to elicit the participant’s views and opinions. This enabled the researcher to enter the participants’ social world. Second, the researcher reviewed audio-visual and digital materials, including visiting several websites, visual narratives, video clips, and social media. Third, the researcher made use of official reports and personal journal diaries. Fourth, the researcher used a taped recording device, and all interviews were limited to 30-45 minutes for each participant.

Data collection is a research process carried out by the researcher in every study. It enables the researcher to gather and analyse data from different sources. Data collection provides informed answers to the researcher’s objectives, problems and questions related to the study [16]. The data collection provides the researcher with possible and constructive outcomes by gathering evidence from the available samples. Data collection provides a platform for the researcher and participants to engage in meaningful discussions about the study. In this regard, the researcher’s adoption of semi-structured interviews not only provides an opportunity for the researcher to elicit information from participants but also provides an avenue for the researcher to clarify and probe the answers provided during interviews. All answers provided by participants are not taken at face value; they are subject to evaluation and interpretation for meaning. Semi-structured interviews allow flexibility, accommodating surprises, disappointments and the unexpected in keeping up with interview schedule. Data collection can be grouped into two headings: Primary data collection and secondary data collection. Primary data collection involves collecting original data directly from the identified source(s) [17].

In order to solicit responses from participants, the researcher posited questions to all participants on.

Research questions and participants response

1. How Rife Is Corruption Within Traffic Police?

All participants responded to this question and stated that corruption was very rife within traffic police. Their responses below are as follows:

According to P1,

“Corruption is very rife in traffic. I cannot speak to all my colleagues in this regard. I can only give an estimate of 80%

of traffic police officers have been involved in one form of corruption or the other. Although many of us will not voluntarily admit to it for fear of losing our jobs. If you look at the way documentation is done within traffic police, it leads to corruption because there is no proper accountability or supervision. In some cases, many of these documents are cooked up by officials to cover their backs.

P2 stated that:

“Corruption is very rife. This can be evidenced from the daily arrest reported in the media of traffic police officers taking bribes from motorists. I also recognise the fact that not all my colleagues who are corrupt are arrested. That does not mean that corruption is low. It means that corruption is a hidden thing done in secrecy.

P3 explained that:

“Yo! Corruption is very high to the extent that some of us find it difficult to do our job without motorists offering us a bribe. To the motorists, everyone in traffic uniform takes bribe full stop. Several colleagues who we know takes bribe are reported, but our supervisors continue to protect them for reasons I do not know.”

P4 stated that:

“Corruption is very rife in traffic; it is difficult to find a traffic police officer who will honestly admit that they have seen corruption or even participate in corrupt activities. I tell you there are very few. I cannot put a number to it. But I will say about 70% of traffic police officers are corrupt, the other 30% are not”.

According to P5,

“Corruption is part of us in traffic; it is also part of our community. Everywhere you turn to in our country, you find corruption at the workplace, police stations, government officials, private bodies. Corruption is rife in our society, not just rife within traffic police. Corruption is destroying us; people are in to make money and not to serve their communities”.

P6 explained that:

“To ask me how rife corruption in traffic police is like asking me whether we breathe air in oxygen. Corruption in traffic police is obvious for everyone to see. It is no longer some news to south African that traffic police officers are bribe takers from motorists. It only becomes a news headline when a traffic officer refuses to take a bribe from a motorist and to make an arrest of drivers offering a bribe. Such behaviour defies the expected norm of traffic police officers and the “cold drink” stereotype that have carried for years”.

P7 stated that:

“Corruption is shamefully very high in traffic. Our love for material things we cannot afford seems to have taken over our thoughts. The culture of getting things free (Mahala) is on the rise. To be dishonest is seen as been very smart. Criminality is seen as side hustling. I don’t get all this. How do you take an oath of office to become a traffic police officer, and you want to side hustle at the same time? You can see there is already a conflict of interest here from the onset”.

P8 “corruption is very high with a high number of us doing it.”

P9 explained that “corruption is very high and rife in traffic police in EMPD. You can see from the news how some of our officers were arrested by RTMC soliciting bribes from motorists. I cannot look my children in the eyes when these arrests are shown on Television. My profession has brought shame to me sometimes due to some colleagues unlawfully asking for money from motorists. In some instances, you hear in the news how motorists are escorting motorists to cash points to withdraw money armed with a gun. This is not only corruption but robbery in uniform. We need to go back to the table and to flush out those of our colleagues.”

P10 stated that “corruption is very high in traffic policing and has also contributed to our reputational damage in the eyes of members of the public who see all of us as very corrupt”.

P11 explained that:

“Corruption is very high; it is a norm for most of us. Corruption has become part of us and normalised. If you do not take part in corruption, your colleagues think you are either stupid or trying to portray yourself as a good traffic officer. In some cases, colleagues become uncomfortable with you because they are always thinking that you are going to sell them out one day to authority”.

P12 stated that:

“Corruption in our department is spreading like wildfire. It is a norm among us traffic officers to see corruption take place and for us to look at the other side. In some cases, you stop a driver on the road, you find several faults with the vehicle. Instead of asking the driver to fix his car, we are thinking how the driver will make payment to us for each of the identified faults. We are no longer working for the government but for ourselves. If a traffic officer refuses a bribe, motorists are mazed of how come you are refusing to do the normal thing as this what they do every day with my colleagues. You can tell from the confidence of the driver that the driver is telling the truth about my colleagues”.

Main Question 1: How Do We Mitigate Corruption in the Traffic Police Within a Specific Socio-economic Context?

P1 reported:

“It is very difficult to mitigate police corruption because all ranks are involved in corruptive acts. Corrupt officers among us are giving all of us a very bad name. Corruption is very high. In terms of social context, you know we all do not have the same socio-economic background. Our family and the community also differ. Our life experiences when we were growing up cannot be the same. Our economic status is also not always the same. Our family background also differs. To mitigate in relation to economic context means expecting officers to be content with their salary, plan their lives with the salary they get, and stop greediness. A self-introspection of why they joined traffic police would be a good starting point as we all joined them for different reasons.”

P2 explains that:

“Not sure how to mitigate against the socio-economic

context of traffic police officers. I can only say. Traffic officers must follow their oath of office to serve the people of South Africa. If they do, corruption will be mitigated.”

P3 stated that:

“A forum must be created where traffic officers meet regularly to discuss the impact of corruption and how it affects their work. As a deterrence, I think more traffic officers must be arrested, charged, and convicted for corruption-related offences. Corruption must be fought from the higher ranks above and not from below to the top as we currently have it”.

According to P4:

“This question is a very complex one. It is very difficult to mitigate corruption within our profession. I am looking at the social context from the perspective of our family background. The family unit is the first social one for most of us. A child, as you know, is born into a family. He/she comes into the family environment and observes what the older family members are doing, how they interact, socialise, communicate, behaviour, religion, and what is good and bad. Every family has a culture; the child follows the culture of his parents. If my parents are violent people, will learn from them, if they are thieves, I will learn from them. When I joined the traffic police, I had already learnt how to become a thief from my parents. My religious, cultural, and moral upbringing as a child plays a part in my personality. A child raised in a home where crime is seen as normal will easily become a bribetaker because as child, he/she was brought up to believe that there was nothing wrong with committing crime. One year of traffic police training will not change that officer's reasoning”.

P5 stated that:

“The family is my first contact point as a social being. In some families, violence is the order of the day, women are beaten up by men for their role in the family as a mother and wife. Police are called to break up families fighting in the presence of their children. A child who grows up in this environment may be influenced by thinking that violence is the solution to things. Suppose a child's nurturing environment is contaminated with their parent's behaviour. In that case, the traffic police as training institution is not in a position to alter a person's way of life and behaviour because most of us are adults and not children. It is difficult to teach adults about behaviour they already know in their families. A child who is not brought up properly by his/her parents may turn out to be problematic in their communities. For these reasons, you can simply understand why it is difficult to mitigate corruption in our jobs as traffic officers”.

P6 explained further that:

“We are socialised into religion when growing up as children; our parents take us to the church, and we are baptised and taught the ten commandments, and one of them is that: thou shall not steal.” This moral lesson stays with us for the rest of our life. Some grow up to abandon the message not to steal due to the work they do or the environment of the work. Corruption is stealing from motorists no matter how you choose to look at it. It cannot be justified. We cannot talk about mitigating corruption in traffic when our selection process is flawed. We must

review our selection process first making sure the right candidates are selected.

P7 elucidated more,

"It is difficult to mitigate against corruption in traffic fraternity. When I joined 35 years ago, corruption was not obvious. Most officers played it with the book, and it was a shameful thing to be accused of corruption. If you are caught to be corrupt, you are dismissed on the spot. But within the last ten years the training school has changed in terms of how traffic police officers are selected and trained. Too much emphasis on theory than practical. Youngsters are coming into traffic policing without much enthusiasm for the job. Our profession no longer looks like a calling to me anymore but more a job to pay the bills. If we are attracted more to economic gains (salary) than the calling to serve our people, we have a problem at hand. The economic pursuit we take over is providing a professional service to the people. Lust for money may lead to traffic officers breaking the law. Just coming out of traffic police college, motorists are throwing money at you, it becomes very difficult to mitigate the urge and want that money commands. Over the years I have seen very brilliant officers who started very well but ended up been dismissed for corruption".

According to P8,

"The community with a high crime rate where we grow up has an impact on our perception. Each time I visit my local Shebeen, I see a few people buying drinks for friends. They do not have a means of livelihood, but they command respect for the money they spend. Beautiful ladies are very much attracted to them because they have a reputation of spending money more than normal. In some instances, I may become influenced and want to know who this respectable spender is. I am happy to follow him because of the economic power displayed. I do not have a chance to question the source of his money. Traffic police environment is similar. Some colleagues will display their ill-gotten wealth in front of everyone; they get praised as smart guys. Few people will aspire to become them or even want to do better."

Based on P9's response: "It is very difficult to attempt to mitigate against a person's socio-economic related issues. At the end of day, we all need money to survive".

P10 added that: "This is very difficult question to answer because corruption has been a part of traffic police for a very long time to the extent that I think to stop it is going to be very difficult".

P11 stated that:

"The only way we can mitigate corruption is to review our salary, some of us are no longer able to feed our families and yet we come to work...It is difficult to successfully mitigate corruption because it has been a part of us as traffic officers for several years".

According to P12,

"I will approach this question from both socio-economic viewpoints. We do not all earn the same salary. Traffic officers tend to spend more than their monthly paid salary. This causes a lot of expectations and stress; at the end of the day, it becomes very difficult to make ends meet. Due to the

nature of our job, we are faced daily with peer pressure about who is doing well and who is not doing well. When one of our colleagues buys a very expensive BMW, I will say to myself, no, this cannot be from his/her salary, he or she must be doing some side hustle. I must do all I can and whatever it takes me to also drive the same car or a more expensive one. That is how we become corrupt because of the competitive personality we have. I will start to think of how to knock off with some extra cash in my pocket. This money will add to my salary, and knowing that doing so, will make me have a better lifestyle".

P13 response was that:

"In my opinion, traffic officer in South Africa needs to be well paid for the job we do. We also need to educate our officers more about the dangers of corruption. Some of us go into it without thinking about the wider implications of it".

P14 explained that:

"One of the ways we can mitigate corruption within our department is to professionalise traffic police. Stop taking gratifications from members of the public. All traffic police in South Africa should have one entry point. Each province and municipality should not be allowed to do their own traffic policing without some form of uniformity. All traffic police officers must be paid one salary throughout the country and employed with the same conditions of service. Hearing that your colleagues in another province or municipality is not on the same salary with you for doing the same job is not a good thing when it comes to traffic police officers' motivation. When you are not motivated, you can be tempted to start doing corruption because you always feel undervalued by your employer".

While P15 stated that:

Corruption is planted at the root of traffic policing. You know our economy is not doing very well now. Several of my colleagues feel underpaid for the work they do. They simply want to have the lifestyle they cannot afford. So, earning an extra income is not a bad idea provided you do not get caught. Their determination to have a good life makes them to be vulnerable to corruption. You know living above one's means has its own consequences.

P16 asserted:

"I spent 8 years in the military before joining the traffic police about 10 years ago. Corruption is one the serious problem facing us today in South Africa. I have witnessed a variety of corruption from managers and colleagues. Corruption is normalised in the traffic environment. Our criminal justice system in my opinion does not back up traffic police enough when it comes to the conviction of traffic offences. Traffic policing is not the focus of the criminal justice system; we are only there to compliment the SAPS. If our justice system was functioning effectively corruption would have been reduced by now. Another way of mitigating corruption is for the government to look traffic police officers remuneration. As traffic officers, some of us are no longer able to provide basic needs for our children. Top managers earn a lot and do not show any signs of feeling the stress of the high inflation in our country. They earn enough to navigate the storm. Unfortunately, it has become more easier to buy off a traffic police officer now

that it was 10 years ago, because traffic police officers are more vulnerable now than before”.

P17 cited that:

“Corruption is part of our day-to-day activity in traffic police. Many of us believe that corruption is normal as we have become used to it. Someone of us have socialised into it from youths before even join the police. So, for these reasons, mitigating corruption is a very difficult task. But we can continue to find ways to bring this corruption pandemic affecting our profession to an end”.

According to P18,

“As for me there are not enough systems and rules put in place to mitigate corruption from socio-economic contexts. Why do I say this? The government is not putting enough resources to fight crime in South Africa. Corruption is a crime, but we are not doing everything we can possibly do to stamp it out. Corruption continues to eat deeper into our social fabric. Traffic corruption happens every day, you and I know this is not secret anymore. For example, the appointment of 10-20 anti-corruption specialist police officers is inadequate to fight corruption effectively. This is one of the reasons why mitigating corruption has become practically an impossible task”.

P19 stated that:

“Traffic police corruption is a career disease without a cure. But I think it can be managed. With enough rules and policies put in place”.

According to P20,

“Corruption in the traffic police is a global problem. I do not think is only found in South Africa. I will suggest we turn to other countries that have reduced corruption in law enforcement to see what they did to reduce corruption in their countries. I am saying this because corruption in the traffic police has been with us for far too long without a solution”.

P21 provided us with a more detailed explanation:

“Ten years ago, I came from the SAPS to the NTP. But first, I think our legislation for punishment for corruption is too lenient. We are not taking corruption seriously enough. There should be no option for fine. The punishment for corruption should be straight prison sentence. Officers need to be made more aware of the full impact of their corruptive acts. When you collect 100 or 200 rand from motorists, it does not end there because some of these unlicensed drivers you collected money from may eventually take the life of another road user. Traffic officers must have a good reflection of how they contribute to the high death toll on our roads. It cannot be business as usual. Money brings comfort but it cannot be everything and everything. Money collected as bribes does not bring a lost life back because of traffic officers’ unlawful actions. Most Investors would not like to invest in a country captured by corruptive elements and few individuals or groups who have no respect for the rule of law, come what may are prepared to bend the rules”.

P22 stated that:

“I am going to be honest with you by saying all government attempts to mitigate against traffic policing have so far

failed. I cannot think of any good solution to mitigate against it right now”.

P23 emphasised that:

“In order to mitigate against corruption, we must first look at traffic police leadership. Are they showing us good examples to follow? I don’t think so, some of them are very corrupt but members of the public keep blaming low-ranking traffic officers. If officers at the top are not held accountable for corruption, we cannot mitigate against corruption. They are our bosses, we learn from them, take instructions from them.

P24 stated that “I am not optimistic about mitigating against corruption in traffic policing because I know we cannot get to that point during my service years”.

P25 stated that “Salary increase is the only way to mitigate against corruption if I can feed my children with my salary why should I be put in shameful position of soliciting for a bribe”. Our salary is not enough to look after our families. I have seen young traffic officers with no children struggling to keep ends meet. Things are very hard for us, food are expensive, electricity bills go up, rent going up, transportation prices are going up, petrol prices going up, school fees going up. How do you expect us to survive under these conditions?

P26 stated that “There is no solution to traffic police corruption, and I do think we can mitigate against it under the harsh economic conditions we all are facing in this country”.

P27 stated that “I am not sure whether we can mitigate against it because corruption in the wider society is also very rife, it is not only traffic police, look at all spheres of society, corruption is there. People see it as trying to side hustle for a living these days. I do not see any wrong for motorists giving me any gift voluntarily. Some motorists do give us drinks to show appreciation for the service we are providing them”.

According P28, “corruption is institutionalised into traffic police fraternity. You may join with good intentions only to find out that most of your colleagues are surviving on collecting bribes from motorists, you either join them or not, the choice is for the individual traffic police officer to make”.

P29 stated that “It very difficult for the government to think they can stop corruption without first review salaries. Any government that freezes the salary of workers for three years cannot be said to helping to fight against corruption but facilitating it by making more traffic police officers to become more vulnerable to corruption”.

P30 stated, “corruption cannot be mitigated against in traffic policing. You and I know this is the bitter truth”.

Authors analysis of participants responses to the main question 1:

In reviewing the responses provided by participants to question 1, the researcher made the following analysis:

There was a disagreement between those who stated that traffic police corruption can be mitigated against and on the other side some participants stated that traffic police corruption cannot be mitigated against. The following participants supported the view that traffic police corruption can be mitigated against. They are as follows: P2 stated that it can be mitigated if traffic police officers followed their oath office. The researcher agrees with the reasons given because the oath or code of conduct is to supposedly serve as the moral code of traffic police officers but unfortunately, they do not seem to adhere to it, if they do, the sarcasm and labelling of traffic police as facilitators of “cold drink” would not have arisen. P14 and few other officers alluded to salary increment as a possible factor in mitigating against traffic police corruption. The researcher disagrees with this view. First, high ranking police officers who have either been suspended, sacked, or imprisoned for corruption were all highly paid officers. The following names comes to mind, SAPS National Commissioner Jackie Selebi, SAPS National Commissioner Bheki Cele, SAPS National Kgomotso Phalane are all cases in point suggesting that the amount of salary one earn does to deter that person from being corrupt. Second, human wants are insatiable, and greed is part of human characteristics. P23 argued that the failure of leadership and not leading by example makes it difficult to stamp out corruption in traffic policing. A view also shared by the researcher. The researcher’s line of argument is also consistent persistent with previous researcher [18, 19, 20].

According to P26, “there is no solution to traffic police in South Africa” The researcher disagrees with this view. It sounds too pessimistic and defeatist. The researcher argued that there are so many challenges that appear to be insurmountable that turned out to be solved with the right strategy put in place.

Question 2: What are the main causes of traffic police corruption?

According to P1,
“Lack of monitoring of traffic police officers by their allocated supervisors or line managers, trust and over reliance on junior officers to be able to do their jobs with discretion, lack of being reprimanded and over familiarity of senior officers with junior officers. As Some managers want to be regarded as popular and accepted by all. Officers who do are not involved in corruption are seen as enemies within and often risk been isolated”.

P2 stated that:

“Greed because as traffic officer, I believe that some of us get paid more than our SAPS colleagues doing a similar job. Peer Pressure, seeing other colleagues doing corruption and have never been arrested for it”.

P3 stated that “Yo! Corruption is very high to the extent that some of us find it difficult to do our job without motorists offering us a bribe. To the motorists, everyone in traffic uniform takes bribe full stop. Several colleagues who we know takes bribe are reported but our supervisors continue to protect them for reasons I do not know”.

P4 highlighted the following causes:

“Greediness and selfishness. We always want to live above

our means. We are in competition among ourselves, who drives the best car, who lives in a bigger house, who wears the most designer label dresses. All these material possessions we aspire to have come at a costly price. Some of us do earn enough to be able to afford it. We turn to criminal activities to do so. Corruption is a criminal activity with consequences. Some of us do not think about the repercussion of getting arrested, the shame it will bring to our families, communities, and colleagues. We just go into taking bribes blindly and very selfishly”.

P5 explained further that:

“Poverty level and rising costs of food, housing, petrol. I come from a black disadvantaged background with a very high unemployment rate, very many extended families waiting for me to assist them. The salary I earn is not enough for me to do so, facing the high pressure from the family and for me not to be seen as a failure who goes to work and cannot provide. I turn into something else to provide for my immediate and extended families. The government is not making it easy for us, sometime there is no salary increase for three years. Prices of food, cost of living are going high, school fees going up, interests rate very high, petrol costs out of reach. How do you expect us to survive with the same salary. I am not going to lie to you. We are tempted and forced to become corrupt to be able to put bread on the table”.

According to P6,

Greed and opportunity. Corrupt traffic officers always like to take chances with the hope that they are not going to be caught. You try it once, it works for you, nobody arrested you. It becomes a habit for you to carry until you are arrested. All traffic police officers are not the same, some take a bribe first time and get caught while others have been taking bribes from motorists for several years without been caught.

P7 stated that:

“Greediness and wanting to live above one’s legitimate salary. When traffic position jobs are advertised, the starting salary is also published alongside. You know what your salary is going to be. You then come into a law enforcement environment and start to think about breaking the law to make money in a criminal way. The is unacceptable to our profession. Do not apply if you think the salary advertised is not going to be enough for you. Let those who really want to serve our country apply. Some traffic officers come in to join us with a plan of getting rich quickly and they end up going to jail during the process of implementing their plan to become rich. The youths of today need to clearly understand, traffic policing is not a vehicle to get rich but a privilege to serve one’s country”.

P8 stated that: Greed and wanting to get rich quick”.

P9 added that: “Less salaries, in my opinion traffic police officers are not paid enough”.

“Greed and lust for material things of the world. We cannot afford to taste luxury goods and property. Pressure to imitate when other colleagues are doing in the group.”

P10 Stated that,

“Poverty, high cost of living, no financial knowledge and

living beyond one's own means."

According to P11,

"Most of us are money driven. We do not have any financial planning put in place; we spend before we plan. In some instances, we become broke and become vulnerable to bribes-taking process. We use corruption as a filler for our careless spending. Our salary becomes insufficient to keep up with our lifestyle. Traffic officers are not educated enough in financial management. Traffic officers during training are given less input around financial management. I personally did a module on it, but I do not think it sufficient to prepare for the real world. Financial management detailed course with teach us not to live beyond our salary".

P12 stated the following causes:

"Greed, living about our salary and wanting to be respected in your family and community as someone who has done very well. If we can live according to what we earn, corruption will be reduced. Say I earn 4,000 rand and spend 8,000 rand a month. The extra 4,000 must come from somewhere. You can see how I have managed to create financial problems for myself".

According to P23,

"Our traffic policing environment is not effective enough to hold most officers accountable for their unlawful actions. Many of our leadership do not want to take responsibility for their indecisive actions. They rather not deal with things according to the rules against corruption. Some of our leaders must lead us by example. They cannot look us in the eyes and say stop corruption when it is obvious that they are more involved in corruption themselves. The junior officers see this flaw and seize the opportunities to become even more corrupt than their managers".

P24 stated that:

"Traffic police officers are always complaining that they are been underpaid, undervalued for our work. Motorists do not want to be prosecuted for their traffic violations; they would prefer to give their money to traffic police to avoid tickets. They often do this because they are in a hurry to get to their travelling destination".

P25 stated that:

"Less pay and financial illiteracy. Not knowing how to manage their income. Some of us can spend all our salary withing few days and then turn to collecting a bribe to survive the month. Some of our colleagues go into corruption due to lack of discipline about how to spend their income.

Author's Analysis of Participants Responses to Question 2:

The participants provided several factors responsible for corruption in traffic policing. These factors are presented above. The researcher argues that all the reasons given above as participant's responses are valid reasons as to why traffic police officials may be tempted to commit corruption.

Why is it so difficult to eliminate traffic police corruption?

According to P1,

"The quest for self-enrichment, greed and wanting to be able

to afford a comfortable lifestyle".

P2 stated that:

"Opportunistic thefts from motorists by traffic police officers."

P3 explained that:

"It is difficult to eliminate corruption because it starts from the top management. There seems to be more focus on lower ranks, this is not right because in my opinion those at the top are far more corrupt than those of us in lower ranks".

P4 stated that:

"It is difficult to eliminate because our managers accommodate it. You report a colleague to your manager. He/she does nothing about it because the traffic officer enjoys some form of protection. You can be seen as a bad person for reporting to your colleagues. This is why some of us no longer report corruption. After reporting I will be the one who must seek transfer for reporting a colleague or for getting a colleague suspended".

P5 explained that:

"It is very difficult to eliminate corruption because we are fighting a system or a behaviour not individual. In most cases, we think we are fighting individual corruption. If there is a system that promotes a culture of corruption, how are you going to unilaterally fight and stop it. If you work in place and find out that majority of the officers, you work are corrupt. It will be safer to be quiet than to be challenging the status quo. I want to let you know that it is not that we do not see corruption around us daily, but it cannot be my responsibility to be reporting colleagues. If things go wrong and the people I have reported are after me, who is going to protect me from them? Remember as traffic police officers we carry firearms".

P6 explained that:

"It is very difficult to eliminate corruption in traffic because our wants and needs are very many and cannot be satisfied. In most cases our salary is insufficient to fulfil all our desired needs. There is nothing wrong with a person to want the good things of life. But there are two things to guide us. First can we afford what we crave for? Second, does our current salary allow us to be able to purchase that want? Some of us have often dreamed of driving a Ferrari in our lifetime but unfortunately some of these big dreams have not materialised. Some of us joined the traffic with the hope that it is going to make us very rich. We think that with a combination of salary plus collecting money from motorists is not a bad idea for some of us. But we fail to also understand that the law does not allow us as traffic police to be corrupt. "We cannot break our oath of office to be corruption-free".

P7 stated that:

"It is a very bad system that has taken several years to plant. It is also going to take several years to uproot it. The benefactors of corruption will always fight back to sustain it. Corruption is found in all ranks of traffic policing. I am glad to be retiring in a year's time, but I must admit the traffic I joined many years ago is not the same traffic I am going to be leaving soon. It is a sad story for me. I have seen very good people who joined us and fought corruption head on,

they end up losing their jobs for charges that do not really exist. Citizens must be given more voice to decide the type of traffic police officers they want, they two choices to make, to get rid of all corrupt officers or retain them. The dark forces of corruption in traffic fraternity are unexplainable to the outside world. Those who are inside will understand what I am saying right now”.

P8 stated that:

“Our wider community recognises corruption, and, in some instances, people are so familiar with it and do not bother to report it. The unwillingness to report it is also associated with traffic policing environment.”

P9 stated that “It very difficult to eliminate corruption in traffic policing because the custodians and benefactors of it will do all they can to sustain it”.

P10 explained that:

“Society worships money, people risk their lives to make sure they get rich, part of soliciting for a bribe is part of that mindset. So long as we are in a position of power over motorists, there is always going to be corruption. When you place too much on a human being, there is bound to be an abuse of that power.”

P11 highlighted that:

“Corruption is a culture that is deeply planted in traffic police foundation. It is difficult to uproot it overnight. The old officers have a culture of bribe-taking which they are prepared to hand over to new ones. It becomes almost impossible to break his vicious circle of corruption. You become socialised about it whether you like it or not. Some Traffic officers also lack morals, you can tell from the way they do things also reflects their family values”.

P12 stated that:

“It is very difficult to deal with it because corruption is very prevalent in wider society. The secrecy of how bribes are given and taken makes it even more difficult to report and investigate it. This makes the prosecution of corruption very difficult, sometimes witnesses are not coming forward. Those who report corruption know about the risk of doing so”.

P13 explained that:

“Unfortunately, we do not have enough resources on the ground to effectively combat traffic police corruption. Corrupt officers know that this is the truth. The number of anti-corruption units are too small to reduce corruption. We do know that both the Hawks and the RTMC (NTACU) carry out raids periodically once a while, these raids are not frequent enough to send a clear warning to corrupt officials. It is better than nothing now. The traffic officials in the urban areas are watched and monitored for corruption. What happens to traffic police officials in the rural areas? They self-monitored themselves with no accountability whatsoever”.

P14 explained that:

“It is difficult to eliminate corruption within traffic fraternities because of too much politics. Too many people playing politics at workplace, favours, nepotism has become the order of the day. Incompetent officers are selected for

promotion by over and above competent and qualified traffic officers. Promotions are not transparent or based on merit. Some of us are promoted because of who we know, not because of our abilities to do the job. All these put together make it very difficult to stamp out traffic police corruption”.

P15 stated that:

“Most of us do not have the moral courage to speak out against it. We fear been isolated by colleagues. It becomes safer to look at the other side and not report corruption hoping it will go away. We live in society where if you do not have money nobody respects you. In some instances, our salary as traffic officers does not qualify us to sit with some of our colleagues in our communities. We then explore other ways to make money to be respected in our respective communities. Even if it becomes necessary to bend the rules for extra cash it does not matter. Accepting bribes from motorists makes us to be able to afford things which our salary simply cannot afford”.

P16 explained that:

“As traffic officers, some of us are socialised into a corrupt culture. From childhood, we are well informed about “money, money, money, it is a Richman’s world” Everyone has price tag, you get respected in your community if you have money, people support you even if you are wrong. Over the years we have become believers and worshippers of money. Traffic officers are human beings subscribing to this culture of getting rich quickly. It does not matter how one acquires wealth these days. To be in poverty and be honest equates to a commitment to living in poverty. Corrupt officers show off their wealth within the traffic department, we all do not drive the same car or live in the same type of house. Traffic officers who are honest start to feel like failure when compared to the lifestyle of some of their corrupt colleagues. At some stage, one must decide which side of the fence they want to sit (Poverty or Wealth)?”

P17 provided us with a more detailed explanation as follows:

“There is a saying in my tradition that when a foundation of building is rock solid that house will not fall. We were brought up with morals and values. We also seen some of driver relatives give money to traffic officers on the road. So, we grow up knowing or thinking that it is the right thing to do, it becomes generational behaviour. It becomes very difficult for that person to stop giving money to traffic officers, instead use that money to fix your car. That if you fix your car, you are not obliged to give cold drinks to police officers. The issue of cold drink has laid a very bad foundation for traffic police officers; this stigma is so strong sometimes I think it may never go away. Our profession has become a joke in our respective communities. Having said this, it pains me to note that corruption is also very much present in the top management of traffic police. Corruption is not found only in lower ranks of traffic police as reported in the media. The top management are more discreet than the lower ranks when it comes to corruption. They participate in grand scale corruption costing us millions of rands not the 200 or 300 rand collected from motorists we are talking about here. The top management hides behind the lower ranks’ corruption in some instances without

detection. Sometimes, you stop a motor vehicle on the road transporting illegal things, you get a phone call from your supervisor to allow it to be. Who am I to challenge this order from above? It does happen but many of us are too scared to report such incidents. In traffic policing environment, you do not challenge the order from your bosses. There are dire consequences of not obeying instructions from above. You can be charged for carrying out a lawful duty if you are not cautious you will be out of your work for doing the right thing and those who bend the rules stay and progress career wise”.

P18 stated that:

“We have adopted the wrong approach to fighting traffic police corruption in South Africa. We must stop focusing too much effort on the lower ranks instead of focusing on the top management. They are the big players of corruption. If the managers are promoting corruption, it means those following him/her are going to do the same. I believe if we get rid of corruption from the top level the lower level will not continue engaging in it”.

P19 explained that:

“Money is the root of all evil and I have seen how this plays out in traffic police environments. Colleagues need professional help. They cannot stop the deviant behaviour of their own volition if some of them want to stop. How do you voluntarily go to your employer to inform them that you are addicted to corruption and money. It is very difficult to admit our flaws because of the shame associated with it”.

P20 explained that:

“This incident has stuck in my mind to this day. Five years ago, while in the traffic police academy, I asked my law lecturer about what I should do if I saw one of my colleagues’ soliciting bribes. My lecturer told me” You either join them or not join them or report them” I was not comfortable with the last option of reporting them because my life will be put in danger knowing that my reporting the officer will eventually lead to his / her dismissal. So many of us would like to report to our colleagues who are corrupt to authorities but how do we deal with the aftermath? Most people I know have developed I did not see it attitude to run away from their moral obligation to report to their corrupt colleagues. At some point one must decide between the two loyalties faced, which one of them takes precedence, loyalty to a friend or to country. We are faced with this operational dilemma”.

P21 stated that:

“I was made to believe as a child growing up from the age of ten when I used to travel in buses to town, I often observe that the driver of the bus stops and drops money behind a tree on the floor and the traffic officer picks it up with a smile. I thought it was a compulsory donation to the police. 20 years down the road I am battling psychologically to put up with my work colleagues doing the same thing. It is a shame that corruption has become part of us in South Africa. I am not sure whether it is true, South Africa is one the most countries in the world. Top officers are also very much involved in this corruption more than they are letting the public to know. Traffic officers are arrested more than top management”.

P22 alluded to,

“You must understand that there are number of things that make some of us resort to corruption. Some of the conditions we are living in do does not tell we have a job and salary. We are not able to afford food for our families and parents. Sometimes, we also feel sorry for the drivers we stop, we can tell we both come from a similar poverty background, and they do not have the money to fix their cars. People who come from a background where they are all struggling to make ends meet will understand why corruption has become part of us for such a long time”.

P23 stated that:

“It is not difficult to eliminate corruption within traffic police departments per se, provided the top management do what is right. For example, each traffic department has its own policies, organisational structures, they are there to guide us if followed. The truth is that our seniors are very much involved in corruption, this is not a hearsay allegation, we know they are involved in corruption. As children, we are supposed to be under guidance. What do you expect us to do when those seniors who are supposed to lead us from the top are also very corrupt as well?”

P24 stated that:

“Corruption is ongoing within the traffic departments because none of us is willing to report it. Both the motorists of traffic police officers are not willing to come forward to report it until they get caught. Corruption gives you a kind of addiction and false confidence that you will never be caught by anyone, we all do it kind of excuses.”

P25 explained that:

“It is difficult to eliminate corruption because all of us do not come from the same social and financial background. You see some officers get away with open corruption; the one most normal traffic police officers dare not do. Most corrupt traffic officers are protected by very senior members. There is one law and disciplinary rules for us and another law for traffic officers who are protected. Corruption officers know they are protected and are not worried about you reports against them because they have been assured by their sponsors that nothing will happen to them. Some just carry on with corruption until they are caught by external agents. Some of these officers are known to us for years before that are caught externally”.

Author’s Analysis of Participant’s Responses to Question 4

The researcher focused on the failure of leadership to address traffic police corruption effectively. Instead, it was found that management often supported and protected those involved in corrupt activities. Over the years, the issue of traffic police corruption in South Africa had predominantly been associated with low-ranking officials soliciting bribes from motorists, supported by the ‘bad apple theory’ that it only few officers that are involved in corruption. The researcher disagreed with this misleading argument because what we do know is that corruption is more prevalent than we knew. Corruption is institutionalised in traffic policing environment. A view shared by most of the participants in this study. While less attention had been paid to the role of management, which lower-ranking officers claimed was

responsible for corruption within the traffic fraternity. There were reports indicating that when corruption was reported to management, they took no action. This perceived protection from management encouraged corrupt traffic police officers to engage in unlawful activities. The researcher emphasised that the presence of corrupt individuals within the traffic police management undermined the concept of accountable leadership. Urgent action was required to address institutionalised corruption, including suspending, investigating, and dismissing implicated managers. Additionally, there was a need for routine forensic investigations or lifestyle audits to identify and address corrupt behaviour among traffic police managers systematically.

What would you do when you see a colleague soliciting a bribe?

According to P1,

"I am not going to try and lie to you. I won't report my colleague to anyone; I will let it be. But I will advise them to stop it because if they get caught, they will lose their jobs. Most traffic officers, including myself as a manager, will not arrest our colleague for corruption."

P2 stated that: "I will arrest that colleague myself without given him/her any previous warning".

P3 explained that:

"I will first say to my colleague that he should stop collecting money from motorists and that it is unlawful to do so. If he/she continues, I will be forced to arrest that colleague. I cannot look at the other side forever".

P4 stated that "I will not do anything to him/her. I will simply walk away from the incident to avoid any trouble."

P5 stated that: "I will not arrest that colleague but issue him /her with a warning not to do so again. as getting employment is very difficult".

P6 stated that: "I will arrest the colleague without any warning. I am zero-tolerant towards corruption.

According to P7, "I will arrest that colleague and bring him/her to justice".

P8 stated that:

"I will not report it. I did not join traffic police to become the gatekeeper of it. So long as the bribes from motorists does not affect me directly. I will walk away".

P9 explained that:

"I will try to get them arrested knowing that in some cases, it is not going to be easy to do so. Corrupt officers are not normal officers, you do not take them for granted, if you do, it can cost you your life. They remove out of the way first before you do so. One can understand one some of our colleagues look away when they see corruption. You may report them, and, in the end, you do not have a job for doing so".

P10 stated that "I will walk away because it is much easier for me to do so."

P11 explained that:

"I am policeman, I will arrest that person immediately and with immediate effect. I do not have to report that person to anyone. I will do what is prescribed by the law giving me full powers to arrest my corrupt colleague without fear or favour".

P12 stated that:

"I will arrest the colleague without issuing him or her any warning. If my colleague has respect for the job and for me, the issue of bribe-taking should not have taken place in my presence".

P13 explained that:

"It is difficult to arrest that colleague because this person is my work colleague. But since I took the oath of office as traffic police officer. I cannot compromise my position. I will report him/her to our supervisor, and they continue to do so. I will arrest that colleague myself. I will go to the extent of giving evidence against him or her."

P14 stated that:

If we are to go by book. I am supposed to arrest my colleague without giving him/her any warning. But eish! I am not bold enough to do so. I will report him to our manager, and it is up to the manager to apply appropriate sanction.

P15 stated that:

"I do not think I am able to summon that courage to report my colleagues for corruption. I will first think about the hardship such a dismissal will cause his/her family. I will also suggest a rehabilitation programme for my colleagues and suspension without pay. I will not call for the dismissal of my colleagues for corruption".

"I will report it and if they continue, I will do the arrest myself without any blind loyalty".

P19 stated that "I will arrest that colleague without any hesitation".

P20 alluded to,

"I will not report that colleague for fear of reprisal from other colleagues. I will let it be or ask to be transferred to work with another colleague".

P21 explained that:

"I will not warn my colleague first. I will go for a straight arrest because South Africans deserve more than corrupt traffic police officers. Our legal duty does allow us to be corrupt. We must fight corruption within traffic with zero tolerance. But I must also warn you that because we are all licensed to carry firearms, we must think about safety first before we arrest our colleagues. I have experienced incidents where things can go horribly wrong, the offending officer fights back because he /she has nothing to lose, wanting to be bringing the person who reported him down as well. In one incident, a police officer entered a police station and shot at his colleagues who he claimed sold him out to be dismissed from work. Reporting a corrupt colleague is one thing but you must also look at yourself after you have done so. For this reason, many of us do not want to report to our managers. We are put in a vulnerable

position after doing so.

P22 stated that:

"I personally will arrest that person even if he/she is a colleague of mine. So long as the taking of bribe was done in my presence. Even I know that after my arrest there is going to be serious animosity between us and colleagues will avoid and all that. I will be prepared to take the isolation for what I believe is right. If I fail to do my job when I see a colleague taking bribes, if they get caught, I will be out of the job myself. I must make an arrest to save my job".

P23 stated that:

"Everybody involved in the giving and taking of a bribe must be arrested and punished. It does not matter whether they are my colleagues or not".

P24 explained that:

P28

"I will report him/her to their supervisor to deal with. It depends on their rank. It may be too risky to report a senior officer to me for corruption. The consequences may be too grave for me. In traffic police you hardly report your senior for corruption. I have never seen or heard of it".

P29 explained that:

"Report to the supervisory manager, expecting necessary disciplinary steps to be taken against my reported colleague. In most instances, this does not happen".

P30 stated that:

"Honestly speaking I won't do anything about it. Due to the economic hardship we all are facing".

Findings of the Study

The findings of this research study are derived from the data collection and analysis undertaken. The findings are listed chronologically according to the above research questions, aims, objectives and themes. The inherent findings of the study are as follows:

1. All participants agreed that traffic police corruption is prevalent and has been part of traffic policing for several years.
2. Corruption hinders the ability of traffic police officers to do their job effectively.
3. Corruption has led to citizens needing more trust and confidence in traffic police officers.
4. Corruption is rife and spread very fast at a very high-velocity rate, making it difficult for anyone to mitigate or control it [12].
5. Institutionalising and normalising corruption within traffic departments have taken many years to be deeply rooted.
6. Operational dichotomy and disconnection exist between the senior management team and junior-ranking traffic police officers.
7. The management team and junior-ranking traffic police officers do not fully accept the blame for traffic police corruption. Each blamed the other for it.
8. Traffic police managers deliberately ignore corruption incidents whenever reported to them. Managers protect corrupt traffic officials and, in some instances, are more corrupt than junior officers.

9. Some corrupt traffic police officers are protected by senior members who act as mentors and benefactors.

10. Surprisingly, some traffic police officers stated that they will not report or arrest their colleagues for corruption for fear of any reprisals, sanctions, or the safety of their lives and do not want their colleagues to lose their jobs.

11. Both the selection and promotion processes in most traffic police departments need to be revised and transparent. Selection and promotion are not based on merit but based on nepotism.

12. Traffic police officers are in dire need of financial management courses as most of them spend above their salaries, making them susceptible to corruption.

13. Poverty levels have increased among traffic police officers due to a high cost of living and salaries are not enough to provide for their families.

14. Greed has made it impossible for traffic police officers to resist the urge for corruption.

15. Socialisation processes are pivotal in shaping traffic police officers' moral values and respect for the rule of law.

16. It is problematic for traffic policing as an institution to intervene and alter some of its officer's behaviour who are already socialised into certain norms, social values, and identities.

17. The government needs to do more to fight corruption, and it puts too much effort into fighting it for those below instead of fighting it from the top levels.

18. Both traffic police officers and motorists are to be blamed for corruption and punished accordingly.

19. Peer pressure, wanting to live a life of luxury, and being respected by peers, families, and their respective communities are tempting reasons to make traffic officers involved in corruption.

20. Sanctions for corruption of traffic police officers found guilty of corruption appear to be too lenient.

21. A disagreement existed about the appropriate sanction for traffic police officers found guilty of corruption.

22. Traffic officers who do partake in corruptive acts are viewed with suspicion by their colleagues for fear of reporting them to authorities.

23. Traffic police officers do not feel protected enough to report their colleagues for corruption.

24. Both internal and external politics make it difficult to fight traffic police corruption.

25. Most traffic police officers interviewed support the idea and the effectiveness of the body-worn cameras assisting them to do their jobs.

26. Body-worn cameras will protect both motorists and traffic police officers.

27. Body-worn cameras may be subject to distortions and manipulations by traffic police officers.

28. The government should explore more about other operational policing strategies and anti-corruption equipment to complement body-worn cameras.

29. Traffic police leadership needs to be led by example.

30. Traffic police leadership styles in South Africa are tilted more towards bureaucratic and autocratic leadership styles.

Recommendations

1. Traffic police departments must review all their selection and promotion processes as a matter of urgency as the current one appears to be unfair, lacks transparency and credibility.
2. Traffic police officers' salaries and remuneration

benefits must be reviewed, unified, and measured against inflationary trends.

3. Protective and supportive schemes for all whistleblowers in traffic policing departments must be put in place, encouraging traffic police officers and staff to report all forms of corruption-related incidents.
4. A failure to report corruption should merit a dismissal for all traffic police officers.
5. Body-worn cameras should be made compulsory for all traffic police officers.
6. There should be compulsory lifestyle audits twice yearly for all traffic police officers.
7. Senior officers must be held accountable for traffic police corruption, just as all junior officers should be held accountable. One rule of sanction becomes applicable to all.
8. Traffic police leadership must attend compulsory professional and effective tailored leadership training programmes.

Conclusion

Disappointingly and shockingly enough, most of the participants stated they will do nothing about it if they see their colleagues soliciting for a bribe. Although some of the participants said they will arrest any of their colleagues seen taking bribes. One can understand while traffic police corruption has thrived with impunity over the years because traffic police officers are unwilling to report their colleagues and in doing so, they are also committing crime for not reporting corruption. Traffic police officers who failed to report corruption are committing a crime contrary to section 34(1) of the Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act No.12 of 2004. This Act states that any person who holds a position of authority, who knows and ought to have known or suspected that any other person has committed an offence of corruption, theft, fraud, extortion, or forgery has committed an offence for failure to report such knowledge to the police. It is a legal obligation to report these incidents. The author argued that any traffic police officers who have knowledge of corruption and fail to report it as the law demands should be arrested, tried, and punished according to the law. The fight against corruption must be taken more seriously than the way it is currently assumed.

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