



## AN EXPLORATION OF PERCEIVED PUBLIC SECTOR CORRUPTION IN FREETOWN CITY ADMINISTRATION, SIERRA LEONE

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### **Abstract**

*The issue of perceived corruption in the public sector of the Freetown City Administration has been an issue of great concern. As such, the study explores the influencing factors, impact and remedial measures to minimize/control it. The study largely utilizes primary data to evaluate its objectives. Primary data was obtained from civil servants/officials and public service users. The online survey was utilized through a structured questionnaire to collect primary data. Descriptive statistic and regression analysis were used to analyze the data. The study finding reveals that perceived corruption in the public sector of the Freetown City Administration is one of the significant pressing social problems that suppress the growth and development of the public sector which negatively affects the lives of citizens and residents who look up to the government for quality public service delivery. Based on the findings, there is a widespread level of corruption in the public sector. This implies there is bribery in the delivery of certain public services which requires no charges. The finding also reveals that the police department is the most corrupt public sector in Freetown City Administration. Furthermore, according to the findings people don't report corruption cases because they perceived it being a normal practice, the reporting process is very complex, and the reporter is not protected from future harassment. More so, the "perceived morals and norms," "political party loyalty" and "weak penalty for culprit" are found to be unique influencing factors leading to corruption in the public sector of the Freetown City Administration. Conclusively, the finding reveals that the impact of corruption in the public*



*sector is positively correlated to the corruption level, frequency, and causes. The increase in corruption level, frequency, and causes shows a significant result in increasing the corruption impact in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The findings also reveal suggestive measures to minimize/control corruption in the public sector of Freetown City Administration.*

*Keywords: Exploring, influencing; corruption; impact; public sector*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Corruption is a very old phenomenon that every nation had experienced or currently experiencing. The issue of corruption remains one of the world's pressing social problems which threatens growth and development and spikes instability in countries, particularly the African countries. The greatest scholars/philosophers of all times, Plato and Aristotle have once mentioned that no nation is free from corruption. Corruption is one of the social problems that is quite understandable to the ordinary less educated or uneducated citizens. The fact here is that any act of corruption is felt by the victim.

Studies have shown that a nation's corrupt practices are rooted in the public sector. Public sector corruption as the term implies is corrupt practices found in government offices that take different forms including but not limited to the act of bribery, embezzlement, illegal wealth acquisition, and abuse of power through nepotism and favoritism. The African continent is still faced with widespread public sector corruption which hinders public service delivery despite support from the world's top richest economies. Transparency International measures the perceived level of public sector corruption in 180 countries of the world and the reports show that most African countries of which Sierra Leone is not an exception have a highly corrupt public sector (Transparency International, 2021).

Concerns about corruption in the public sector from 2018 to 2021 had recently grown rapidly in the Freetown municipality. This undermines the efficiency of service delivery to citizens and trust in public officials. Despite the draconian steps taken by the current government, led by His Excellency President Bio, to minimize and control the level of corruption and administrative challenges, there is still rumors and allegation of corrupt practices by public officials and civil servants.

### **Statement of the Problem**

For far too long, scholars have raised concerns that corruption is a deterioration of moral standards and weakens people's trust in government. This statement reflects, in reality, the conditions and living standards public sector corruption instills on vulnerable citizens and

residents of Freetown City, Sierra Leone. More than half of the citizens in Sierra Leone are victims of corrupt practices (Transparency International, 2019). State resources are mismanaged and embezzled in large amounts in the country. A joint survey conducted by the Center for Accountability and Rule of Law (CARL), Public Finance Management Consortium, the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), and Christian Aid found that Sierra Leone lost between 10.45 Trillion Leones and 15.9 Trillion Leones due to corruption in 2016, 2017, and 2018. (UK).

One hundred and eleven “persons of interest” were identified by the Anti-Corruption Commission, including parastatal heads, bankers, and others according to reports from the British Broadcasting Corporation News (BBC, 2020). One hundred former government officials, including former President Ernest Bai Koroma, were placed on a travel restriction early in 2020 by the current government led by President Bio because of corruption charges (BBC, 2020). In Sierra Leone, the poverty rate remained at 56% in 2018 (Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey, 2018). Sierra Leone is ranked 182 out of 189 nations in the Human Development Index 2020 report (UNDP, 2020), with approximately 53% of the population living below the \$1.25 per day income poverty line (World Food Programme), and the highest maternal mortality rate of 1,165 deaths per 100,000. In Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index (2019), Sierra Leone is placed 119th out of 180 countries, and 117th in the 2020 published report (Transparency International, 2020). In addition to this, Transparency International’s (2021) report shows that Sierra Leone scored 34/100 depicting high-level public sector corruption.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Conceptual Definition of Corruption

Corruption is the betrayal of public trust for the satisfaction of personal interest. Given the ambiguity of the concept, corruption can be defined in a multitude of ways. According to Bussell (2015), corruption can be defined in a variety of ways, but it's important to highlight that no single definition applies to all research purposes. Jain (2001) supports this by stating that although a specific definition is difficult to come by, most believe that corruption refers to activities in which the power of the public office is exploited for personal gain in a way that violates the rules of the game. Further, Gillespie et al. (2020), posits that any pursuit of self-interest through the misallocation of organizational resources for personal gain is often regarded as corruption.

## **Influencing Factors That Explain the Main Causes of Corruption in the Freetown City Administration**

Several factors could explain the prevailing cause of corruption in the Freetown City Administration. However, this study will focus on three key influencing factors, “perceived morals and norms”, “political party loyalty” and “weak penalty for culprits” identified as the main causes of corruption in Freetown City administration yet the majority of the citizens, politicians, and public officials might acknowledge but tend to ignore.

### **Perceived Morals and Norms**

The prevalence of corruption discussion in the media, the real experience of it in the daily life of the citizens of Sierra Leone, and the weak actions taken to curb it compel the ordinary Sierra Leonean to accept that corruption is linked to society’s perceived moral practices and norms that anyone can indulge in and thus fuel motivation in public servants and politicians to resort to. While others believe in the old saying that “one cannot have contact with palm oil without licking his/her fingers”. This implies since politicians and civil servants are given discretionary powers, there is a likelihood for them to use them to best suit their gains. Many if not all public service users understand the underlying conditions to accessing quick public service so they succumb to it. Reporting of incident-based corrupt practices poses a great challenge because of the above-given reasons. Many feel that receiving public service in time requires one to “grease the palm” of a public official.

Many studies have found that the perception of peers is also an important component to consider when assessing the proclivity to engage in corrupt actions. If the environment is regarded to be very corrupt, the proclivity to engage in these same actions increases dramatically (Julián & Bonavia, 2020). In 2012, Dong, et al. conducted a study on conditional corruption. Additionally, it appears as though individuals consider the possible consequences of their acts, which are inextricably related to their beliefs about the social norms and institutions that govern them. The benefits of corrupt practices will be greater if the law is not respected. Several other studies show that the most important factors in determining whether or not people are inclined to engage in corrupt behavior are societal and personal norms, as well as whether or not they believe there is a specific opportunity to do so without suffering any negative consequences (Gorsira, et al., 2018). As a result, how people around us think and behave, our moral convictions, and the possibility to be unhurt by the circumstance would explain a substantial part of the desire to perform corrupt behaviors, which has been seen in both civil officials and private sector personnel. Banerjee (2016) also researched to demonstrate that the idea of what is

morally proper, or what has been referred to as the “socially suitable norm,” was a critical element in explaining why individuals engaged in corrupt actions.

Corrupt practices have a significant impact on the perception of potential offenders. To illustrate this point, Barr and Serra (2009) conducted an experiment in which they found that participants’ willingness to pay bribes dropped when the circumstance was framed as one in which a corrupt act would harm an innocent victim.

### **Political Party Loyalty**

Political party loyalty occurs when a member(s) of a political party tends to support it. Protect, and defend the image of the party and its members in a situation where a member is found guilty of corrupt practices or misconduct. There are two main political parties in Freetown City, Sierra Leone, the All Peoples Congress (APC) and Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP). The main aim of these political parties is to converge people with the same political ideas, take part in an election and win and appoint members to key positions in the government. Politicians use the political appointment to offices to pay back loyal party members. Stapenhurst and Kpundeh (1999), also claim that in return for their loyalty, civil servants are often shielded, pampered, and allowed to increase the range of their powers and pursue opportunities for self-enrichment (pg.215).

Political parties in Freetown, Sierra Leone are very instrumental in winning an election such that members will go the extra mile to protect their images to the detriment of the social and economic development of the country all in the name of party loyalty. In Freetown, positions in key public sectors are assigned to political party members of the ruling party. Party members also referred to as bureaucrats protect themselves over allegations of corrupt practices as a way of protecting their party and their government in power. For instance, there must be a constitutional reform on the powers vested on the president to appoint the head of the Anti-Corruption Commission in Sierra Leone or the appointee should be independently free from all forms of political allegiances or loyalty. Besides, even if the commissioner appointed is initially non-partisan, there is a likelihood that he could be influenced by the president to carry out a biased investigation on certain corruption cases in favor of the party in power exemplifying party loyalty.

Some civil society organizations are not-for-profit and non-state organizations whose primary responsibility is to seek the collective and common interest of some specific target group or the public by advocating for effective and efficient service delivery and suppressing the government to be accountable for their actions. Challenges such as funding to carry out their operation have one way or the other rendered them fragile in the fight against corruption. Most

of these CSOs rely heavily on the government for funding and in some cases, they need to belong to the ruling party. The ineffectiveness and inefficacy of civil society organizations could be connected to the financial support they received from the government.

In addition to this, the general membership of these political parties who are the very citizens themselves supports corrupt practices of politicians and public officials based on party loyalty. For instance, in mid-2021, the former Minister of Finance in the then All People's Congress government who doubles as the current Flag Bearer of this opposition party was invited by the Sierra Leone Anti-Corruption Commission to answer questions on allegations of corruption. Hundreds of party members took to the street protesting against his invitation to the Anti-Corruption Commission referring to it as a political witch-hunt. A similar incident also happened with Former President Koroma of Sierra Leone which led to some instability in Freetown. PPL is a serious influencing factor that motivates politicians and public officials to indulge in corrupt practices in the public sector of Freetown City Administration, Sierra Leone.

### **Weak Penalty for Culprits**

The penalty for corruption culprits in Freetown Sierra Leone is not strong enough to deter its prevalence in the public sector. There are many instances where politicians are found guilty of embezzlement of public funds and then they are charged an amount that can motivate them or any other to indulge in the same corrupt practices. Stapenhurst and Kpundeh (1999) found that the law enforcement agency is weak, and punishment for those caught in unlawful activities is light. This has encouraged corrupt activities to blossom, often with the collaboration of top officials (pg.215).

### **Impacts of Corruption**

Corruption impacts the public sector in diverse ways which creates an alarming situation for most countries/governments to implement a measure that could minimize or control its occurrence.

### **Economic Impacts**

Economic growth and advancement are highly dependent on a nation's or country's ability to use best practices to reduce systemic corruption in government. Corruption skews economic distribution, stymies investment, leads to inefficiencies and resource exploitation, and jeopardizes democracy and ethics, according to generally held beliefs.

## Impacts on Economic Development

The ability of a nation or country to implement best practices to decrease systemic corruption in the government apparatus is critical to economic growth and advancement. According to Montinola and Jackman (2002), the extent of corruption in a country determines its economic success. As a result, these researchers discovered evidence indicating that as economic progress accelerates, corruption drops significantly. Despite this, other studies argue that lower per capita income leads to lower levels of corruption and that lower levels of corruption lead to economic success.

## Impact on Economic Growth (GDP)

Hardin, (1968) and Leys (1965) agreed that corruption promotes economic progress. This is because corruption boosts the efficiency of the public sector. Continuing with this argument, Acemoglu and Verdier (1998) support the concept that corruption has a positive impact on economic growth and discovered that in an environment that allows contracts to boost investment, theoretically corruption dominates and property rights implementation is insufficient. Good firms may be able to avoid bureaucratic hurdles and engage in the market as a result of corruption.

## Impacts on Economic Reforms

Corruption substantially hinders a country's ability to execute reform. Increased openness and accountability, as well as the limitation of discretionary powers, special privileges, and pricing distortions, are all necessary components of economic reform. As a result, the affluent and powerful, who profit the most from a corrupt system, will fight changes. Corruption fuels the chance for economic rent, which in turn fuels corruption (Myint, 2000).

## Political Impacts

Politically, corruption affects representation and how the state will be governed. Furthermore, Amundsen (1999) found that corruption has a direct impact on how countries are regulated. Political repercussions of corruption vary greatly depending on the sort of corruption that takes place as well as how resources are exploited, much like economic repercussions. Lack of service will diminish the legitimacy of weak regimes since the ruling class has little control over who will benefit from corruption and how much. State institutions and political legitimacy are likely to be undermined if corruption is allowed to run wild.

## **Social Impacts**

Corruption impedes access to effective drugs and risk-management programs; it depletes funds for critical infrastructure projects such as hospitals. Corruption in the healthcare industry stymies progress toward universal health coverage. It limits access to high-quality health care and safe and effective drugs, as well as risk-management systems. It also takes money away from important infrastructure projects like hospitals, clinics, and medical colleges.

Building codes, environmental regulations, traffic rules, and prudential banking regulations are just a few examples of laws and regulations that serve social goals and protect the public interest in every country. Infringement of these norms for the goal of gaining financial advantage through corrupt practices can cause significant societal harm. For instance, soil erosion caused by illicit logging has resulted in entire communities being swept downhill sides in flash floods or buried in mudslides, killing many people. Building code violations perpetrated by unscrupulous politicians and contractors have led to the collapse of apartment buildings, department shops, and hotels in various countries (Myint, 2000).

## **Environmental Impacts**

Corruption continues to unleash hell on government social infrastructure while also exposing the government to economic jeopardy. A report by UNDP (2011) states corruption increases the costs of building water infrastructures by as much as 40 percent-this equates to an additional \$12 billion a year needed to provide worldwide safe drinking water and sanitation. In most cases, bribery is used to get around waste management restrictions, leaving the environment unable to renew its resources. These corrupt practices have an impact on the livelihood of populations whose survival is dependent on the environment.

## **Strategies to Remedy Public Sector Corruption**

Government strategies to remedy corruption is very essential for minimizing the level of corruption in the Public Sector thereby promoting efficient service delivery, good governance, and citizen trust.

## **Raising Public Awareness**

In the words of Langseth (2001), the key to preventing corruption, and hence the major challenge and cornerstone of this holistic integrated strategy, is to educate and involve the public in establishing integrity.



## Public Expenditure Tracking

It is possible to track government expenditures in a variety of methods, but each method relies on some sort of “discrepancy methodology” to determine how much money is being wasted. This method compares actual expenditure with the flow of public monies from central ministries to front-line corporations (usually colleges and hospitals). The difference might be used as a bribery indicator. This method is also known as “Graft estimation with the use of subtraction” (Olken & Pande, 2011). The Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) is one of the most useful tools to track public expenditure. As a result, all public institutions should be subjected to public PET.

## Central Budget Planning

This category covers a wide range of improvements aimed at enhancing the central government's budgeting and management procedures, with ministries of finance typically being the principal beneficiaries. Countries with strong budget management systems and greater external stakeholder participation in public expenditure (i.e. through participatory budgeting) have lower CPI scores, according to cross-country studies, which are frequently based on quasi-experimental styles and victimization multivariate analysis methods (Dorotinsky & Pradhan, 2007).

## Decentralization

Corruption may be reduced through inter-jurisdictional competition if citizens who are dissatisfied with the services provided by corrupt bureaucrats in one region have the option of moving to another (USAID 2017). It may also be more feasible to hold local leaders, rather than national ones, accountable for their actions (USAID, 2017). According to Lessmann and Markwardt (2010), in places where there is a free press, decentralization is more likely to tackle corruption. Power and authority should be assigned to other bodies in this sense.

## Social Accountability

The concept of accountability implies that everyone is accountable for their acts. Public servants should be subjected to whatever level of scrutiny is appropriate for their job, responsibilities, and behavior. Accountability shows how the institution achieved its goals. It also indicates how the public interest has been protected when using public monies (ICAC, 2009). Public involvement in the fight against corruption is key. Fox (2014) notes out, it incorporates a wide range of methodologies, including participatory budgeting, public expenditure tracking

(PETS), citizen monitoring of service performance, information sharing, and public complaints systems, among others.

### **Transparency and Access to Information**

Many uphold the notion that corruption in the public sector can be curbed with transparency and access to information about the public service sector. Transparency and access to information are also seen as the vehicles for ensuring the efficient implementation of social accountability mechanisms. Transparency measures, according to McGee and Gaventa (2010), can have positive effects on institutional responsiveness, corruption, public engagement, empowerment, budget usage, and service delivery. To increase citizens' and civil society organizations' access to information, laws must be revised.

### **Civil Service Reform**

The implementation of E-government in Sierra Leone will aid in the battle against corruption and boost civil service accountability. In addition, electronic technologies improve the ability to track and monitor administrative actions. Governments throughout the world are turning to electronic governance as a way to promote productivity and efficiency in internal administration while also increasing responsiveness to the general public (Lee, 2017).

### **Penalties**

It's easy to see how a rise in penalties can prevent people from engaging in illegal activities. When civil servants consider the benefits and costs of corruption, raising the cost side of the equation should lead to fewer acts of corruption (Becker & Stigler, 1974). A notable lack of evidence supports this claim, however. Participants in corruption games are less ready to pay bribes as the consequences of corruption increase in laboratory studies, which confirms theoretical predictions (Abbink, et al., 2002).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study largely utilized primary data to evaluate the influencing factors, impact, and remedial measures of perceived corruption in the public sector of Freetown City Administration, Sierra Leone. Purposive sampling is the method used in this study. This sampling prioritizes respondents who have in-depth knowledge and understanding of the study. A total of 169 of 300 respondents-civil servants and public service users (owners of firms, Brokers, ordinary residents, etc.) responded to the study, making up the sample size for analysis.

The study employed an online survey using google form (developed through questionnaire) and focus group discussion as the main method and instruments of data collection. The Google form survey was sent to the participants via email, Facebook Messenger, WeChat, and WhatsApp to preserve a seamless information flow. Data collected from the study were categorized and coded on a pre-drafted coding sheet and were then entered into Stata for analysis. Descriptive statistics and ordinary least square regression analysis were used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze/measure the objectives of the study. According to Lamin (2020), descriptive statistical analysis is the process of organizing and interpreting raw data to provide descriptive information. The mean, median, frequency distribution, percentage distributions, rank, skewness, kurtosis, and standard deviation are typically calculated using this technique. The focus group discussion data were paraphrased and then used for data augmentation. Based on the study objectives and basic research questions, the data were recorded and categorized under each theme and summarized.

### **Explanation of Research Variables**

The level of perceived corruption is used as a dependent variable in this study, which is linked to its drivers through the development of appropriate indicators. The three (3) main influencing factors that lead to corruption: “perceived morals and norms”, “Political party loyalty” and “Weak penalty for perpetrators” were grouped into “economic”, “social”, “political” and “organizational”, serve as independent explanatory variables that may predict the cause, impacts, and level of corruption in the public sector of Freetown City Administration. As stated by Lamin (2020), if the environment is perceived to be highly corrupt, the proclivity to engage in these same behaviors increases dramatically. Stapenhurst and Kpundeh (1999), also claim that in return for their loyalty, civil servants are often shielded, pampered, and allowed to increase the range of their powers and pursue opportunities for self-enrichment (pg.215). In addition, Stapenhurst and Kpundeh (1999) found that the law enforcement agency is weak, and punishment for those caught in unlawful activities is light. This has encouraged corrupt activities to blossom, often with the collaboration of top officials (pg.215).

### **Other Empirical Variables**

Following the survey results, a few other new variables have been selected or built to conduct an empirical analysis. The purpose is to empirically assess the effect of corruption on the public sector of the Freetown City Administration. The dependent variable “**Impact of corruption**” (CImpact) is selected to proxy for the corruption effects on the public sector of Freetown City Administration. This variable was built based on survey data on abduction/rape,

unemployment, inflation, safety concerns/crime, cost of living, political instability, low quality of education, Low quality of health care, cost of education, cost of health service, lack of housing, access to clean water, poor sanitation, food availability, public services (cost, quality, availability), poor quality of roads, and lack of leaders.

We used three independent variables:

1. **Corruption level (Clevel):** This variable represents the perceived corruption by the population.
2. **Corruption frequency (Cfreq):** This variable was built from the ranking responses to the following assertions: 1) The public official would demand that a bribe must be paid; 2) The public official would request that a bribe must be paid; 3) The public official would whisper that a bribe must be paid; 4) The local firm/agent offers the bribe and 5) The groups know how the process works and how much money they need to pay.
3. **Causes of corruption (CCauses):** This variable encompasses the Perceived corruption as a normal practice, the Political party loyalty, the Weak penalty for a culprit, the Lack of transparent and accountable public service process, the Lack of independent and effective Judiciary, the Lack of independent and effective media, and the Lack of effective corruption reporting system.

The variables used for control are as follows:

1. **Honesty in the public sector (HonestPS):** The main public areas selected are the Education Sector, the Health Sector, the Police Force, the Court of Law, the Ministry of Lands, the Mass Media, and the Customs and Revenue Authority.
2. **Effectiveness of reporting process (EffRP):** It results from the responses to the following assertions: 1) The process is very effective 2) The reporter is well protected from harassment 3) The process is very simple
3. **Willingness to fight corruption (CFWill):** This variable is based on the followings: In private sectors there exists a genuine and sincere will to fight against corruption at this time. And in the public sector there exist a genuine and sincere will to fight against corruption at this time.
4. **Measures against corruption (CMeasures):** Tougher laws and sentences free from political loyalty; providing a good example of leadership; more regular and control of public officials; greater publicity of the negative impacts of corruption; better salaries for public officials and servants; and better education.
5. **Failure to denounce corruption (CDfailure):** Not knowing where to report, cases not being proven, the process is too complex and long, corruption is a custom, corruption can be justified under the current economic situation, an investigation would not be made about the report, no enforcement even if the decision to investigate is made, concerned about potential harassment, don't want to betray one's colleague.

## ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### The Demographic Profile of Respondents

As illustrated in table 1 below, the results show that 89 males (52.7%) and 80 females (47.3%) responded to the survey in which 5 respondents (3%) were 18 years old, 99 respondents (59.6%) 20-30 years old and respectively 61 respondents (36.7) above 30 years old. In the area of educational level, the results showed that a huge number of the respondents 94% attained higher education and as such, they are knowledgeable about corruption issues and are capable of independently responding to the survey. In a total of 169 respondents, only 10 respondents (6%) has no education, 46 respondents (28%) holds a diploma, 54 respondents (32.5%) hold a first degree and 14 (8.4%) hold a second degree. About 14 % of the respondents were civil servants including managers, directors, and police personnel whereas the majority 86% were public service users who frequently use public services from the year 2018 to 2021 and they include petty traders, owners of firms, local brokers, and ordinary residents/citizens.

Table 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

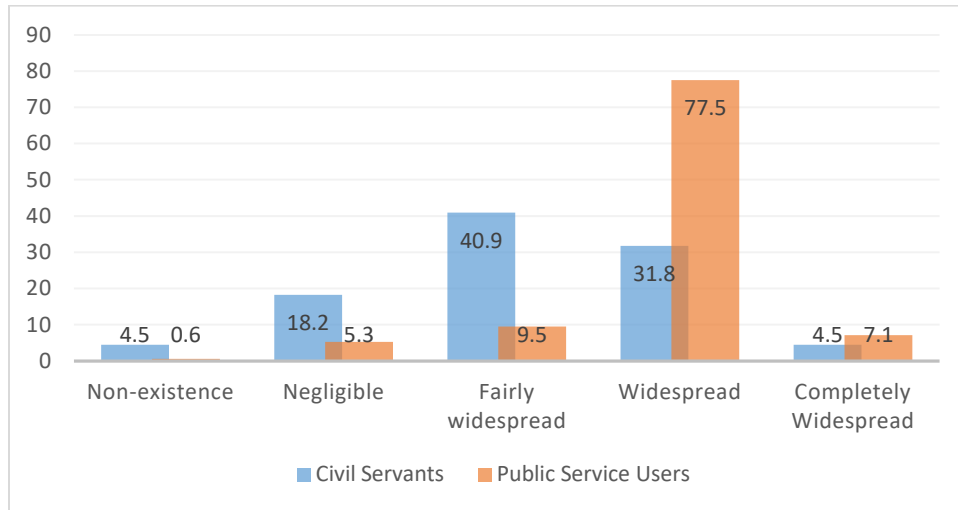
Demographics	F	%	Demographics	F	%
<b>Sex:</b>			<b>Education Level:</b>		
<b>Male</b>	89	52.7	<b>No education</b>	10	6
<b>Female</b>	80	47.3	<b>Literate</b>	12	7.2
<b>Age:</b>			<b>Certificate</b>	30	18
<b>18 years</b>	5	3	<b>Diploma</b>	46	28
<b>20-30 years</b>	99	59.6	<b>First degree</b>	54	32.5
<b>Above 30 years</b>	61	36.7	<b>Second degree</b>	14	8.4
<b>Years of service</b>			<b>Sector:</b>		
<b>Below 5 years</b>	14	8	<b>Public</b>	23	14
<b>5-10 years</b>	155	92	<b>Private</b>	146	86

### The Extent of Perceived Corruption in the Public Sector

The perception level of corruption is a significant first step in evaluating the level of corruption. Although public perception could slightly differ from reality in certain cases, this metric could be used to evaluate its true prevalence as it reflects the sincere experiences of public service users.

Public servants and public service users were asked to rate the level of corruption in the public sectors of Freetown City Administration and their feedback/responses are illustrated below.

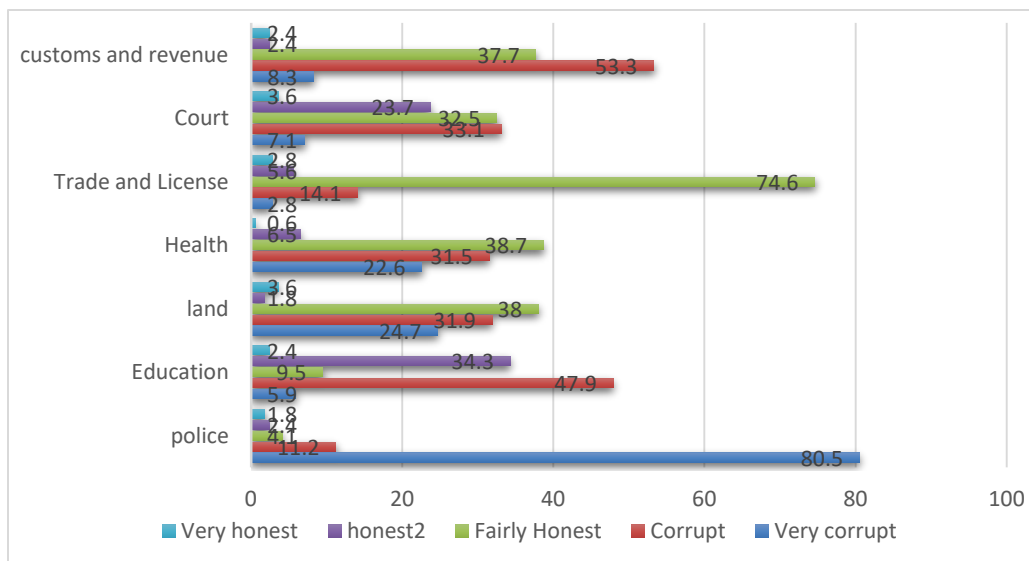
Figure 1 The Extent of Perceived Corruption in the Public Sector



As presented by the survey results above, corruption in the public sector was perceived to be “widespread” but not “completely widespread”. About 77.5% of the public service users responded that corruption is “widespread” but not like how it was “completely widespread” in the year 2018 downward, and some of the civil servants/officials were still engaged in petty corruption whereas 31.8% of civil servants claimed that some public servants still indulge in corruption. This finding is confirmed by the TI 2021 report which states that Sierra Leone score 34/100 in the CP1 evaluation depicting a higher level of public sector corruption.

The respondents were asked to evaluate the public sectors they perceived to have widespread corruption and the results are vividly illustrated in the figure below.

Figure 2 Public Sectors That Are Perceived to Have Widespread Corruption

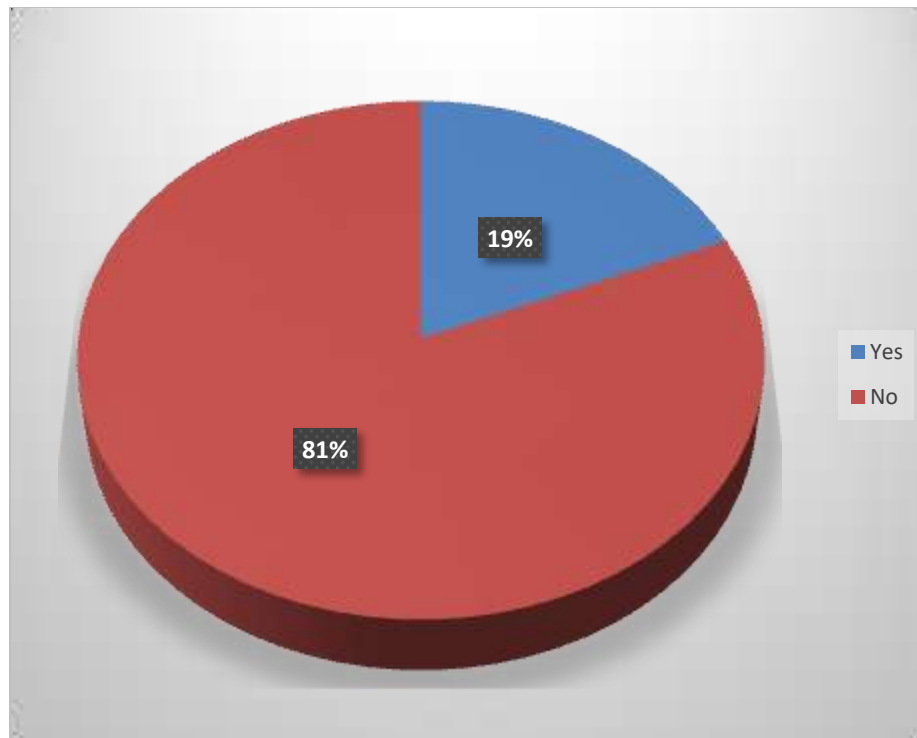


As it can be seen from figure 2 above, a larger amount of 136 respondents (80.5%) responded that the police sector is the most corrupt public sector; 90 respondents (53.3%) responded that the customs and revenue authority is the second most corrupt public sector; 56 respondents (33.1%) responded that the law court in some circumstances is minimally corrupt whereas 53 respondents (74.6) responded that trade license is fairly honest. According to one of the respondents, a commercial driver reported:

*“The police officers arrested and charged us for no good reasons even to some extent they charged us to court for unknown vehicle mechanical failure. Most of the time if you don’t bribe them the matter will be charged to court and you will end up in prison”.*

These findings emphasize the urgent need for institutional and administrative reform in the above sectors to achieve efficiency in service delivery. The court of law (judges and magistrates) needs to properly dig into cases of commercial vehicle drivers defaulting on road safety rules with more electronic evidence before a verdict is passed.

Figure 3 Reporting Corruption Cases



Results in Figure 3 showed a very low reporting rate of corrupt practices by civil servants. See results in Table 2 below for reasons for the above result.

Table 2 Evaluating Why People Refuse to Report Corruption Cases

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means "very unimportant" and 5 that "very important".	Frequency	Very unimportant	unimportant	Fairly important	important	Very important
Non-proven cases	F	5	13	13	87	49
	%	3	7.8	7.8	52.1	29.3
Corruption is a custom	F	3	12	11	38	104
	%	1.8	7.1	6.5	22.6	61.9
If the decision to investigate is taken, there is no action	F	4	11	63	41	50
	%	2.4	6.5	37.3	24.3	29.6
Fear of being harassed	F	3	14	10	40	102
	%	1.8	8.3	5.9	23.7	60.4

When respondents were asked why they refuse to report corruption cases in Freetown City Administration, 61.9% of respondents stated that they think that corruption is a customary practice by public officials and civil servants as a result 52.1% of them stated that reported cases are not being proved. This means the report won't make any change whilst 61.9% stated that they didn't report for fear of harassment or retaliation. These findings show that for corruption to be minimized or controlled, first the idea of it being perceived as a normal practice should be ignored and more corrupt practices should be reported. Furthermore, every reported corruption case should be taken seriously with an effective investigation and the reporter should be given all forms of protection against harassment/retaliation from the perpetrator.

### Evaluating the Influencing Factors That Lead to Corruption in the Public Sector

The second objective of the study is to evaluate the main factors that lead/contribute to the widespread level of corruption in the public sector of the Freetown City administration.

Table 3 The Influencing Factors That Lead to Corruption in the Public Sector

On a scale of 1-5 where 1 means "strongly disagree.... Evaluate the following as factors/causes of corruption in the public sector of the Freetown City administration	Frequency	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
Perceived morals and norms	F	3	11	15	38	101
	%	1.8	6.5	8.9	22.6	60.1
Political party loyalty	F	3	12	13	39	100
	%	1.8	7.2	7.8	23.4	59.9
Weak penalty for a culprit	F	3	12	13	34	105
	%	1.8	7.2	7.8	20.4	62.9



When respondents were asked to evaluate the existing significant factors leading/contributing to the widespread corruption in the public sector of Freetown City Administration, 105 respondents (62.9%) “strongly agree” that “weak penalty for culprit” is the main reason why public servants indulge in corrupt practices, and 101 respondents (60.8%) “strongly agree” that “perceived morals and norms” is also an influencing factor of public sector corruption in Freetown City Administration. The normality of the practice makes people ignorant to reporting incidence cases whilst other respondents 100 (59.9%) “strongly agree” that “political party loyalty” plays its role in supporting corrupt party members in the public offices.

### Measures to Control/Minimize Corruption

The objective of this study was also geared toward gathering suggestive responses on effective remedial measures to minimize the level of corruption in the public sector of the Freetown City administration

Table 4 Respondents' Suggestive Measures to Minimize/Control Corruption in Public Sector

On a scale of 1-5 where 1 means “harmful” .....	Frequency	Harmful	Not necessary	Not very effective	Quite effective	Very effective
Tougher laws and sentences free from political loyalty	F %	4 2.4	5 3	15 9	33 19.8	110 65.8
Setting an excellent leadership model	F %	5 3	12 7	54 32	47 28.3	48 28.9
Accountability and control of public officials	F %	4 2.4	13 7.7	7 4.1	101 59.8	44 26
Increased awareness of the negative consequences of corruption	F %	3 1.8	14 8.4	94 56.6	8 4.8	47 28.4
Better pay for public officials and civil servants	F %	4 2.4	12 7.2	59 35.3	69 41.3	23 13.8
Close international loopholes, support or partnership if found guilty	F %	2 2.8	11 15.5	10 14.1	45 63.4	3 4.2
Public expenditure tracking	F %	1 1.4	12 16.9	10 14.1	0 0	48 67.6

When the respondents were asked what measures should be implemented to minimize or control public sector corruption in Freetown City administration, most participants 110 (65.8%) suggested that “tougher laws and sentences” is the most rigid and applicable measure to minimize/control corruption. One of the respondents stated:

*“sometimes the law officers protect those reported or found guilty of corruption because they belong to the same political party.”*

Another stated: *“public officials who are found guilty of corruption are fined a lesser amount of money as compared to the amount they stole from the public fund. This is the main reason why they continue corrupt practices”*

69 respondents (41.3%) think that one of the “quietest” or “most effective” ways to discourage public sector corruption is by offering better compensation for officials and employees. The wages and living standards of public officials and civil servants determine their willingness to engage in corrupt actions. Low pay encourages corruption, which stymies the public sector’s productivity and effectiveness. According to studies, increasing the salaries of public officials must be accompanied by strong control and surveillance to maintain a lasting impact on controlling corruption (Chêne, 2019). More crucially, Becker and Stigler (1974) discovered that providing public employees a fair salary encourages them to provide honest service.

About 48 respondents (67 .6%) believe that tracking public expenditure in all government offices will be an effective measure to control corruption thereby increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of service delivery.

## Empirical Analysis

Table 5 Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max	Skew.	Kurt.
CImpact	169	4.196	.343	2.941	5	.085	-.417
CLevel	169	3.852	.642	1	5	2.019	2.102
CFreq	169	3.559	.621	1.4	5	-.621	-.704
CCauses	169	4.322	.585	1.714	5	.362	.784
CDFailure	169	3.858	.726	1.625	5	.467	-1.789
HonestPS	169	2.28	.592	1	4.714	-.723	6.490
EffRP	169	2.584	.642	1	4.667	.686	4.64
CFWill	169	3.467	.804	1	5	-.644	2.286
CMeasures	169	3.935	.727	1	5	-.711	.119

Table 5 shows the number of observations, mean, standard deviations, minimum and maximum value, skewness, and kurtosis of the variables. The skewness and kurtosis values for each variable were computed to investigate normality. As per Hair (2010)’ recommendation, when values are above  $\pm 3.0$ , it indicates that the assumption about the normality of the distribution at the 0.01 probability level can be discarded. From Table 5, there is an indication that the majority of the major variables are very close to normal. Therefore, confirming close multivariate normality by the study model. With a maximum of 5 for most of the variables, an observation of the mean shows that the corruption impact and the causes of corruption have reached a very high level in Freetown, Sierra Leone. As for the honesty in the public sector, it is

below average, which suggests that the Sierra Leone public sector is unreliable and cannot be trusted, from the public point of view. Other variables are around average.

Table 6 Pairwise Correlations

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
(1) CImpact	1.000								
(2) CLevel	0.104*	1.000							
(3) CFreq	0.062	0.531*	1.000						
(4) CCauses	0.185**	0.470*	0.632*	1.000					
(5) CDFailure	0.046	0.458*	0.772*	0.662*	1.000				
(6) HonestPS	-0.188*	0.002	0.077	0.066	0.176	1.000			
(7) EffRP	-0.161**	-0.083	-0.239*	-0.049	-0.124	0.061	1.000		
(8) CFWill	-0.066	0.077	0.362*	0.362*	0.521*	0.578*	0.110	1.000	
(9) CMeasures	0.250*	0.307*	0.319*	0.445*	0.409*	-0.335*	0.095	-0.073	1.000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

Table 6 depicts the correlations among the variables. as can be observed, the impact of corruption is positively correlated to the corruption level, frequency, and causes; even though this relationship is only significant for the corruption level and causes (10% and 5% level of significance respectively). However, those results are further confirmed by the regressions in Table 7.

Table 7 Regression Analysis

	(1) CImpact	(2) CImpact	(3) CImpact	(4) CImpact
CLevel	.03 (.049)	.03 (.049)	.022 (.049)	.028* (.061)
CFreq	.094 (.061)	.063 (.058)	.11* (.061)	.061 (.071)
CCauses	.152** (.059)	.136** (.059)	.107* (.062)	.121* (.063)
HonestPS	-.116** (.054)		-.079 (.056)	-.075 (.056)
EffRP	-.094** (.042)		-.114*** (.043)	-.12*** (.043)
CFWill	.014 (.045)		.023 (.045)	.048 (.048)
CMeasures			.093** (.044)	.114** (.046)
CDFailure				-.09 (.067)
_cons	4.218*** (.252)	3.719*** (.209)	4.066*** (.259)	3.998*** (.263)
Observations	169	169	169	169
R-squared	.107	.042	.132	.142

Standard errors are in parentheses. \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

As seen from Table 7 above, the corruption impact on the public sector increases with an increase in the corruption level. Most specifically, as shown in the fourth regression, a one-point increase in the corruption level will increase the corruption impact by 0.028, and this relationship is significant at the 10% level. Similar to the corruption level, the increase in corruption frequency and causes also show significant results in increasing the corruption impact in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

Besides the Will to fight corruption, and the Failure to denounce corruption which appears to have no significant effect on corruption impact in Freetown, Sierra Leone, other control variables are significant. For example, a one-point increase in Honesty in the public sector decreases the impact of corruption by 0.116. The Effectiveness of the reporting process also has a significant decreasing effect on the impact of corruption.

However, the Measures against corruption yield results that are significant but contradictory. As observed, they are positively correlated (Table 5) to the impact of corruption, and tend to increase the latter when implemented (Table 6). In other words, under the pretense of fighting corruption, more niches are created, behind which corruption is still practiced or even promoted. This suggests that serious work should be done public by authorities in Freetown, Sierra Leone to come up with effective and sustainable measures against corruption.

## CONCLUSION

Corruption is one of the most significant hurdles to the development of the Freetown City Administration. Its widespread presence is a call for immediate administrative reforms in the sectors that have been identified as the most corrupt. It restrains effective and efficient service delivery to the public especially when the government apparatus resort to corruption. This results in people beginning to lose confidence in the government's competence and willingness to lead, which contributes to some degree to political instability. Therefore, the issue of corruption in the public sector of the Freetown City Administration should be considered a matter of national importance to save the country's development efforts from some set of greedy, heartless, and so-called corrupt politicians and civil servants of our time.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Even though the Sierra Leone Government has been making significant progress in the fight against public sector corruption, they still have more to do to reach a corruption control level that will boost the economy and ensures every Sierra Leonean can live a better life. Even though not all anti-corruption practices from the west are applicable in a typical African setting,

few measures from the United States could be applicable in the real fight against public sector corruption in Sierra Leone. They are: 1) the fight against corruption should be a top governance priority; 2) the government must work with partners at both domestic and international levels (governmental and non-governmental levels to minimize/control and respond to corruption; 3) systematically identify the means corrupt actors are applying to take advantage of the Sierra Leone financial system and the rule-of-law based systems to make their illegal gains; 4) targeting and hold accountable both senior officials and low and middle-level officials for corrupt practices and 5) anti-corruption laws, regulations, and policy should be uncompromised.

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