

# The Mirror Image of Retired Police Officers and Corruption among Serving Officers in Nigeria

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## Abstract

*The study examines the mirror image of retired police officers and corruption among serving officers in Nigeria, offering scrutiny on how corruption has survived and mutated across generations among members of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF). The youngest recruits, in most cases, nurse the idealism or ambition of continuing in the same manner even before joining the force. The work employed both social strain and frustration-aggression theory to analyse the subject matter, suggesting that serving members of the NPF suffer frustrations as a result of the obstacles they experience from the job. This study explores a qualitative research design to examine the views of serving and retired police officers on corruption. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants. The sample includes 10 serving officers and 10 retired officers, with a total of 20 respondents. The study results revealed that corruption exhibited among serving officers is adopted or adapted from the officers' mirrored image of retired officers as a survival strategy. In order to address properly the root cause of corruption in the NPF, there must be a deliberate reform that will address the real cause of corruption in the force with the aim of nipping the challenges in the bud. The study concluded that bold reforms must be pursued with the aims of improving welfare, enforcing accountability, and fostering a new ethical culture of policing. Thus, the NPF should engage both serving and retired officers as agents of change to rebuild public trust and fulfill the NPF mandate of justice and service.*

**Keywords:** corruption, mirror-image, retired-officers, serving-officers.

## 1. Introduction

The formal social control institution as prescribed by the constitution to preserve lives and property is the police. The duty and task before the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) is to preserve law and order in the society and within the controversial spaces in the country's socio-political landscape. The NPF is established with high ideals of upholding public protection and justice. Over the years, the NPF has drifted away and evolved into a symbol of dysfunction in the eyes of many Nigerians. The issues surrounding this establishment are not only limited to active officers patrolling the streets or investigating crime scenes; the issues are extended into the legacies of retired police officers who once wore the uniform and now walk among civilians.

Retired police officers embody decades of experience, accumulated knowledge and, perhaps most significantly, a reflection of institutional values during their years of service. The experiences of retired officers are not devoid of corruption, exemplified in bribery and other forms of illegal and unethical conduct. Regrettably, this has formed a mirrored image of the police personnel, which often reveals a persistent culture of corruption, inefficiency, and abuse of power. Apart from Nigerians in general, an average officer might have formed a mirrored image from observing police behaviours while still serving and after retirement from the force. The mirrored image might have formed a sort of entrenched false ideal definition that serving officers rationalise and operate with in their daily job obligations; however, this is contrary to the police rules of engagement as captured in the Police Service Acts. Onje, July 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025, reported a case of police protest right at the heart of the Police Headquarters in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria, where officers recounted that they received retirement benefits that were less than three million Nigerian naira (less than \$2,000) and a monthly pension allowance of forty thousand Nigerian naira (less than \$35); many also affirmed that they are yet to receive any form of payment since their retirement. Others reported that they barely can feed themselves and their families; some are homeless, some ill and

cannot cater for their medical needs due to lack of or ineffective health insurance. Drawing from the foregoing, it becomes suspected that servicing officers have observed the suffering and degradations experienced by retired officers; this thus becomes what propels them into corruption as a way of augmenting for the future. Aborisade and Fayemi (2015) state that instead of serving officers representing the NPF by ushering in an ethical practice, some serving officers and retirees are living testaments to entrenched malpractice and corruption in and outside the force. The continued failure to shape the behaviours of serving and retired officers makes the NPF lose confidence amongst the Nigerian populace (Udeuhele & Elechi, 2022).

The researcher describes the concept of mirror image as a sort of formed cognitive map that serving officers developed after carefully observing retired officers' after-service life. The outcome of the mental observation produces an experience of fear that they (serving officers) assume might befall them on their retirements. Thus, they seek alternative approaches to mitigate for retirement, either using extortion or bribery. The notion of a “mirror image” between retired and serving officers draws scrutiny on how corruption survives and mutates across generations among members of the NPF. Considering the trend of corruption among the NPF personnel, the youngest recruits in most cases nurse the idealism or ambition of continuing in the same manner even before joining the force. Thus, it is seen as a mentorship from a distance watch that is quickly moulded with informal mentorships or shadow guidance from observing servicing officers and retired officers who reinforce these outdated codes of conduct. Thus, the long watch of bribery, extortion, selective enforcement of the law, and loyalty to powerful political actors have become a normal practice handed down to young and old officers like valuables (Ibrahim, 2019a; Foluke, 2018; Ulo, 2021; 2024; Oní, 2024). This silent curriculum undermines even the most well-intentioned reforms introduced by policymakers or watchdog organizations.

Consequently, the mooted idea is that there are institutional weaknesses in teams of training, oversight, and accountability; these gaps have created fertile ground for corruption in the NPF. Thus, serving officers are not witnessing the impunity enjoyed by their predecessors, some of whom remain influential within communities and political circles and have adopted some similar strategies to navigate their careers. Again, it has been observed that there is a lack of effective disciplinary structures that has also laid precedence for misconduct to fester while community trust in law enforcement plunges (Osayande, 2008; Edigin, 2015; Igbo, 2017). The supposed immunity displayed by most retired officers as a form of benefit as one-time uniform men, and often helped perpetuate corruption, encourages serving officers to maintain the status quo rather than disrupt it (Afrobarometer, 2023; Ulo, 2024; Nsirim & Nwakanma, 2022).

However, it is not all serving and retired officers who propel this mould of misrepresentation of the NPF. The study in the cause of fieldwork saw a number of officers, both serving and retired, who have spoken out against the injustices within the NPF, advocating for reform and urging transparency amongst serving and retired officers. Nevertheless, the voices of these few officers are often outshone by the more dominant inheritance of calm and involvement in the act. Contravening this posture of the bad imaging already cultivated by the personnel. Thus, stamping out corruption amongst officers, both serving and retired, needs essential reimagining of the NPF by building confidence about the force and already bad imagery in the minds of the populace by showcasing real accountable engagement by the police officers, both serving and retired. This display should be a genuine ploy of accountability and trust building that reflects a real and proper service to Nigerians. This show of genuineness needs to be stirred with professionalism and accountability, thereby fostering a high level of moral management and real variation in the NPF and in the minds of the populace (Guardian Nigeria, 2025).

The study critically examines the relationship between serving and retired officers from the place of corruption. The study seeks to address the culture of corruption among the Nigerian police force and set a new part of corrupt culture among police officers, both serving and retired. The challenges and significance

of redesigning the ugly circumstance around the NPF are what this study seeks to address. This study will serve as a guide for policymakers, government functionaries, and security agencies for effective policing.

## 2. Corruption among Serving Officers

Notwithstanding the continuous reform efforts in the NPF, corruption still thrives among active personnel in the force, constituting the cankerworms eating the fabric of the police's integrity and dissipating public trust. The Nigerian public considers the daily show of extortion by members of the NPF as an integral part of corruption, which has paved the way for corrupt citizens to perpetuate their criminal activities. The NPF officers made blocks and checkpoints along major roads and, in some cases, arrested innocent citizens with the aim of extorting money from them, which has remained one of the most visible corrupt practices engaged in by the NPF personnel (Otodo *et al.*, 2023). In a study conducted by Umeagbalasi (2025), as reported in 2025 by the International Society for Civil Liberties and Rule of Law (Intersociety), it was revealed in the study that the NPF personnel in the South East region alone have extorted about ₦15 billion from motorists over a period of two months during the festive season. The act of corruption cumulates harassment, false allegations, and unlawful detention of road users, with the said personnel demanding bribes with threats on their victims (Kabir, 2018; Ulo, 2024).

The existing corruption in the NPF is related to the meagre salary structure. For the purpose of emphasis, the lowest rank in the police salary structure receives less than \$30, the average police officer receives a salary of about \$120, and the highest rank receives a token sum of about \$450. This might be one of the breeding grounds of corruption within this police system, especially when these incomes are not commensurate in terms of the purchasing power of the present economic reality. Odumosu and Fakeye (2018) maintained that the inadequate salary system within the NPF is a cause for concern, as most officers could not meet their financial obligations for family life; many cannot afford comfortable shelter, quality food, educational insurance for their children, and health care systems and welfare. The accumulation of all put together are the building blocks of corruption in the NPF, which are reflected in members' extortion and bribery.

Table 1 below presents a better picture that depicts the frustrating salary structure of the NPF.

A reflection of Table 1, which represents the NPF salary structure, indicates a worrying state of affairs. The Inspector General of the police receives a meagre sum of ₦ 711,450 (\$425), and the least in the ranks (Constable) receives a frustrating salary of not more than ₦ 43,293 (\$25) as a monthly salary. It becomes clearer that the reasons for officers' extortions and bribery are not far-fetched. Although the management of the NPF is perceived to deliberately cover up officers' corruption. It is in the public domain that the top-ranking officers see the junior officers but show no capacity to enforce the law on such erring officers, as the case may be. This clandestine attitude is seen as an institutional cover-up by the top-ranking officers, who are also perceived to be beneficiaries of the proceeds from the bribe. According to Igbuzor (2008), a former NPF commission commissioner stated that most of the investigations carried out by the commission are mostly influenced, thereby derailing the outcome of justice and perpetuating corruption because most erring officers are not disciplined. Meanwhile, Faniyi (2022) argued that the absence of quality disciplinary measures and effective independent oversight has unlocked the flourishing of misconduct, allowing for high-level corruption in the midst of citizens' hardship.

Another stroke of decay in the NPF is the area of recruitment, which has been plagued with nepotism, political interference and corruption, not minding the integrity of the NPF being at stake. A former inspector general of police, Arase (2024), stated that the recruitment exercise of the NPF in the past was characterised by political influence and corruption, thereby leading to the recruitment of unqualified personnel. The study by Gabriel and Jaja (2024) cited outdated curricula, inadequate funding, and poor training infrastructure as some of the major barriers to the professional development of the force. These lapses are said to be the

contributing factors that are making the NPF system flawed, making them not uphold the ethical standard and earning the trust of the public.

<b>Ranks</b>	<b>Salary (Monthly)</b>
Inspector General of Police	₦ 711,450
Deputy Inspector General of Police	₦ 546,573
Assistant Inspector General of Police	₦ 499,750
Commissioner of Police	₦ 302,970
Deputy Commissioner of Police	₦ 278,852
Assistant commissioner of police	₦ 212,938
Chief Superintendent of Police	₦ 199,732
Superintendent of Police	₦ 172,089
Deputy Superintendent of Police	₦ 170,399
Assistant Superintendent of Police	₦ 156,318
Inspector of Police	₦ 87,135
Sergeant Major	₦ 62,204
Sergeant	₦ 55,000
Corporal	₦ 50,000
Constable	₦ 43,293

Table 1: Nigeria Police Salary Structure; source: <https://inquiresalary.com.ng/> (2025).

### 3. Corruption among Retired Officers

The NPF retirees tend to be involved in corrupt practices in a most subdued way, using the influence of serving officers as a formal colleague. It is also recognised during the study that most retired officers still have influence in the NPF as they have the tendency to influence directly or indirectly serving officers. In most cases they employ the mechanism of mentorship or cultural norms or political networks. These retirees' influence is also being felt when agitating for police accountability and reforms (Aborisade & Fayemi, 2015).

Despite the harsh economy coupled with a spirit of survival by the NPF retirees. They try to continue their instillation of informal mentorship, thereby transmitting the corrupt practices they are used to as serving officers. Thus, they deliberately instill this outdated, corrupt practice in the serving officer, thereby neglecting the professionalism and ethical standards of the NPF. These retirees pass down the mentality of survival policing tactics relying on extortion through their informal mentorship. This breeds opposition to

oversight functions by the authorities in charge of such functions, thereby creating unquestionable loyalty to authority. This behavioural transmission is regarded as “social reproduction”, which perpetuates institutional corruption (Aborisade & Fayemi, 2015). Thus, serving officers in most scenarios see the retirees as their role models, thereby emulating their wrongful acts, which they believe were successful even though their success was built on wrongful acts.

In the situation of persistent acts of corruption perpetrated by the retired officers beyond the barracks, they wield influence through political connections. These connections make them an intermediary power broker, shielding misconduct from legal or institutional scrutiny. The retired officer uses their influence to intervene during disciplinary measures or provide cover for illegal activities, which enables them to function effectively as protectors of the status quo (Guardian Nigeria, 2025). This meddling with concession internal justice instruments entrenches loyalty-based hierarchies within the police force (BusinessDay, 2025). Based on their consistent hold and benefit from corruption, this set of officers tends to silence and resist transformative reforms with the NPF strategically. Despite the overwhelming flaws experienced within the NPF, many retired officers desist from openly validating structural reforms. The retired officers are strategically silent on reforms; their silence may be born out of implicating themselves or losing influence among the serving officers. According to PRNigeria (2025), retirees choose to protest institutional flaws like poor pension schemes; however, they are persistently unwilling to back broader calls for transparency or human rights accountability. This resistance deters reform campaigners and decelerates educational shifts needed to restore public trust in the NPF.

#### **4. Theoretical Frame: (Frustration Aggression and Social Strain Theory)**

The work combined both Merton’s social strain and Dollard *et al.*’s frustration-aggression theory (Merton, 1938; Dollard *et al.*, 1939). The latter is anchored in Merton’s axiom of innovation, which maintains that people seek shortcuts when they feel that the societal-laid principles for attaining success goals are unclear or do not favour them. A member of the NPF values success just as other members of society do; however, in light of the meagre salary and huge task involvement for the job. Thus, they innovate by applying alternative rent-seeking means to achieving their success (respect/wealth).

The mirror image of the serving NPF members becomes clearer when the frustration-aggression theory is applied. The theory holds that people exhibit aggression when they experience frustration emanating from the feeling of a blocked success goal. Serving officials of the NPF mentally mirror their lives subjectively with that of the retired members. These are retired officers, many of whom are yet to receive their meagre retirement benefits, and even when paid will require a long period of waiting after numerous protests and public ridicule. Serving NPF officers develop the feeling of deprivation and frustration, especially when they compare themselves with those serving in other sister organizations internally and externally. Many of the retired officials have no homes, health insurance or active pension benefits. It becomes imperative for serving members of the NPF to thus innovate and showcase their frustration through engagement in corruption as a way of seeking alternative sources of funds to balance for the meagre salary and palliative retirement plans.

#### **5. Methodology**

The study adopted a qualitative research design to explore the views of serving and retired NPF officers on corruption, with a focus on perceptions, experiences and institutional influences on corruption in Nigeria. The qualitative approach is appropriate given the study’s focus on uncovering nuanced social dynamics, informal mentorship patterns, and cultural legacies within the NPF. Qualitative research uses several techniques, including interview, focus groups, and observation (Tenny, Brannan & Brannan, 2025). The target population consists of retired police officers and serving officers within the NPF. The researcher adopted a purposive sampling technique to select respondents who possess firsthand knowledge of the

internal workings of the NPF and have an understanding of the subject matter. The researcher interviewed 10 serving officers and 10 retired officers across various ranks. This makes a total sample of 20 officers, all within the Asaba metropolitan police. The sample size was considered adequate for a qualitative survey. The reasons for the choice of the sample size is as a result of the research scope which focus on specific population or case study (members of the NPF), saturation point (police corruption has been over researched), agreeing with the depth of understanding while upholding manageability in data collection and analysis (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006; Babbie, 2016; Yin, 2018).

The data for the study was collected through semi-structured interviews, which provide flexibility for respondents while maintaining consistency across interviews. Prior to the interview section, the questions as contained in the interview guide were subjected to validation by a senior colleague of the Department of Criminology. The interview was done one-on-one with the interviewed officers. The researcher informed the respondents on the nature of the research before the interview was carried out, and consent was obtained with the assurance of confidentiality after educating them on the right of withdrawal. Given the sensitive nature of the topic, rapport and trust building, clear communication, flexible scheduling, incentives, anonymity and pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of officers and ensure that they remain focused to the interview. The outcome of the interview was analysed using transcription, thematic, content, comparative analysis, these fix methods was considered necessary for a nature of work like this.

## 6. Findings

The results of the analysis are presented in the two tables below.

Rank	Items	Responses	Interpretations
<b>Constable</b>	Retirement Imaginations	"I fear to imagine retirement because the experiences I have observed from retired officers are very awful; most of them can barely feed, clothe themselves, and see their wards through school and the worst many can't even afford rents."	They are afraid of retirement because retired officers are suffering bitterly after they leave active service
	Survival Through Corruption	"Our salary is not enough to feed a family. We're expected to look sharp, report daily, and risk our lives, but we're paid peanuts. Collecting money from road users is survival."	Corruption is normalized as a coping mechanism for economic hardship.
<b>Corporal</b>	Retirement Imaginations	"A mere look at officers protesting every day over payment of retirement benefits, pensions and gratuity should propel any officer to start looking for any survival means to allow for augmenting the weak salary and pension."	Officers start engaging in corruption as innovation to augment the meagre salary and retirement plans.
	Peer Influence	"When I joined, I saw others collecting money at checkpoints. I was told, 'If you don't do it, you will be seen as weak or stupid.' It's the culture here."	Peer pressure reinforces corrupt behaviour as a norm.
<b>Sergeant</b>	Retirement Imaginations	"When you see retired police officers on the streets, especially those of junior cadre, you will understand that the only	The afterlives of police officers create fears among serving officers. This instigates corruption.

	Mentorship by Superiors	<p>way to survive this job is corruption, as the salary is nothing.”</p> <p>“My first patrol supervisor told me, ‘Do not come back empty-handed.’ He explained how to collect bribes without drawing attention. That is how I learnt the ropes.”</p>	Corruption is taught through informal mentorship and expected performance.
<b>Inspector</b>	Retirement Imaginations	“The first thing one should think of as a serving officer is safety, and the other is retirement. The fear is very dreadful because the lived experiences of retired serving officers are frustrating: no car, no house, can’t feed well, no active health insurance, no retirement benefits and no pension.”	The retired officer creates a sense of fear for serving officers who, in the bid to avert similar experiences, choose corruption.
	Public Perception	“People insult us, call us thieves. But they do not know what we go through. We are not all bad, but the system makes it hard to stay clean.”	Defensive posture; corruption is rationalised due to systemic challenges.
<b>DSP</b>	Reform Skepticism	“Every few years, they announce reforms, new uniforms, and new slogans, but nothing changes. The same corrupt officers stay in power. It is just for show.”	Deep distrust in reform efforts and institutional sincerity.
<b>ASP</b>	Moral Conflict	“I wanted to serve with integrity, but I quickly realised that honesty does not get you far. You either bend or break. I still struggle with that.”	Ethical dissonance between personal values and institutional expectations.
	Political Interference	“Retired officers still have influence. They call in favours, protect their boys, and block disciplinary actions. They are part of the corruption network.”	Corruption is sustained through external and political patronage.
<b>SP</b>	Accountability Mechanisms	“When officers are caught, they are investigated by their friends. Most cases are buried. If you have someone at the top, you are untouchable.”	Internal accountability is viewed as corrupt and ineffective.
	Recruitment and Training	“Some officers cannot even write a proper report. They were recruited through connections. Training is outdated, and we are not equipped to serve professionally.”	Poor recruitment and training undermine ethical standards.

	Hope for Change	“There are good officers who want change, but they are afraid. If we had better pay, strong leadership, and real oversight, things could improve.”	Reform is possible but requires structural and cultural transformation.
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Table 2: Serving Officers’ Perceptions toward Corruption in Nigeria: Rank-Based Responses Source: Author Interview 2025

Rank	Items	Responses	Interpretations
<b>Inspector</b>	Retirement Imaginations	“Any reasonable serving officers would do anything to survive life after retirement, including corruption.”	Retired officers acknowledged that retirement plans go with the act of corruption, especially as benefits and pensions are very unreasonable and usually take years of delays.
	Legacy of Corruption	“We did what we had to do. The system was broken even back then. Today’s officers just took it to another level.”	Acknowledges past corruption and its evolution.
<b>Inspector</b>	Retirement Imaginations	"While still on active service, serving officers should be smart by doing everything possible to save for retirement because suffering is real after retirement.”	Acknowledges corruption as smartness.
	Mentorship Influence	“We taught them how to survive, not how to steal. If they are corrupt, it is their choice.”	Denies direct influence but admits informal guidance.
<b>Inspector</b>	Retirement Imaginations	“If I knew I would experience the financial difficulty on retirement, I would have chosen any available means, including engaging in corruption. I regret it now, and I will encourage any serving officer to start early, as the salary is too meagre.”	Encouraging corruption among serving officers.
	Denial of Responsibility	“I retired clean. I do not know what these young officers are doing now.”	Rejects any link between retired and serving officers.
<b>DSP</b>	Retirement Imaginations	I don’t blame any officers who extort and collect bribes; it’s the only way they can survive the job. If you didn’t engage in corruption, it would be difficult to feed, clothe, or have a home or even see your children through school.	Retired officers support corruption, seeing it as a survival technique.



	Systemic Failure	“We were part of a system that rewarded loyalty over honesty. It is difficult to blame only the young ones.”	Accepts institutional complicity in corruption.
<b>DSP</b>	Political Patronage	“Some of us still have connections. We help our boys when they are in trouble. That is how the system works.”	Admits ongoing influence and protection of corrupt officers.
<b>ASP</b>	Reform Advocacy	“I speak out against corruption. I tell young officers to do better than we did.”	Advocates for change, but acknowledge past flaws.
<b>SP</b>	Defensive Legacy	“We served during tough times. Do not compare us to today’s officers who extort openly.”	Deflects blame and draws generational contrast.
<b>CSP</b>	Cultural Transmission	“They still come to us for advice. We must be careful what we pass down. Some of us glorify the wrong things.”	Recognizes the mentorship role in perpetuating corruption.
	Pension and Welfare Frustration	“We are treated like trash after retirement. If officers are corrupt today, it is because they fear ending up like us.”	Links corruption to fear of post-retirement hardship.
	Institutional Reform	“We need to support reforms and stop shielding bad officers. Our silence is part of the problem.”	Calls for accountability and admits complicity through silence.

Table 3: Retired Officers’ Perceptions towards Corruption in Nigeria: Rank-Based Responses; source: Author Interview 2025

## 7. Discussion of Findings

The study results as drawn from the interviews revealed that serving officers of the NPF turn to corruption as a means of innovation after a rationalisation of the suffering of retired officers through an intersubjective projection of the defining officers’ lived experiences while serving and likely future retirement outcome. A constable asserts, *“I fear to imagine retirement because the experiences I have observed from retired officers are very awful; most of them can barely feed, clothe themselves, and see their wards through school, and the worst can’t even afford rent.”* The assertion of the officer presents serving officers’ fears propagated from the observed suffering of the daily life of retired officers. The excerpt of a retired inspector presents a lucid concordance to that of the serving constable: *“While still on active service, serving officers should be smart by doing everything possible to save for retirement because suffering is real after retirement.”* This assertion suggests that serving officers should engage in corruption as innovations to augment future retirement plans, considering the meagre salary, gratuity and pension. This result aligns with the report of Onje (2025); retired officers recounted that they received retirement benefits that were less than three million Nigerian naira (less than \$2,000) and a monthly pension allowance of forty thousand Nigerian naira (less than \$35); many also affirmed that they are yet to receive any form of payment since official retirement. Others reported that they barely can feed themselves or their families; some are homeless, ill

and can't cater for their medical needs due to lack of or ineffective health insurance. The awful lived daily experiences faced in the job by serving officers, coupled with the meagre salary, are married to the observation of the suffering of retired officers, forming the mirror image usually propagated by fears of retirement even while still serving.

The study results from the interview revealed that corruption is seen by serving officers as a means of survival strategy. A constable stated, *"We are not paid enough. Collecting money is how we survive."* This statement by the officer echoes the economic worry that energises unethical behaviour. According to Ibrahim (2019a), poor salary and a deficiency of welfare support are among the major causes of police misconduct, specifically among junior-ranked officers. Going forward, this is obviously seen in the suffering of retired officers, which may have arisen from the survivalist mindset of serving and retired officers. According to Sahara Reporters (2025), it reported that retired officers have in the past protested that they have been receiving as little as ₦1.6 million after decades of service to the nation, making serving officers have resentment of retirement and justify the reason for their corrupt tendencies as a form of future security.

The study results further revealed how corrupt practices are informally taught to them by senior officers and retirees across ranks, as stated by serving corporals and sergeants. One sergeant noted, *"My supervisor told me, 'Do not come back empty-handed'"* While the retired officers self-proclaimed to offer "survival tips", nevertheless, some retired officers denied encouraging corruption. This result aligns with the study of Aborisade and Fayemi (2015); the researchers opined that corruption in the NPF is a socially communicated norm, passed down through informal mentorship and peer modelling. The "mirror image" is clear: retired officers shaped the corrupt culture that serving officers now inherit.

The study findings revealed a missed expression about their deepest distrust of any police reform efforts, which is agreed upon by both serving and retired officers. A serving DSP said, *"Reforms are just talk. Nothing ever changes."* A retired inspector echoed this, *"We were part of a system that rewarded loyalty over honesty."* This disbelief aligns with the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), which notes that corruption in the NPF has remained "virtually unchanged in form and format" despite decades of reform attempts by various Inspectors General of Police (IGP). This flaw of internal accountability instruments, as emphasised by Ibrahim (2019a), has led to widespread impunity in the NPF.

The study also revealed that retired officers use their political connections to shield their corrupt cronies, who are serving personnel, to continue to wield their influence among serving personnel. A CSP stated, *"Retired officers still pull strings; they are part of the corruption network."* A retired DSP confessed to helping "their boys" avoid disciplinary action. The act of illegality, as mirrored in the NPF, is a rooted support system for serving officers, where loyalty is rewarded by their cronies. The Guardian (2025) reported that undermining integrity, accountability, and reform will enable more informal influence from retired officers on serving officers through their informal networks.

Consequently, the findings of the study revealed that some serving and retired police officers stated moral discomfort about the status quo in the NPF. Thus, a serving ASP said, *"I joined to serve with the mindset of integrity, but the system forces you to compromise on the job"*. Again, a retired DCP stated, *"We need to support police reforms and stop shielding bad police officers"* These voices in the NPF represent a minority but are crucial for change. Ibrahim (2019b) argues that ethical awareness must be nurtured within the force to respond to the existing institutional decay of the NPF. Thus, the recent announcement of the IGP's officers' welfare inducements for ethical conduct is a step in the right direction (ICPC & PS, 2008).

## **9. Results, Implications and the Way Forward**

In order to address properly the root cause of corruption in the NPF, there must be a deliberate reform that will address the real cause of corruption in the force with the aim of nipping the challenges without playing lip bud. It was revealed in the study that one pressing issue in the force is poor remuneration and a lack of welfare for officers (serving and retired) (Ibrahim, 2019b). To solve this problem, the government needs to pay attention to the welfare and salary upgrades of the officers. As noted earlier, retired officers had protested because of the insignificant amount received as retirement benefits of ₦1.6 million after decades of service to the nation (Sahara Reporters, 2025). This said amount fails to reflect the sacrifice put into the service of the NPF over the years; hence, they desperately solicit income through corrupt means as future security. Thus, an improved pension pay and scheme will restore dignity in the force, especially among the young police officers.

The NPF has designed a structural mentorship for officers, and their training should include modules of integrity, public service ethics and accountability to nip the challenges stated by Aborisade and Fayemi (2015). Thus, promoting integrity and misconduct due to peer pressure will increase ethical mentorship and the internal culture of the force. To reduce scepticism, the Police Complaints Commission should be granted autonomy to prosecute cases independently, as this will restore trust (ICPC, 2024). This will build public confidence and deter impunity.

The NPF officers should be monitored, while necessary feedback should be gathered from the public as a criterion for promotion of officers, instead of just the routine three years of service. Consequently, the Police Act should be reviewed to reflect modern standards of accountability and human rights. Also, an annual corruption audit should be undertaken in the force, and a report published publicly to punish any offender. This implies that ethical conduct should attract reward for the institution.

### **9.1. Contribution to Knowledge**

The research analysed corruption in the police system from the standpoint of mirror image, which explains that corruption is orchestrated as a result of fear of retirement, especially after the observation of the life states of retired officers. On this note, the research added to knowledge by leveraging the mirror image of retired police officers as a major cause of corruption among serving officers in Nigeria. The mirror image was well captured in both theories as employed in the study (Social Strain and Aggression Frustration Theory), postulating that serving officers have observed retired officers' afterlives' struggles and suffering and tend to innovate and exhibit their angers and frustrations using corruption (extortion and bribery) as a means of survival amidst the meagre salary and to augment retirement plans.

## **10. Conclusion**

The study examines corruption of the serving and retired NPF officers. It was revealed in the study that corruption has been in existence for generations within the NPF. It is discovered that serving officers having mirrored retired serving officers adopt or adapt to corruption (bribery and extortion) as a way to cater for their meagre salaries and augment their retirement plans. Also, some retired police officers still play the role of shaping corruption among the serving officers, a practice that they were involved in as a survival means during their service years. These retired officers now serve as mentors to the serving officers. The study noted that serving officers degrade themselves to corruption tendencies, such as extortion, abuse of power, and bribery, which are normalised and even expected from them by their superiors. This act has made the public lose confidence in the institution, while the officers attribute it to poor remuneration, weak accountability and fear of post-retirement neglect. This “Mirrored Image” concerning these officers remains a sorry state in the mind of the people, and the continued act will continue to dissipate distrust and confidence amongst citizens. It is therefore necessary to reprimand unethical norms inherited from their

predecessors. However, in the midst of these mirrored images, there are few voices within the force still advocating for integrity and reform; these few voices often hope for transformation. To end this ugly cycle, bold reforms must be pursued with the aims of improving welfare, enforcing accountability, and fostering a new ethical culture of policing. Thus, the NPF should engage both serving and retired officers as agents of change to rebuild public trust and fulfil the NPF mandate of justice and service. Also, erring corruption officials who fall short of the required ethical responsibility of the job should be sanctioned.

The researcher faced some limitations as a result of funding and gaining access to police officers who constituted the respondents for this study. Many refused to discuss freely in their official premises as a result of the regimented working environment.

Although the study has contributed to knowledge in that serving officers' develop corruption strategies as a result of the fear of being caught in the same web that retired officers are experiencing after retirement. A fear that emanated from the mirror image, which occurs after serving officers intersubjectively analyse themselves in the lives of retired officers; thus, anger and frustration create a sense of innovations among serving officers, which are showcased in extortions and bribery. The study suggests further research that will incorporate more eclectic approaches involving a qualitative and quantitative approach with a greater sample size.

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