Cross-Country Variations of Public Bribery in Africa

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Abstract

Corruption in Africa undermines development and access to public services. This study investigates variations in the prevalence of bribery and associated factors across African countries. This study analyzed the eighth round of the Afrobarometer survey dataset with a sample of over 40,000 respondents across 34 African countries. The study found that 68.2% of Africans reported paying a bribe to public service officials. This figure ranges from 17.7% of respondents who paid bribes for public school services to 35.7% for police assistance. Thirty percent of Africans have paid bribes for choice institutions compared to 61% for monopoly institutions. Liberia recorded the highest prevalence of bribery for school services (47.1%) and medical care (59.3%). Cameroonians paid the most bribes for identity documents (52.3%), while Nigeria recorded the highest for bribery for police assistance (80.4%). Gender, age, education, poverty and political participation/activism were significant predictors of different forms of bribery, but their associations vary across countries. The study suggests that bribery occurs more often in monopoly institutions where the people have no alternatives. In addition, variations in the factors associated bribery indicates cross-country diversity and the need to region or country-specific policy interventions to reduce the bribery in public services in Africa.

Keywords: Afrobarometer; School Bribery; Police Bribery; Medical Care Bribery; Identity Document Bribery

Introduction

Bribery and corruption are as old as the human race, but their disproportionate effects on development in developing countries are monumental. According to Cleveland et al. (2009), there is a consensus that bribery is unethical and harmful to social progress. Aside from being unethical, bribery has adverse

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effects on society, including a fall in the amount of taxes generated by the government (because people pay bribes instead of taxes), a reduction in public service efficiency (Cleveland et al., 2009), an increase in the level of distrust in the system (Shaw, 2000), undermining the legitimacy of democracy (Seligson, 2006), etc. In addition, bribery leads to a situation of undue advantages, where critical positions and documents are given to unqualified people (Hunt & Laszlo, 2012).

In the health sector, for instance, the negative impacts of bribery in developing countries had always been felt before the Coronavirus. However, since the global pandemic in 2019, many developing countries, including those in Africa, have been feeling the heat of corruption in public governance (Alabi & Krönke, 2024; Gaspar et al., 2020). Access to specialised medical services for COVID-19 patients and those affected by the disease has been coloured by the complications of corruption in Africa (Cuffe, 2021; Usman et al., 2022). Cases of unequal access to relief materials and embezzlement of Covid-19 funds have been reported in Africa (Alabi & Krönke, 2024; Sanny, 2022).

In the educational sector, academic transcripts are not accessible to students in some African countries, especially in public institutions. There are reports of embezzlement and diversion of funds for education equipment, nepotism and procurement fraud (Hoffmann & Patel, 2021). With the increasing emigration rate for postgraduate studies, many young people require their transcripts as part of the application requirement. However, they encounter institutional barriers in sending their transcripts from their university in their home country to their aspiring universities outside their country. University officials seek bribes to hasten the sending of academic transcripts or deliberately delay the process for months (Edwards, 2021). Retrieving and renewing national identity documents, such as passports and driver's licenses, have proven challenging in some African countries due to inefficiency, institutional corruption and bribery (Sahara Reporters, 2022; Van der Post, 2022). Also, the police- in many African countries- are notorious for seeking bribes before carrying out their duties to the populace (Adisa et al., 2020; Twum, 2022; Wambua, 2015). In fact, there is evidence that the police is the most corrupt institution in Africa (Aborisade, 2021; Adisa et al., 2020; Mbaku, 2016). However, there are tendencies to see unofficial payments as gifts, not bribes, in some cultures (Cleveland et al., 2009).

Bribery, whether paid to ease access to public service or secure undue advantage from there, deepens inequalities (Campos & Pradhan, 2007). In many African countries where governance structures are associated with nepotism and crass capital accumulation, the rich and the political class spend much time capturing the state and looting the available resources for development (Mbaku, 2019). This is because bribery, extortion from members of the public, and looting of public treasury are the primary avenues by which most public servants survive. They do not only exploit members of the public; corrupt civil

servants often connive with politicians to embezzle and loot the resources that should have gone into the eradication of poverty in the continent (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013; Mbaku, 2000). This explains why most governance reforms in African countries are yet to yield their anticipated results of fighting corruption and empowering people experiencing poverty (Okonjo-Iweala, 2014). The objective of this study is to examine the prevalence of bribery in Africa, its variation across African countries, and associated factors. This study asks: how does public bribery vary by type and country in Africa? What is the role of gender, age, lived poverty index, education, and political participation/activism on the vulnerability to public bribery in Africa? Does the influence of these factors vary by type of bribery? Does the influence of these factors on bribery vary across countries in Africa? Answers to the questions may help shed some light on the notable differences among different forms of bribery and across African countries.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Bribery and Corruption: Africa's Deleterious Problems in the Face of Reforms

The term bribery in some cultures (including the African context) is often confused with gift-giving. Bribery is the use of money or non-monetary values to induce someone in an authority position to do what (s)he would not have done. It includes using money to change a public servant's decision or receiving special favour or treatment from someone representing the public interest (Adisa et al., 2022; Mbaku, 2000). In addition, bribery may sometimes be paid to induce public officials to facilitate or hasten the public service delivery process or bypass essential procedures. Such bribes are often called "grease payment," (Cleveland et al., 2009) "facilitating payment," or "speed payment."

Research on corruption and development in Africa has attested that corruption slows down the pace of economic development (Campos & Pradhan, 2007; Hunt & Laszlo, 2012; Kaufmann & Dininio, 2006; Mauro, 1995). Mauro (1995) established that a percentage increase in the level of corruption would negatively affect a country's gross domestic product. Campos and Pradhan (2007) detailed how corruption empowers the rich and makes the poor vulnerable to abuse in education, transportation, and petroleum. The work detailed the extent to which the corruption in revenue generation and public procurement denies millions of people the needed funds for public infrastructural development and empowers the rich with millions of dollars into foreign accounts through money laundering (Campos & Pradhan, 2007). World Bank (2011) published a report on how cartels that dominated the transportation and road sectors used collusion to embezzle funds in contract execution. These studies and others attest

that corruption has continued to have negative impacts on social development. It should be noted that no country is free of bribery and corruption. However, the extent to which corrupt practices have been institutionalized varies across countries. In addition, the effects of bribery and corruption vary across countries. In many African countries, "gift-giving" in exchange for official services has been institutionalized such that gifting has become overtly mandatory and those who refuse to gift public officials are perceived as greedy and may not receive quality services. Consequently, bribes are not willingly offered by the bribe-payer in some cases, they are covertly and subtly demanded by officials, leaving service seekers with little choice. However, this is not to portray the bribe-takers as culprits and the bribe-payers as innocent. The agency rests with both parties (Nel, 2020), and bribe-payers may offer bribes to officials to bypass lengthy procedures. Aside from the negative economic effects of bribery and corruption, their implication for mis-appointment and normalization of unofficial payments in exchange for free services is gross.

Factors associated with vulnerability to bribery: Expounding the soft-target hypothesis

Arguably, corruption varies across institutions like schools, health, police, and immigration services, considering (1) differences in the demand for the services, (2) differences in the coercive powers held by officials in the institutions, (3) the extent of the monopoly of services rendered by the institution (Peiffer & Rose, 2018).

The monopoly of power or services is believed to increase the chances of bribe-seeking (Goel et al., 2013; Peiffer & Rose, 2018; Yang, 2005). It is expected that institutions that offer services (such as policing, issuance of passports, and other official documents) provided only by the government will be more corrupt than competitive institutions (such as schools and hospitals) that the government and private individuals can establish. Consequently, Peiffer and Rose (2018) argued that in choice institutions, people have a choice to seek the services of private organizations and avoid corruption in the public sector. This view portrays the private sector as less corrupt and assumes that the people have the financial wherewithal to patronize private organizations. Nonetheless, reducing the monopolistic power of an institution may reduce its corruption tendencies.

Evidence shows that gender is related to bribery (Boehm, 2015; Breen et al., 2017; Lan & Hong, 2017; McGee & Benk, 2023; Organization, 2020; Swamy et al., 2001). The "soft-target" explanation suggests that perpetrators of anomalies are strategic and focus on specific categories of people they believe are more vulnerable and whose victimization will not likely result in their apprehension (Alabi, 2023; Hussin & Zawawi, 2012). The soft-target explanation assumes that women are more likely to be targeted than

men (Hussin & Zawawi, 2012). Hence, one may expect that bribe seekers will target men more than women. In addition, African society is largely patriarchal, with men earning more than women. Consequently, bribes may be sought from men- who are believed to be wealthier- than women.

A few empirical studies have been conducted to ascertain the direction of the association between gender and bribery and corruption (Boehm, 2015; Breen et al., 2017; Lan & Hong, 2017; Swamy et al., 2001). According to Breen et al. (2016), who utilized the World Bank's Enterprise Survey, female business owners or top female managers are less likely to pay bribes than men. The former is also less corrupt than the latter. Similarly, Peiffer and Rose (2014) found that women are less likely to pay bribes than men possibly because "women are more likely to be excluded from contact with officials" (p. 9). Swamy et al. (2001) also reported that women are less likely to pay bribes than men and are less likely to condone bribe-seeking than men. A social experimental study found that "males gave larger bribes in the private context than in the public, whereas females gave smaller bribes in both contexts" (Lan & Hong, 2015, p. 1). A similarly empirical study by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2020) also reported that men at different points pay bribes more than women. However, in a blog post for the World Bank, Habbershon (2021) argued that women are not necessarily less corrupt than men, but women are less represented/included and less trusted by networks of corrupt organizations and individuals.

Regarding age, the soft-target explanation suggests that older people may be targeted for extortion by public officials. However, Alabi (2023) reported that young people are less patient. Consequently, they may offer "grease" or "speed" payment to public officials to have their services rendered/delivered faster than normal. By implication, even if public officials do not demand bribes from young people, the latter may offer it. The lesson from this is that bribe offering and bribe seeking are different things. Public officials may demand bribes to render services that are supposed to be free. Also, users of public services may also offer bribes to public officials to speed up the service delivery process or to boycott essential procedures. In some African countries, an example is when public members do not have the required skills and documents to obtain a driver's license but are willing to pay bribes to get it. Supporting this claim, an empirical study has shown that young people tend to have more favourable attitudes toward corrupt practices than older people (McGee & Benk, 2023). In another study, however, age was not significantly associated with bribery intention (Bai et al., 2016).

From the perspective of soft target explanation, the least educated may be described as "soft targets" because of the likelihood of the absence of adequate knowledge to navigate social institutions, such as the health, police and education, and ask questions when public officials demand bribes from them. While some studies found no significant association between educational level and attitudes toward bribery

(McGee et al., 2023), studies on corruption in the institutes of higher learning suggest that being educated may not necessarily deter people from being corrupt (Heyneman, 2004; Osipian, 2008). In fact, educated people may have more opportunities to be involved in corrupt practices. In all, Peiffer and Rose (2014) expresses caution in the discussion of the association between education and bribery because educated people are more likely aware of the implications of bribery. Hence, they are less likely to report their payment of bribery.

Regarding poverty, Justesen and Bjørnskov (2014), who used the Afrobarometer survey, found that the poor are more prone to bribery. Peiffer and Rose (2018), who disaggregated Afrobarometer survey data into types of services, found that poor people are as likely as rich people to pay bribes for monopoly services. However, the former pays bribes for choice services than the latter. This implies an increasing inequality between the rich and the poor. This is why Ake (2000) and Mbaku (2000) argue that public-service corruption affects the poor more than the rich. However, a recent study noted that macroeconomic indicators such as inflation can mitigate the positive association between poverty and bribery (Asongu & Diop, 2024). Contrary to soft-target hypothesis, which suggests that the poor may be more vulnerable, Hunt and Laszlo (2012) found that in Peru and Uganda, the rich use officials more often and are more likely to pay bribes than the poor, although the latter pays a larger share of their income as bribes than the former, a claim that has been debated recently (Nel, 2020).

In Africa, it is expected that in the case of choice services, the rich would prefer private institutions because of the distrust and ineffectiveness of the public ones. Hence, they have little contact with public institutions in the first place. However, it makes logical sense to believe that the rich will pay bribes to monopoly institutions such as the police and issuers of national identity documents to quicken service delivery.

There is a paucity of literature on the influence of political participation on bribery. Earlier studies in this regard have focused on the reverse association, that is, the influence of corruption on political participation (Giommoni, 2021; Školník, 2020). The findings are that corruption discourages political participation.

METHODS

Data and population

This study analysed the Afrobarometer dataset. Afrobarometer uses nationally representative sampling strategies. More information on the sampling is available on the Afrobarometer website

(https://www.afrobarometer.org/). Survey questionnaires and datasets are also publicly available on the website.

The current study utilised round 8 data, which were collected between 2019 and 2021 across 34 African countries. The data comprised 40800 respondents across 34 African countries (1200 respondents from each country). All the respondents were first asked if they had had contact with or requested assistance from five public institutions twelve months before the survey. These include (1) contact with a public school; (2) contact with a public hospital or clinic; (3) approaching any government institution that deals with public identity documents, such as birth certificate, passport, driver's license, voter's card, etc; (4) requesting assistance from the police; (5) encountering the police at traffic stops, checkpoints, etc. Only those who had encounters with the public institutions proceeded to answer the questions on bribery. The number of Africans who had contact with a public school was 15871; 25076 people had contact with the hospital; 15483 people tried to obtain an identity document; 5944 requested police assistance; 5552 people had contacts with the police at traffic stops or checkpoints. Peiffer and Rose (2018) regarded schools and hospitals as rendering choice services because they are provided by both the government and private entities so that the people can choose.

Variables

Outcome variable

The outcome variable is public bribery or public service bribery. Participants were asked, "How often, if ever, did you have to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favour for..." (1) "services you needed from the schools?" ; (2) "A health worker or clinic or hospital staff in order to get the medical care you needed?"; (3) "A government official in order to get the document you needed?"; (4) "A police officer in order to get the assistance you needed?"; (5) "a police officer in order to avoid a problem during one of these encounters?" The options range from "0" (never) to "3" (often). For each of these questions, a score of "0" meant that the respondent had never paid a bribe, while a score of "1" or higher meant otherwise.

At a second level, any respondent who paid a bribe for public school service and/or medical care was regarded as having paid a bribe for "choice services" or to a "choice institution". Anyone who has paid a bribe to get an identity document and/or to police assistance and/or to avoid police problems was treated as having paid a bribe for "monopoly service" or to a "monopoly institution".

At a third level, public bribery is a composite measure of all five variables. In all, a score of "0" meant that a respondent had not paid a bribe for any public service in the twelve months preceding the survey, while a score of 1 or higher meant that a respondent had paid a bribe for public service.

Independent variables

This study selects five independent variables: gender, age, education, lived poverty index (LPI), political participation. Afrobarometer captured education at many different levels, which we recategorized into four in this study: "0" = no formal education; "1" = some/completed primary education; "2" = some/completed secondary education; "3"= post-secondary education. LPI is a composite measure of five levels of material deprivation: how often respondents and/or their families went without enough water, food, cooking fuel, medical care and cash income. A higher score meant high poverty level. Political participation/activism is a composite measure of three variables. Respondents were asked how often they engaged in three actions in the year preceding the survey: "attended a community meeting", "go together with others to raise an issue", and "participated in a demonstration or protest march". The response options range from "0"= "No, would never do this" to "4"= "Yes, often". The score for each respondent ranged from 0 to 12.

At the descriptive level, ratio variables (including LPI, political participation and age) are presented in categories. At the inferential level, age, LPI and political participation are treated as ratio variables, while gender and education remain categorical.

Data analysis

Data analysis was carried out at different levels. At the descriptive level, data were analysed using simple frequencies, percentages and means. Simple bar charts were used to present the prevalence of different forms of public bribery across the continent. At the inferential level, analysis began with the use of binary logistic regression to investigate how the five independent variables are associated with public bribery, that is, the composite outcome of five forms of bribery. The results are presented in Table 2. We tested for multicollinearity by running a correlation matrix of the independent variables. There was no high correlation between the independent variables (all correlation coefficients were less than 0.3). Hosmer and Lemeshow Test were used to determine the goodness of fit of the model.

Aside from investigating the influence of the five variables on public bribery, we predicted that there might be a difference in how the predicting variables influence each of the five forms of bribery. We then computed a binary logistic regression model for each of the five forms of bribery. However, according

to the Hosmer and Lemeshow tests, the models for bribery paid to public school officials and bribery for identity documents were not fit. Hence, only three models (bribery for medical care, bribery for police assistance and bribery to avoid police problems) are presented in Table 3.

We also predicted that there might be some differences across countries in the influence of the five independent variables on each of the dependent variables. However, the sample size for the public bribery variable (the composite outcome of the five forms of dependent variables) was small (1240) and not sufficient to test for cross-country variations. Hence, we computed logistic regression models- for each of the 34 countries, showing the influence of the independent variables (gender, age, education, LPI and political participation/activism) on each of the five forms of bribery and summarized the results without presenting tables.

RESULTS

RQ 1: How does public bribery vary by type and country in Africa?

Table 1 shows the frequency distribution of all variables. The table further shows that most bribes were paid to the police- a monopoly institution. More than a quarter of the respondents (35.7%) reported paying bribes to receive police assistance; 33.9% paid bribes to avoid problems with the police at checkpoints or traffic stops. About a quarter of the respondents paid bribes for identity documents; 19.2% paid bribes for medical care; 17.7% paid bribes to public school officials. Less than one-third (30%) paid bribes for choice services, while 61% paid bribes for monopoly services.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of the prevalence of bribery paid to school officials across African countries. The lowest prevalence of bribery for school services was recorded in Cabo Verde (2.2%), followed by Mauritius (2.5%), Botswana (4.7%), Lesotho (5%), and Morocco (5.3%). Liberia recorded the highest prevalence with 47.1%, followed by Angola (38.4%), Cameroon (35.9%), Gabon (32.2%) and Mozambique (32.2%). Figure 2 shows the distribution of bribes for medical care. Surprisingly, Morocco, which had the fifth lowest bribery rate to school officials in Figure 1, recorded the fifth highest rate for medical care (37.6%). Cabo Verde and Mauritius remained at the bottom of the chart with 1.5% and 2.6%, respectively. Liberia also recorded the highest prevalence of bribery for medical care, with 59.3%, followed by Sierra Leone (54.6%) and Uganda (42.2%).

Table 1: Frequency distribution of all variables

Gender	Frequency	Valid percent

|		
Male	20666	50.7
Female	20135	49.3
Education		
No formal education	8147	20.0
Some/completed primary education	10838	26.6
Some/completed secondary education	14882	36.6
Post-secondary education	6805	16.7
Lived poverty index		
No Lived Poverty	4158	10.3
Low Lived Poverty	12973	32.1
Moderate Lived Poverty	14030	34.7
High Lived Poverty	9286	23.0
Age		
18-25	11620	28.5
26-35	10926	26.8
36-45	7749	19.0
46-55	5059	12.4
Over 55	5440	13.3
Political participation		
No participation	3449	8.6
Low participation	15797	39.4
Medium participation	16535	41.3
High participation	4295	10.7
Bribery for public schools		
No	13048	82.3
Yes	2799	17.7
Bribery for public medical care		
No	20235	80.8
Yes	4800	19.2
Bribery for identity document		
No	11513	74.6
Yes	3930	25.4
Bribery for police assistance		
No	3810	64.3
Yes	2116	35.7
Bribery to avoid police problem		
No	10484	66.1
Yes	5381	33.9
Bribery to choice institutions		
No	8627	70.0
Yes	3695	30.0
Bribery to monopoly institution		
No	903	39.0
Yes	1413	61.0
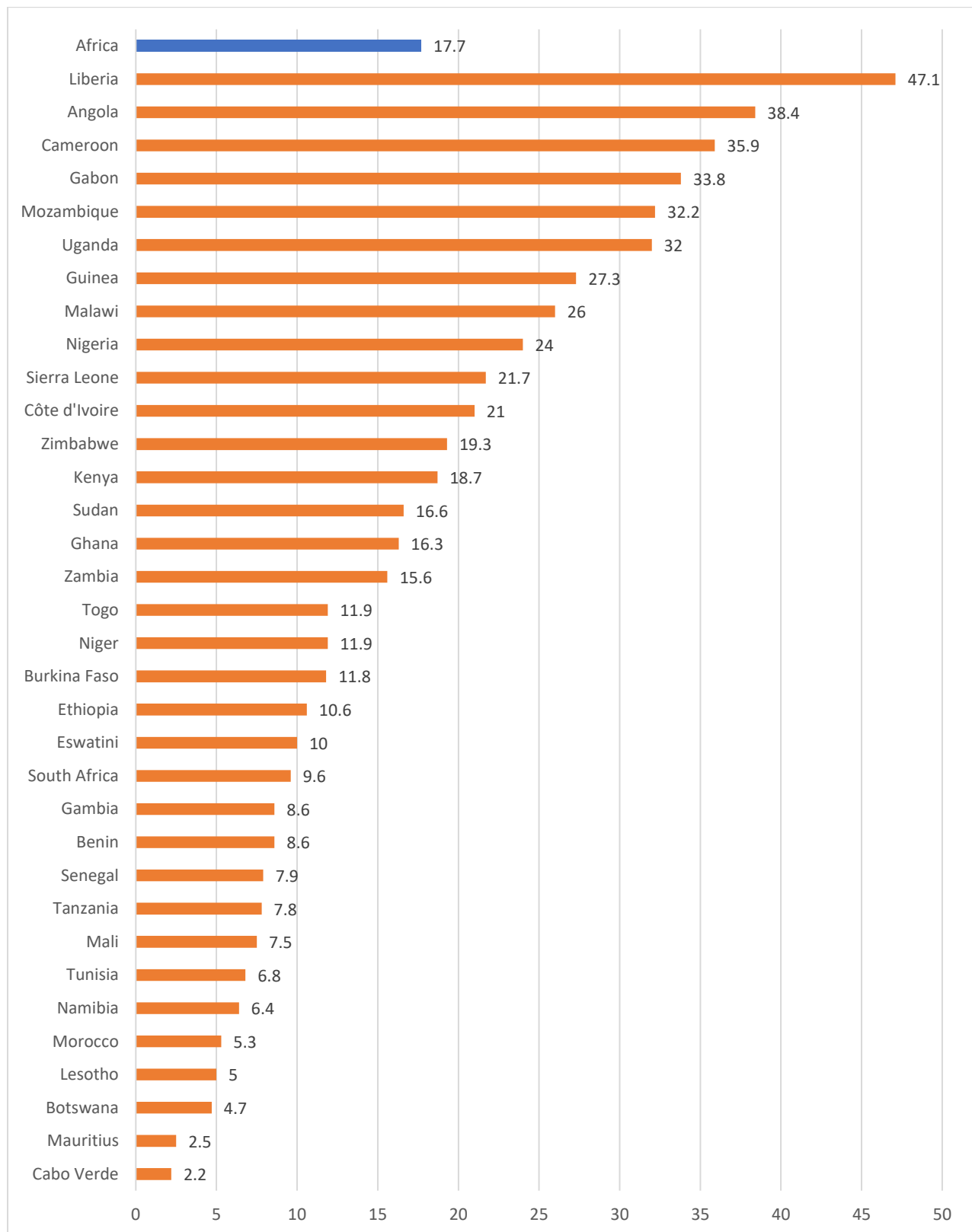
Figure 1: Bribery to public school officials (%)

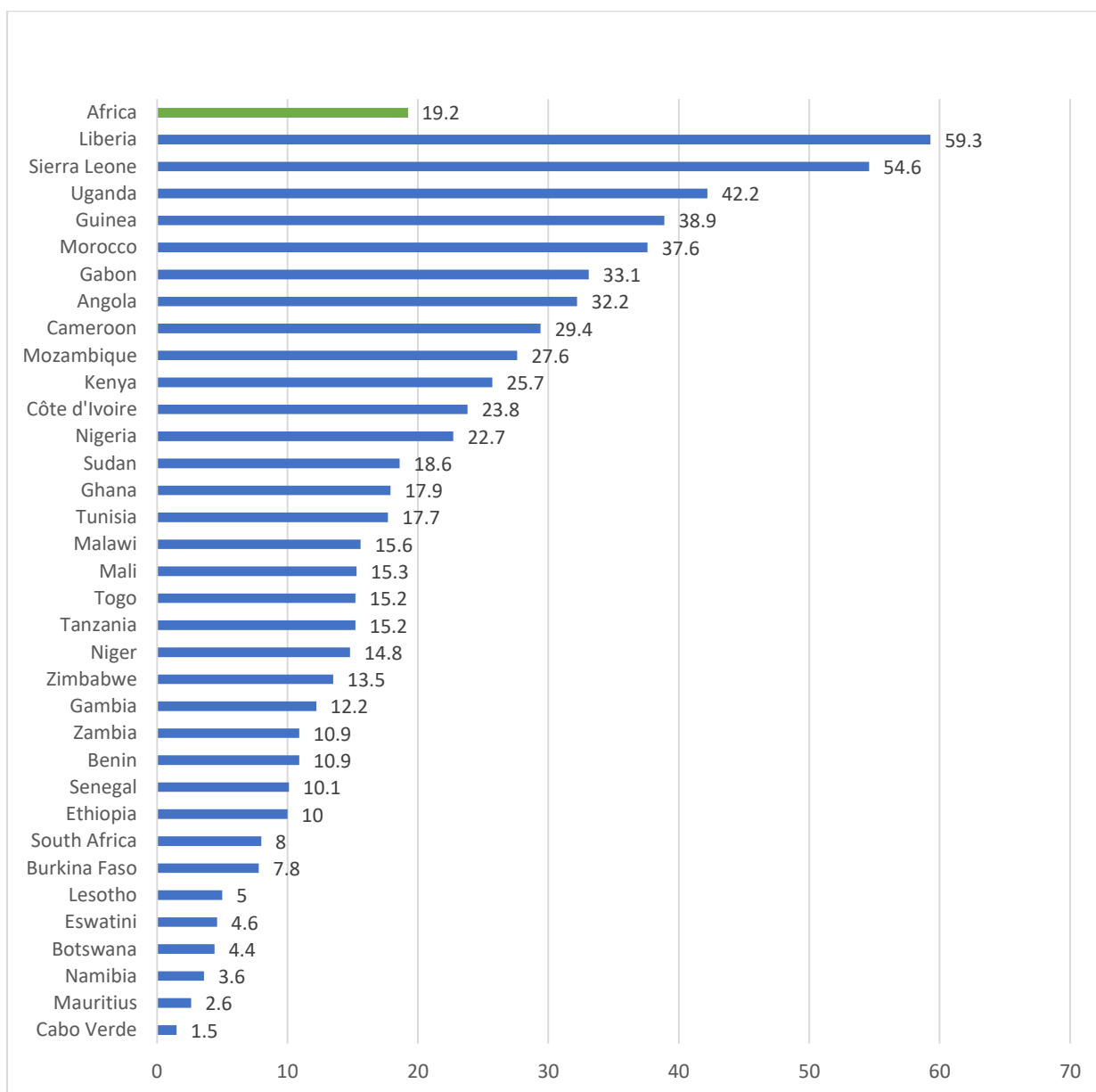**Source: Afrobarometer survey data, 2022**

Figure 2: Bribery for medical care (%)

Source: Afrobarometer survey data, 2022

As in Figure 2, Cabo Verde, Mauritius, Botswana and Namibia also remained at the bottom of the chart in Figure 3, showing bribery for identity documents. Cameroon, Kenya, Sierra Leone, Nigeria and Liberia were the top five countries that paid the most bribes for identity documents; the prevalence is 52.3%, 50.6%, 46.7%, 44.3% and 43.2%, respectively. Countries like Cote d'Ivoire, Sudan and Ghana remained in the three forms of bribery at the middle of the charts. Figure 4 shows that Nigerians paid the most bribe for police assistance, with four in five persons reporting to have paid bribes. Uganda took the second spot with 75.9%; Liberia recorded the third prevalence with 68.3%; Guinea came fourth with 58.9%. Cabo

Verde, Mauritius, Namibia and Botswana remained at the bottom of the chart. For bribery paid to avoid police problems presented in Figure 5, Guinea (75.3%), Nigeria (70.1%), Togo (62.4%) and Liberia (55%) were on top of the chart. In comparison, Cabo Verde (1.6%), Namibia (8.6%), Mauritius (9.1%) and Botswana (10.1%) remained at the bottom of the chart.

We computed the average for the five forms of bribery. The figure shows that Liberians paid the most bribes (54.58%), followed by Ugandans (48.4%), Nigerians/Guineans (48.3% each), and Sierra Leoneans (45%). The country that paid the least bribes was Cabo Verde (1.5%) followed by Mauritius (4.6%) and Namibia (6%) and Botswana (6.1%).
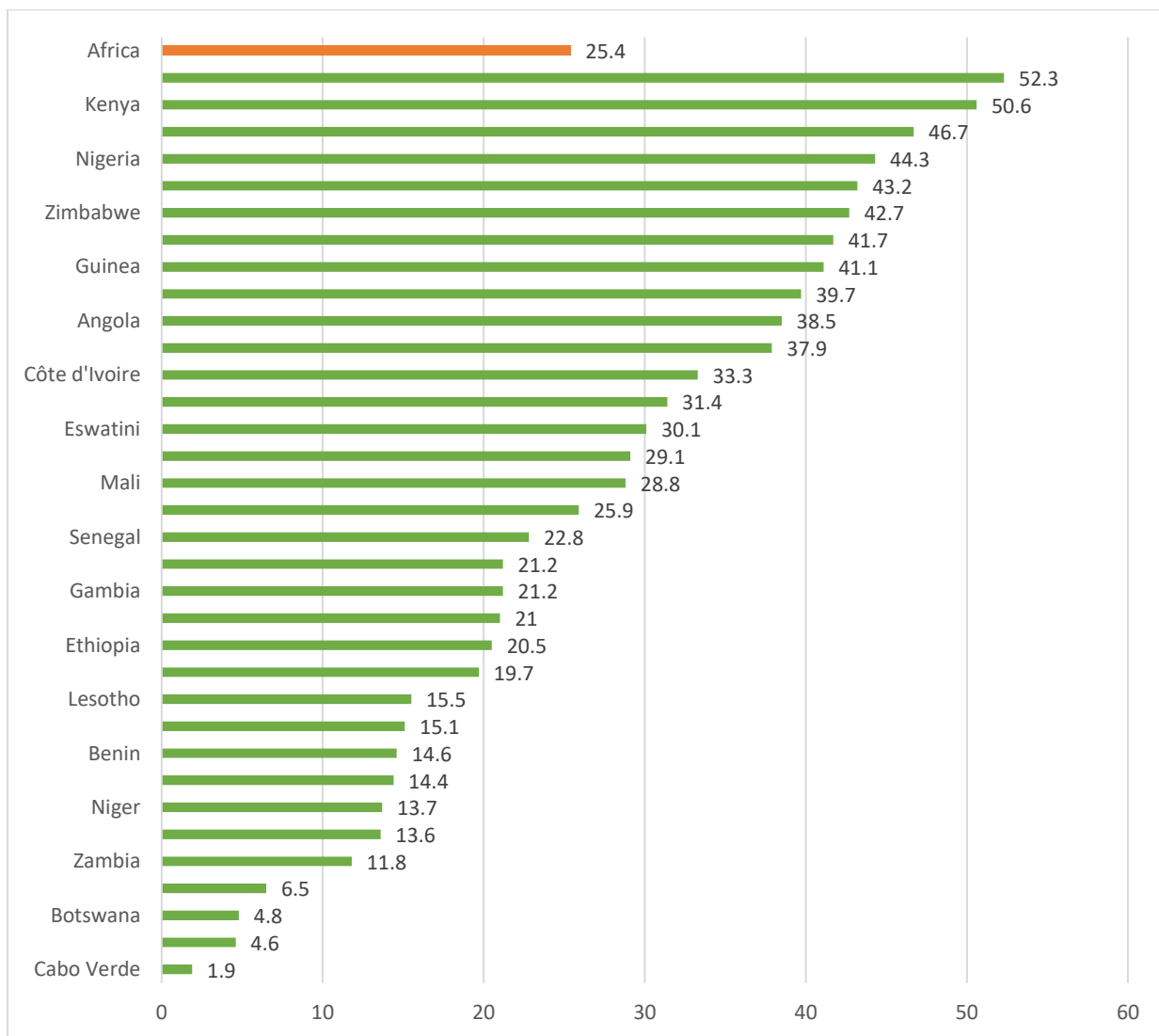
Country	Value
Africa	25.4
	52.3
Kenya	50.6
	46.7
Nigeria	44.3
	43.2
Zimbabwe	42.7
	41.7
Guinea	41.1
	39.7
Angola	38.5
	37.9
Côte d'Ivoire	33.3
	31.4
Eswatini	30.1
	29.1
Mali	28.8
	25.9
Senegal	22.8
	21.2
Gambia	21.2
	21
Ethiopia	20.5
	19.7
Lesotho	15.5
	15.1
Benin	14.6
	14.4
Niger	13.7
	13.6
Zambia	11.8
	6.5
Botswana	4.8
	4.6
Cabo Verde	1.9

Figure 3: Bribery for identity document (%)

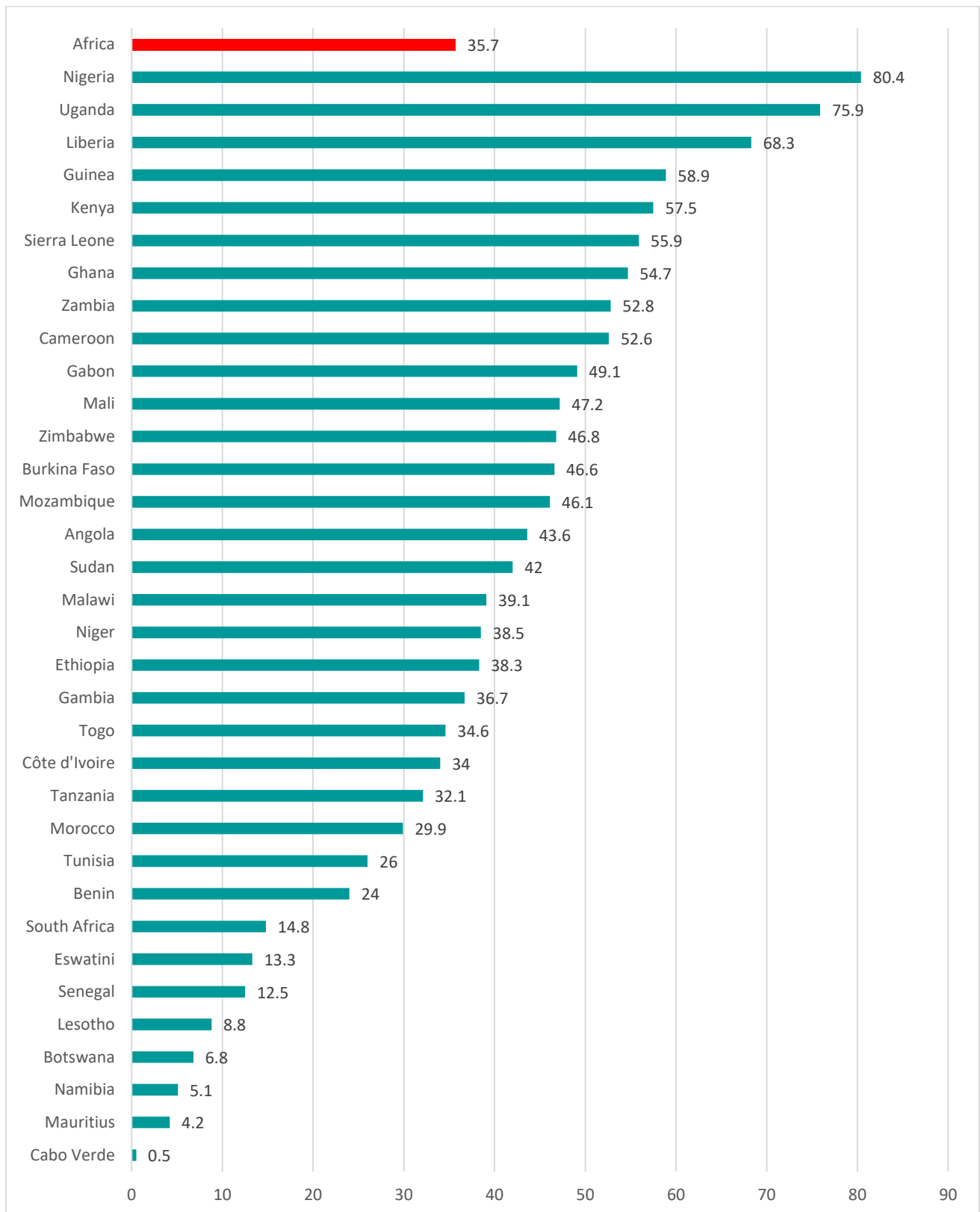**Source: Afrobarometer survey data, 2022**

Figure 4: Bribery for police assistance (%)
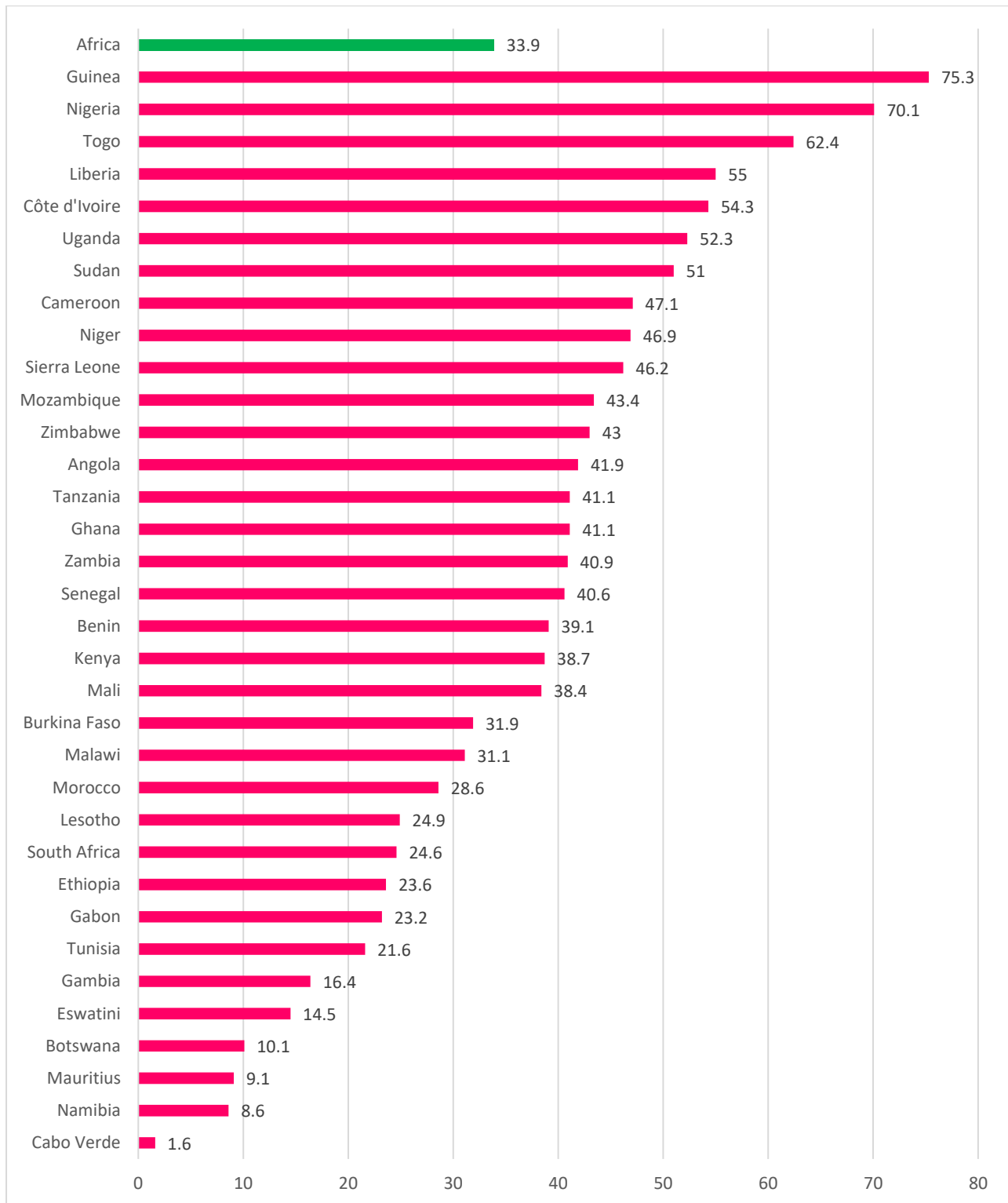**Source: Afrobarometer survey data, 2022**

Figure 5: Bribery to avoid police problem (%)

Source: Afrobarometer survey data, 2022

In line with the study of Peiffer and Rose (2018), we categorized the five forms of bribery into two: bribes paid for choice services and bribes paid for monopoly services. The results are shown in Figure 6. The

figure shows that Liberians paid the most bribes for choice services (70.5%), followed by Sierra Leoneans (57.8%) and Ugandans (55.4%). Nigeria fell in the tenth position and recorded a score of 37% for choice service bribes. However, Nigerians paid the most bribes for monopoly services, with a score of 98.1%, followed by Liberians (89.7%), Guineans (86.7%), Angolans (86.1%), and Ghanaians (85.7%). The top three countries (Nigeria, Liberia and Guinea) are in West Africa.
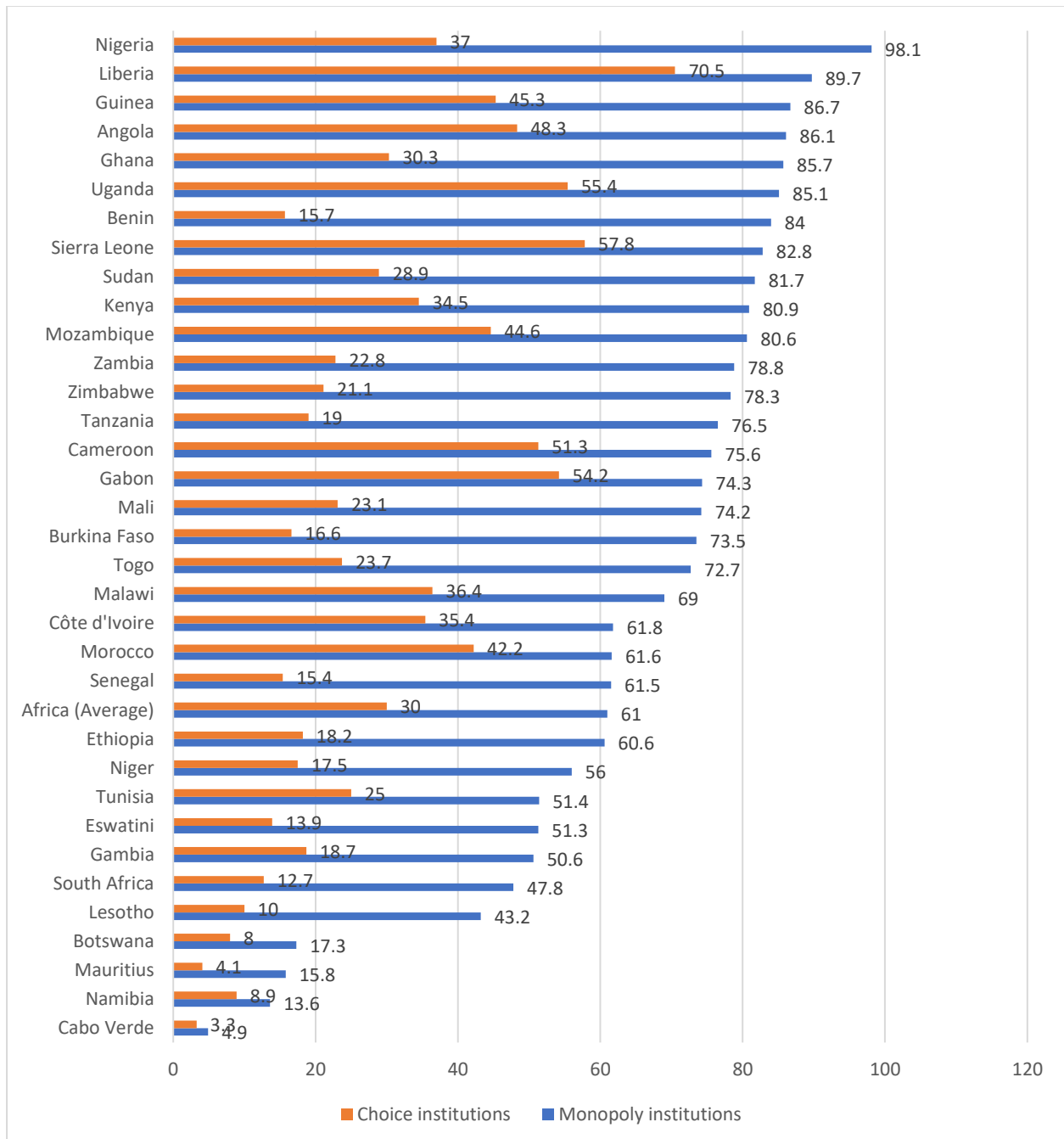

Figure 6: Bribery to choice and monopoly institutions across Africa (%)

Source: Afrobarometer survey data, 2022

RQ 2: What is the role of gender, age, lived poverty index, education, and political participation/activism on public bribery in Africa?

Table 2 shows the factors that are associated with public bribery in Africa. The table shows that gender was not significantly associated with overall public bribery. Older people were less likely to pay bribes than younger ones (β: -.023; p<0.001). Educated people were less likely to pay bribes than those who did not have formal education. The poor were more likely to pay bribes than the rich (β: .355; p<0.001). Similarly, political participation increased the likelihood of paying bribes (β: .052; p: .029).

Table 2: Predictors of public bribery (Model 1- composite measure of five forms of bribery)

Predictors	β	p	AOR	95% C.I.for EXP(B)	
				Lower	Upper
Female	-.244	.069	.784	.603	1.019
Age	-.023	<.001	.978	.968	.987
No formal education		<.001			
Some/completed primary education	-.535	.043	.585	.348	.984
Some/completed secondary education	-1.280	<.001	.278	.172	.448
Post-secondary education	-.739	.004	.478	.291	.785
Lived Poverty Index	.355	<.001	1.427	1.230	1.655
Political participation/activism	.052	.029	1.054	1.006	1.104
Constant	1.712	<.001	5.542		
	N: 1212 **Omnibus Test: X^2 (p): 95.359 (<0.001)** **H & L Test X^2 (p): 6.679 (0.572)**				

RQ 3: Does the influence of these factors (gender, age, lived poverty index, education, and political participation) vary by type of bribery?

After ascertaining predicting factors of the composite outcome, we computed two models (bribery for choice services and bribery for monopoly services) using the five independent variables as predicting factors to see whether the influence of the factors will vary between the two forms of bribery. While the model for choice services returned better goodness of fit results (p: .448), the model for monopoly services did not (p: .009). Instead, we used Pearson's chi-square tests to understand how each factor is associated with bribery for choice and monopoly services (tables not shown). The results show that gender was significantly associated with bribery for monopoly services (more men paid bribes than women), but the association was not significant for bribery for choice services. For both forms of bribery, more young people paid bribes than older ones, and the proportion of people who paid bribes decreased as we moved to higher age groups. Education was significantly associated with both forms of bribery,

but a slight difference in the direction was observed. Respondents with post-secondary education paid the most bribes (32.8%) compared to 30.8% of those with some or completed primary education and 30.1% of those without formal education. However, for monopoly services, people with no formal education paid the most bribes (76.6%), followed by those with some/complete primary education (67.2%) and those with secondary education (60.4%). In both outcome variables, people who had some or completed secondary education paid bribes the least compared to other educational groups.

For both choice and monopoly services, the proportion of bribe-paying people is higher among people with high-lived poverty. In fact, the proportion increases as people move from lower to higher poverty levels. A similar trend was observed in the influence of political participation on the two dependent variables- the proportion of bribe-paying people increases as one moves from "no participation" to "high political participation."

To test whether the influence of the five factors is the same for each of the five forms of bribery, we computed a logistic regression model for each of the five forms of bribery. However, only three models passed the Hosmer and Lemeshow tests and are presented in Table 3. Women had significantly lower odds of paying bribes than men across all three forms of bribery (bribery for medical care, bribery for police assistance and bribery to avoid police problems)- p<0.001 in the three models. Older people were less likely to pay bribes than younger ones across the three models (p<0.001).

For future studies, promising and seasoned scholars can channel their research to Russia's engagements with the African continent that are devoid of Soviet origin. Private Military Company (PMC) – Wagner Group as a non-state actor in Africa's security, Russia and the electoral process of African democracies, its disinformation campaign, development of African countries' outer space satellites, and COVID-19 vaccine diplomacy are nascent research areas that welcome more scholarly contributions in the discourse of Russia-Africa relations.

Table 3: Predictors of bribery for medical care, bribery for police assistance and bribery to avoid police problem

	Bribery for medical care (Model 2)			Bribery for police assistance (Model 3)			Bribery to avoid police problem (Model 4)		
	β	p	AOR	β	p	AOR	β	p	AOR
Female	-.158	<.001	.854	-.344	<.001	.709	-.448	<.001	.639
Age	-.016	<.001	.984	-.015	<.001	.985	-.016	<.001	.984
No formal education		<.001			<.001			<.001	
Some/completed primary education	-.083	.079	.921	-.171	.084	.843	-.250	<.001	.779
Some/completed secondary education	-.178	<.001	.837	-.513	<.001	.599	-.360	<.001	.698
Post-secondary education	.032	.574	1.032	-.129	.206	.879	-.129	.035	.879
Lived Poverty Index	.278	<.001	1.321	.303	<.001	1.354	.285	<.001	1.330
Political participation/activism	.049	<.001	1.050	.036	<.001	1.036	.063	<.001	1.065
Constant	-1.371	<.001	.254	-.243	.091	.784	-.402	<.001	.669
	N: 24394 **Omnibus Test: X² (p): 549.768 (<0.001)** **H & L Test X² (p): 10.868 (0.209)**			**N: 5774** **Omnibus Test: X² (p): 231.880 (<0.001)** H & L Test X² (p) 13.690 (0.090)			**N: 15470** **Omnibus Test: X² (p): 712.957 (<0.001)** H & L Test X² (p) 14.334 (0.073)		

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Table 3 also shows some differences in the influence of education on the three forms of bribery. Regarding bribery for medical care, no difference was observed in the odds of those with no formal, primary, or tertiary education. The only point of difference was secondary education, as people who had some or completed secondary education were less likely to pay bribes for medical care (AOR: .837; p<0.001). A similar direction was observed in model 3 (police assistance bribery), where the only category that has significantly different odds from the reference category (no formal education) is the one that comprises those with some or complete secondary education (AOR:.599, p<0.001). In model 4, however, people in each of the three other educational categories have significantly lower odds compared to those with no formal education (primary: AOR: .779; p<0.001; secondary: AOR: .698; p<0.001; post-secondary: AOR: .879; p<0.05). In models 2, 3 and 4, the odds of paying bribes seem to increase with the poverty level (p<0.001 in the three models). Also, the odds of paying bribes appear to increase with the level of political participation or activism.

RQ 4: *Does the influence of these factors on bribery vary across African countries?*

Variations in the predictors of bribery to school officials

Although bribery for public services is a practice in many African countries, we suspected there could be cross-country differences in how the five independent variables predict each of the five forms of bribery. We computed a model for each country for each of the five forms of bribery (tables not shown). Although, in Africa, the model for two forms of bribery (school officials and identity) did not produce good Hosmer and Lemeshow results; hence, they were not presented in Table 3; the model produced good results in some countries (tables not shown).

Regarding bribery to school officials, it was found that gender was only significant in Senegal, and the direction of the association is contrary to what was observed in earlier models and contradicts the soft-target hypothesis. In Senegal, women had more likelihood of paying bribes for school services than men (β: .861; p<0.01).

In Angola, Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Zambia, only LPI was a significant predictor of school bribery, and the results show that poor people are more likely to pay bribes than rich people. In Botswana, only political participation was associated with school bribery (β: .261; p<0.05). In Kenya, two factors (age and political participation) were significantly associated with school bribery. Regarding age, the direction of the findings in some countries (Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique and

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Nigeria) was that older people were less likely to pay bribes to school officials than the young, but the reverse was the case in Mauritius (β: .069; <p<0.05). Also, education was a significant predictor of school bribery in three countries (Senegal, Sudan and Zimbabwe), but the direction of association varies. While the educated were more likely to pay bribes to school officials in Senegal (β: .347; p<0.05) and Zimbabwe (β: 1.099; p<0.001), the reverse was the case in Sudan (β: -.261; p<0.05).

In countries where LPI and political participation are significantly associated with school bribery, the directions of the association are the same: (1) poor people are more likely to pay bribes than the rich; (2) the likelihood of paying bribes is higher for those with a higher level of political participation/activism. It is noteworthy that unlike in most countries where, if any factor at all is associated with school bribery, only one or at most two factors are significant predictors, four factors (gender, education, LPI and political participation) were significant predictors in Senegal. Three factors (Age, LPI and political participation) were significant predictors in Mozambique; two were significant in Kenya (age and political participation), Mauritius (age and LPI), Nigeria (age and LPI) and Sudan (education and political participation).

Variations in the predictors of bribery for medical care

It was found that four factors (gender, age, LPI and political participation) were significantly associated with bribery for medical care in Burkina Faso compared to three in Cote d'Ivoire (age, education and LPI), Mali (gender, education and political participation), South Africa (gender, age and political participation) and Tanzania (gender, age and LPI). Other countries have two or fewer significant predictors.

In countries where gender and age were significant predictors, the directions of the associations were the same. Women were less likely to pay bribes for medical care than men; older people were less likely to pay bribes for medical care than younger ones. Education was a significant predictor of bribery for medical care, but differences were observed in the direction of the association. In Guinea (β: .147; p<0.05) and Zambia (β: .550; p<0.001), educated people were more likely to pay bribes for medical care than those who have no formal education, but the reverse was the case in Cote d'Ivoire (β: -.267; p<0.01) and Mali (β: -.430; p<0.001). LPI was a significant predictor of bribery for medical care in fourteen countries, and the direction of association was the same: the poor are more likely to pay bribes for medical care than the rich.

Variations in the predictors of bribery for identity documents

The results regarding bribery for identity documents shows that four variables were significant predictors of bribery for identity documents in Guinea (gender, education, LPI and political participation); three factors were significant predictors in Sierra Leone (age, education and LPI) and South Africa (gender, age and political participation); two factors were significant predictors in Botswana (age and political participation), Eswatini (gender and age), Ethiopia (gender and LPI), Lesotho (gender and age), Mauritius (education and political participation), Togo (education and LPI) and Tunisia (gender and age).

While women were less likely to pay bribes for identity documents than men in Eswatini, Ethiopia, Ghana, Lesotho, South Africa and Tunisia, the reverse was the case in Guinea (β: .454; $p<0.05$). Some differences were also observed in the influence of age. Older people were more likely to pay bribes for medical care than younger ones in Eswatini (β: .022; $p<0.05$) and Sierra Leone (β: .032; $p<0.05$); the reverse was the case Botswana (β: -.048; $p<0.01$), Lesotho (β: -.038; $p<0.001$), South Africa (β: -.040; $p<0.01$), and Tunisia (β: -.028; $p<0.01$).

Variations in the predictors of police bribery

It was found that three factors were significant predictors of bribery for police assistance in Liberia (age, education and LPI), Sierra Leone (gender, LPI and political participation) and Togo (gender, age and political participation) compared to two in Botswana (age and political participation), Lesotho (gender and age), Niger (gender and education) and South Africa (gender and LPI). Differences were observed in the influence of age between Guinea (β: .815; $p<0.05$) and some countries, where the coefficients returned negative. While the poor were more likely to pay bribes for police assistance than the rich in Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Tanzania, the reverse was the case in Liberia and Namibia. Also, while the coefficients for political participation were positive in Botswana, Gabon and Sierra Leone, it was negative in Togo.

Regarding bribery to avoid police problems, all five variables were significant predictors in Cameroon compared to four in Liberia (age, education, LPI and political participation), Malawi (gender, age, LPI and political participation) and South Africa (gender, age, education and political participation). Consistently, females were less likely to pay bribes to avoid police problems than males across countries. Also, participating in politics/activism increased the chances of paying bribes to avoid police problems across countries. But differences were observed in the effect of age, education and LPI.

A summary of the influence of each factor on the five outcome variables is presented in Table 4. It can be gleaned that age and political participation are essential in Botswana, as the variables significantly

predicted four and five forms of bribery, respectively. In Ethiopia, LPI predicted all five forms of bribery. Each of gender and LPI predicted three forms of bribery. In Kenya, each of gender and age predicted two outcome variables, while political participation predicted four. In South Africa, gender predicted four forms of bribery, while each of age and political participation predicted three.

Table 4: Summary of the influence of predicting factors on bribery

S/N		Gender	Age	Education	LPI	PP
1	Angola		✓		✓✓	✓
2	Benin	✓			✓	✓
3	Botswana	✓	✓✓✓✓			✓✓✓✓✓
4	Burkina Faso	✓	✓		✓	✓
5	Cabo Verde				✓	
6	Cameroon	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	Côte d'Ivoire	✓	✓	✓✓	✓✓	
8	Eswatini	✓✓	✓			
9	Ethiopia	✓			✓✓✓✓✓	
10	Gabon	✓				✓✓
11	Gambia		✓	✓	✓	✓✓
12	Ghana	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
13	Guinea	✓✓✓		✓✓	✓✓✓	
14	Kenya	✓✓	✓✓			✓✓✓✓
15	Lesotho	✓✓	✓✓✓	✓		✓✓
16	Liberia		✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
17	Malawi	✓	✓✓✓		✓✓	✓
18	Mali	✓		✓	✓✓	✓
19	Mauritius		✓✓	✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
20	Morocco	✓			✓	
21	Mozambique		✓✓		✓✓✓	✓✓
22	Namibia				✓✓	✓
23	Niger	✓	✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓
24	Nigeria		✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓
25	Senegal	✓			✓✓	✓✓
26	Sierra Leone	✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓
27	South Africa	✓✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓✓
28	Sudan			✓✓✓	✓	✓✓✓
29	Tanzania	✓	✓		✓✓✓✓	
30	Togo	✓✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓✓	✓
31	Tunisia	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓✓	
32	Uganda					
33	Zambia			✓	✓✓	
34	Zimbabwe			✓		

Note: The number of mark sign indicates the number of the bribery times that the variable is significantly associated with. One mark sign indicates that the variable is associated with one type of bribery; five mark signs suggest that the variable is associated with all five types of bribery. Empty cells denotes that the model did not pass the Hosmer-Lemeshow test.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the prevalence of public bribery in Africa and associated factors. The study found that the prevalence of bribery is twice as high in monopoly institutions (police and institutions issuing identity documents) than in choice institutions (schools and hospitals). This finding resonates with the powerlessness explanation Peiffer and Rose (2018) provided because people have no choice. In addition, the finding suggests that the police- a monopoly institution- are more corrupt and known for bribe-seeking than other institutions in many African countries (Aborisade, 2021; Adisa et al., 2020; Goel et al., 2013; Mbaku, 2000; Wambua, 2015; Yang, 2005).

The findings show that the least bribe-paying countries include Cabo Verde and Botswana is supported by the 2022 Corruption Perception Index of Transparency International, which shows that Seychelles, Botswana and Cape Verde are the least corrupt countries in Africa (Transparency International, 2023). Interestingly, this research found that most of the least bribe-paying countries (such as Namibia, Botswana and Lesotho) are in Southern Africa. A plausible explanation for this is the existence of effective public service in Southern African countries.

Regarding the influence of gender, Table shows that females had significantly lower odds of paying bribes for medical, for police assistance and avoiding police problems than men. Similar results were observed across several African countries for different forms of bribery. The findings of the study largely contradict the soft-target hypothesis and supported earlier studies that reported that women are less corrupt and less likely to pay bribes than men (Breen et al., 2017; Herzog & Oreg, 2008; Lan & Hong, 2017; McGee et al., 2023; Organization, 2020; Swamy et al., 2001). However, there are a few exceptions in Senegal (where women paid more bribes to school officials than men) and Guinea (where women paid more bribes for identity documents and police assistance than men).

Our findings on the influence of age on bribery mostly support the explanation that young people are impulsive, less patient and may be more willing to pay bribes to grease and quicken service delivery than older people (Alabi et al., 2023). The findings are also consistent with the assumption that people may get tired of committing crimes as they age (Sparkes & Day, 2016; Torgler & Valev, 2006). However, there are a few exceptions, including Mauritius, where older people paid bribes to school officials more than the young; Eswatini and Sierra Leone, where older people paid bribes for identity documents more than the young; and Angola, where older people paid bribes to avoid police problems.

Our findings on the influence of education are mixed. One would expect that education would be positively associated with bribery to school officials across many African countries. However, the association was only significant in three countries. Education was positively associated with bribery to school officials in Senegal and Zimbabwe, but the reverse was observed in Sudan. While the findings from Senegal and Zimbabwe contradict the early work of Peiffer and Rose (2014) that educated people may not report their practice of bribery, the results from Sudan shows otherwise. Mixed results were also observed for bribery for medical care. For identity documents, the association was positive in four countries (Guinea, Mauritius, Sierra Leone and Togo) and negative in one (Sudan). However, education was consistently negatively associated with bribery for police assistance in Liberia, Niger and Tanzania, thereby supporting the argument of Peiffer and Rose (2014). In addition, this also supports the soft-target hypothesis that the police may be more willing to extort the less educated than the educated people.

The findings on poverty are consistent in most countries. The results show that across three outcome variables (bribery to school officials, for medical care and for identity documents), the poor paid bribes more than the rich in several African countries. This supports the earlier studies of Justesen and Bjørnskov (2014) and Peiffer and Rose (2014, 2018). It also shows that, indeed, poor people. It also shows that poor people may benefit from bribery in several ways (Asongu & Diop, 2024; Nel, 2020). However, a few exceptions were observed in bribery to seek police assistance and avoid problems. The findings on the influence of political participation are also consistent across the five forms of bribery across many African countries, as the odds of paying bribes increase with political participation. The only exception was Togo, where a reverse association was observed between political participation and bribery for police assistance.

CONCLUSION

Payment of bribes for services that ought to be free remains a problem in Africa. Officials of monopoly institutions receive bribes from more than half of the people who seek their official assistance. Monopolistic powers and institutions are notorious for bribe-seeking because the people have no alternatives (Goel et al., 2013; Peiffer & Rose, 2018). The police institution is the most notorious for receiving bribes in Africa, and the high-handedness of police officers is still on the rise in many African countries (Adisa et al., 2020; Aborisade, 2021). By implication, providing alternatives to monopoly institutions may help reduce the high prevalence of bribery in Africa. However, this study does not assume that public officials initiate bribery. The people themselves may willingly offer "grease payment"

to public officials to unduly facilitate service delivery, bypass procedures and seek opportunities and positions for which they do not have the requirements.

This study expresses caution regarding the generalization of results to the entire continent of Africa because considerable differences exist across countries. In addition, an earlier study that analyzed the Afrobarometer data found that considerable variations may exist within countries, and a factor that influences an outcome in one direction in a region may be associated with the same outcome in the opposite direction in another area (Alabi, 2023). While some countries, such as Cabo Verde and Mauritius, recorded less than 5% prevalence, others, such as Liberia, Cameroon, and Nigeria, recorded over 40% across different forms of bribery. There is enough evidence to submit that increased political participation may increase vulnerability to bribery, suggesting that political institutions are weak and ineffective and that people bribe their way. Also, a reasonable amount of evidence suggests that the poor pay bribes more than the rich in many African countries and that women pay fewer bribes than men in many African countries.

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