

A little bit of money goes a long way:

Examining the influence of corruption on trust in police in Russia

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Abstract

Corruption is one of many factors influencing citizens' trust in the police force. Monthly household income and perceived police competence in controlling crime were identified as possible moderating factors on the relationship between perceived corruption and trust in the police. Using interview data from the 5th wave of the European Social Survey ($N = 1620$), multiple linear regression analysis was used to analyse these possible moderators in Russia. Perceived corruption has significant negative correlations with police trust, and this negative effect was found to be reduced for those of high-income. However, higher perceived police competence was not found to increase tolerance to corruption when examining impact in trust levels. Instead, those Russians that viewed the police as competent were slightly more impacted in their trust levels by perceived corruption. The findings were fairly consistent with existing research. Further research is required to distinguish between corruption perceived and corruption experienced, and if they have differing impacts on trust.

Keywords: corruption, Russia, income, bribery, crime control, police competence.

Introduction

Historically, corruption has been a major challenge in the development of police institutions. Corruption is generally defined as “abuse of authority for private gain” and in many countries, police forces are a major breeding ground for corruption practices such as bribery and embezzlement of state funding (Bayley & Perito, 2011). Transparency International, a Berlin-based voluntary association set up to combat global corruption, reported in 2010 that in 84 countries the police force was the fourth-most corrupt public institution after political parties, public officials in general and parliaments. This prevalence of police force corruption can have a significant negative effect on the amount of trust the citizens have in the police force. This trust is especially important in modern (especially democratic) societies, where the police have to ‘earn’ legitimacy for their actions from citizens (Kääriäinen, 2007). In order for the police to fulfil their role in society and appear as legitimate, they have to be fair and impartial: all citizens should be treated equally in the system of government regardless of their social or economic status (Rothstein, 2005). If police officials are corrupt, this rule of impartiality is undermined in favour of a system where those with ample resources, be it financial or social, can rig the system in their favour and make a mockery of the rule of law. In extreme cases, the police can be seen as not “a source of help and security, but rather of harm, risk, and impoverishment”, as the World Bank found to be a prevalent attitude in 23 countries (World Bank, cited in Power, 2009, p. 52).

However, high levels of corruption are often seen as mainly an issue for developing countries, and not necessarily a large risk factor in Europe. This is true to some extent: European countries dominate the top rankings in the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for lowest overall corruption, and Singapore and New Zealand are the only 2 non-European countries in the top 10 countries for lowest corruption (Transparency International, 2021). Notably however, is that almost all of these European countries that are noted to have low amounts of corruption according to the CPI are part of Western Europe or Scandinavia; most of Eastern Europe is notably absent at these levels of the CPI index. In fact, the countries that were formerly part of the Soviet Union have some of the worst scores for corruption in the CPI index, rivalling those of countries such as Mexico. Russia is of particular note here: during the days of the Soviet union the average Soviet citizen perceived the police as a repressive but legitimate organisation that was accountable to the Communist Party (Shelley, 2000). In modern days, this perception has shifted to one of high levels of public distrust and dissatisfaction (Ministry of Economic Development, 2011).

It is clear that there are severe issues with the public perception of the police force in

Russia. Trust in the police is low and has remained low for many years despite improvements in socio-economic conditions and multiple police reforms (Semukhina & Reynolds, 2014). Their perceived level of corruption can be assumed to be a major factor in the public trust in the police force. Yet, prior research seems to suggest that individual-level variation is larger than society-level variation in regard to trust in police (Leyland and Groenewegen, 2003). The most obvious individual-level variation here would be that those who personally experienced corruption would be less trusting of the police force than those who had not. However, perhaps for some citizens there might be circumstances wherein a corrupt police force might prove beneficial: those with the resources to engage in bribery might benefit more from a corrupt police force compared to an impartial one.

This article will examine the effect of individual experiences with corruption on police trust in Russia. Furthermore, multiple factors that possibly ‘soften’ the blow these experiences with corruption have on trust in police will be examined and tested, such as individual social and financial resources, and the perceived competence of the police force in controlling crime.

Theory

To examine the effect perceived corruption has on an individuals’ trust in the police, firstly the concept of trust must be examined. The concept of trust is related to the larger topic of social capital. Social capital refers to ‘connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them’ (Putnam, 2000, p. 19). Social capital primarily refers to social networks of interpersonal relationships that ‘are accumulated through interaction between people in families, neighbourhoods, workplaces and a variety of informal and formal meeting places’ (ABS, 2000). However, social capital also has close ties to trust and reciprocity: ‘well-functioning social networks and communities lay the foundation for the emergence of norms of reciprocity and trust’ (Kääriäinen, 2007, p. 412).

Conceptualizing trust

Trust in the context of social capital often discusses two major concepts: ‘personal trust’ and ‘generalized trust’ (Kääriäinen, 2007). ‘Personal trust’ refers to the notion that interpersonal trust is based on previous experiences: past experiences with individuals shape expectations about their reliability and the way they will treat us in the future (Mishler & Rose, 1995). This means that familiarity, and therefore prior knowledge about behaviour and intentions of potential trustees, will permit both greater levels of trust if prior interactions were perceived

as positive, as well as lower levels of trust if previous interactions have been negative (Goldsmith, 2005).

‘Generalized trust’ refers to the idea that the basic attitude of individuals towards other people is trusting and that people are willing to cooperate with each other, even if they do not know these people personally (Kääriäinen, 2007). Many studies on social capital assume that generalized trust is produced from well-functioning social networks; in particular participation in non-governmental organizations has been seen as a significant generator of trust (Putnam, 2000). However, whilst empirical studies have partially supported this viewpoint, they do not do so unambiguously. In particular, Rothstein and Stolle (2003) reject the society-centred approach in favour of an institution-centred approach: they argue that generalized trust is generated by societal institutions. Public service systems in particular are argued to be of great importance for developing and maintaining generalized trust.

However, if the trust examined in this study is generated by institutions (such as the police force), it could be argued the concept of ‘institutional trust’ is more relevant to examine. One of the ways institutional trust has been defined is the extent to which an individual trusts an institution to perform its’ role in a satisfactory manner (Hudson, 2006). Citizens are theorized to ‘recognize whether government institutions are performing well or poorly and react accordingly’ (Boateng, 2018, p. 166). Prior studies have found some evidence for this performance-based approach to institutional trust: perceptions of factors such as corruption and economic performance were much more significant predictors of institutional trust compared to socio-economic variables (see e.g. Mishler & Rose, 2001).

Combining this conceptual definition of institutional trust with the institutional-centered approach to generalized trust pioneered by Rothstein & Stolle (2001), institutions are ‘judged’ by citizens based on their performance. If, for example, police services or health care services are set up in a manner that is accessible and beneficial to a majority of the citizens, citizens will have relatively higher levels of institutional trust. This in turn generated trust towards society and its’ members as a whole (Kääriäinen, 2007). On the other hand, if they are set up in a way that creates inequality between groups of citizens, they create an atmosphere of distrust. Whilst there is mainly empirical evidence for the positive effect, meaning a significant correlation between equality and generalized trust (see e.g. Van Oorschot & Aarts, 2005), in particular police force corruption is relevant for the reduction of institutional trust, and therefore also generalized trust.

How corruption influences trust

Corruption plays a key role in the level of impartiality of a public service, and it is widely seen as an important measure in determining the quality of government (Uslaner, 2005). Governments and public service systems that are corrupt are not able to fulfil the requirement of equality, instead providing services mainly to those willing to ‘appease’ officials through favours and bribes. In many ways, corruption can be seen as ‘the ultimate breach of the impartiality principle’ (Pierre & Rothstein, 2011). Following this line of reasoning, it seems almost obvious that a corrupt police force would have a negative effect on the level of social equality in a given country. Prior research seems to confirm this notion: corruption reduces economic effectiveness and increases societal inequality (see e.g. Mauro, 1995; Montinola & Jackman, 2002). In addition, as previously mentioned corruption was a significant predictor of institutional trust (Mishler & Rose, 2001). In particular, social inequality and police corruption have been found to be interrelated phenomena (You & Kagham, 2005). The inequality ‘generated’ by the impartiality of the police force then in turn has a negative effect on the citizens generalized trust (Uslaner, 2013).

The effect of the inequality on generalized trust in turn has strong negative influences on trust in government institutions (Anderson & Tverdova, 2003), particularly on trust in the police (Morris, 2011). More specifically, corruption was found to explain most of the variation in trust in the police (Kääriäinen, 2007). Morris (2011) found that corruption had a significant negative effect on trust in police in 53 countries, after controlling for factors such as ethnic homogeneity, democratization and general life satisfaction. Similar results were found in Russia; two indicators of perceived police corruption, bribery and abuse, were found to have a significant negative effect on trust in police (Semukhina & Reynolds, 2014). Based on this prior research, the following hypothesis can be derived:

H1: Russians that perceive higher amounts of police corruption have less trust in the police.

Potential beneficiaries of corruption and their trust in the police

Corruption does not affect everyone equally. As discussed previously, a corrupt police force has a strong negative effect on social equality, mainly through offering potential ways out of the legal system for those with the resources to bribe police officials. The less well-off citizens, who have less resources at their disposal to rig the system in their favour, have little opportunity to ‘control the legality of the acts of their authorities’ (You & Kagham, 2005). On the other hand, the citizens who are well-off have both the resources and motivation to use corruption in the police force for their benefit. Furthermore, if those with low income do use bribes, they are most often used to ‘gain access to otherwise attainable benefits’, whereas

higher income citizens also use them to expedite services (Karklins, 2005).

If those well-off have more opportunities to use police corruption for their own benefit, it is possible that they have a higher *tolerance* for corruption compared to those less economically fortunate. In the context of this paper, this refers to the notion that equal amounts of perceived corruption have less of a negative effect on the level of trust an individual has in the police force if certain conditions are met. Specifically, well-off citizens have more opportunities to benefit from corruption, which might lessen the negative effect corruption has on their levels of trust in the police force. There is some circumstantial empirical evidence to justify this reasoning: in the United States, those belonging to lower income groups tend to have lower levels of satisfaction and trust in the police force (Frank et al, 2005). Following this line of reasoning, the following hypothesis can be derived:

H2: The negative effect of perceived corruption on trust in the police force is larger for low-income Russians.

Perceived police effectiveness and corruption tolerance

Aside from the potential benefit to the citizen through bribes, another possible factor in corruption tolerance is perceived effectiveness. A 'little' corruption might be more easily forgiven if the police force is perceived to be 'doing their job controlling crime', compared to a police force which is not seen as effective. Several studies have found a negative association between trust in the police and fear of crime, which possibly implies people hold the police accountable if crime is prevalent (see e.g. Jackson et al, 2012). Citizens living in neighbourhoods with a higher prevalence of crime have also consistently been found to have lower levels of trust in the police compared to those in more prosperous neighbourhoods (Weitzer & Tuch, 2002). Whilst corruption and an effective police force might seem like they are mutually exclusive, as usually corruption is linked to an ineffective police force (Alatas, 1990), this depends on the metrics individuals use to measure police effectiveness. Many citizens base their perception of police effectiveness on their 'perceived performance in providing security in their neighbourhoods' (Tankebe, 2010). For Russia in particular, prior research suggests that in general Russians are 'more concerned with the degree to which the police is controlling crime compared to protecting individual rights and freedoms' (Semukhina & Reynolds, 2014). This could mean Russians might be more tolerant of corruption if they view the police force as effective in controlling crime. Practically, this means that when judging the performance of the police as an institute, the negative effect of perceived corruption on institutional trust (which in turn negatively effects generalized trust)

could be partially mitigated by the ‘positive’ performance indicator of crime control. Following this line of reasoning, it can be hypothesised that:

H3: The negative effect of perceived corruption on trust in the police force is smaller for Russians that view the police as effective in controlling crime.

The Russian context

Prior to discussing the operationalisation of these hypotheses, they will be contextualised. Before 1991 and the fall of the Soviet Union, the police force in what is now Russia was a ‘monolithic militarised law enforcement organisation with vast powers that could be used to invade the privacy of Soviet citizens (Fastov, 2005). Police officers were viewed as a repressive, but nonetheless legitimate, as they were seen as accountable to the Communist Party (Shelley, 2000). There were instances of corruption, but knowledge of these instances was repressed and the public was generally not aware of them (Clarke, 1993). Upon the collapse of the Soviet Union, police funding became a major issue, and salary payments were frequently delayed, causing many police officers to seek their fortune elsewhere, such as private security companies (Gilinskiy, 2000). Those still working for the police force found themselves in a position with similar amounts of power as before, but without the accountability mechanism of the Communist Party keeping them in line (Rybnikov & Aleksushin, 2008). Meanwhile, crime rates went up sharply, leaving the understaffed and underfunded police force unable to cope (Inshakov, 2007). Given these tumultuous circumstances after the fall of the Soviet Union, it should not come as a surprise that those still in the police force engaged in many forms of misconduct, and Russian police officers became a vital part of organized crime during the 1990s (Semukhina & Reynolds, 2014). Meanwhile, many cases were left unsolved as they ‘provided no monetary benefits’ (Gilinskiy, 2003). The interests of the public became secondary to the self-interests of the police officers, which often overlapped with the interests of organized crime groups (Volkov, 2002). These conditions have led to an overall low level of trust in the police among the Russian population, despite multiple reforms since the transitional period between the USSR and modern Russia (Semukhina & Reynolds, 2014).

This overall low level of trust provides an intriguing backdrop to study trust repercussions for perceived corruption in Russia. Compared to most other countries in Europe, corruption is prevalent in Russia (Transparency International, 2021). This is important to study the relationship between the variables properly, as the values for perceived police force corruption are more likely to be somewhat normally distributed compared to

countries where the police force is generally seen as fair and impartial. Additionally, as mentioned previously, there is some evidence that a significant amount of Russians are more concerned with police effectiveness than the fairness and impartiality of the police force (Semukhina & Reynolds, 2014). Whilst no such prior evidence exists for the hypothesized effect of income on the relationship between perceived corruption and trust in the police, the prevalence of corruption overall should nonetheless provide reasonable conditions to test this possible moderator.

Data and Methods

The empirical data used in this research comes from interview data collected during the 5th round of the European Social Survey (ESS) in 2010. The ESS 5th round was conducted in 28 countries and interviewed a total of 52,458 respondents in 2010 and 2011. For the purpose of this research, only the data collected in the Russian Federation will be analysed. Within Russia, 2,595 interviews were approved for use in the dataset, which were conducted between December 2010 and May 2011.

The respondents were selected for the hour-long interviews through stratified three-stage probability sampling. Electoral districts were stratified into ten geographic zones; the number of electoral districts to be selected for each zone were proportional to the population of those 15 years and older in the stratum (using controlled rounding). In total, 272 out of 96,193 electoral districts were selected by simple random sampling within the given strata. Following this first stage, an address database was created for each of the electoral districts. From this map, 14 households per electoral district were randomly selected. Lastly, within each selected housing unit all residents aged 15 and over were listed, and a respondent was chosen using Kish grid. After removing respondents with missing values for the variables studied in this research, the total *N* is 1,631. In total, 975 (37.6%) of the respondents had at least one and at most 5 missing values for the variables studied and were thus excluded from the analyses.

Variables

The dependant variable measuring citizen's level of trust in the police force is derived from the following question, in which the police are included as one of the institutions:

Please tell me on a score of 0-10 how much you personally trust each of the institutions I read out. 0 means you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust.

The main independent variable, measuring the perceived level of corruption in the police force, is derived from the following question concerning bribery:

How often would you say that the police in Russia take bribes? Choose your answer from this card where 0 is never and 10 is always.

The first hypothesized moderating variable concerns income. In the data, this is measured as the total monthly household income in deciles, ranging from 1 (a monthly income of less than 6000 rubles, equal to ~€150 in January 2011) to 10 (a monthly income of more than 40000 rubles, equal to ~€1000 in January 2011). The exact divisions of the deciles can be found in Table 1. This variable had the most missing values out of all the measured variables (448), which is an expected trait of questions concerning income (see e.g. Riphahn & Serfling, 2005).

The second hypothesized moderating variable regarding perceived police competence was derived from two questions; respondents were asked how successful they perceived the police to be at preventing violent crime in Russia and how successful they perceived the police to be at catching those who commit house burglaries. Both questions could be answered between 0 (Extremely unsuccessful) and 10 (Extremely successful). To ensure these variables could be combined into a singular scale, they were tested for internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha. The variables were found to have great internal consistency ($\alpha = .848$), and therefore will be combined to form a singular mean score for crime prevention to be used in the analyses.

Lastly, four control variables will be used: gender, age, education and whether or not individuals or their family members were recently victimized by crime. Age and gender were included as standard control variables, partly because were also used in most similar studies and this would make comparisons between studies easier. Age was measured through asking respondents for their year of birth, which was used to calculate age before the dataset was made available. Gender was measured in either 'male' or 'female'; no separate category was included for those of a non-binary gender. Gender is recoded to a dummy variable for the analyses, where male respondents were given a value of 1. Education was included to complement the income question, as both education and income are often used to approximate social-economic status (SES), and was measured in years of full-time education completed. Lastly, respondents were asked if they or a family member had been a victim of burglary or assault in the past 5 years. They could answer with 'Yes', 'No', 'Don't know' or refuse to answer. This variable was included as prior research has shown that (recent) victimization

experiences can have significant negative effects on attitudes towards the police (see e.g. Homant et al., 1984; Koenig, 1980). Descriptive statistics for all the variables can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics

	<i>N</i>	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	STDEV
Trust in police	1620	3.42	0	10	2.762
Frequency police take bribes	1620	6.62	0	10	2.301
Competence police in controlling crime	1620	5.216	0	9.5	1.263
Age	1620	45.64	15	94	17.984
Gender	1620	%			
<i>Male</i>	682	42.1			
<i>Female</i>	938	57.9			
Victim of crime <5 years	1620				
<i>Yes</i>	255	15.7			
<i>No</i>	1365	84.3			
Monthly household income	1620				
<i>Decile 1 (<6000 rubles)</i>	113	7.0			
<i>Decile 2 (6001-9000 rubles)</i>	246	15.2			
<i>Decile 3 (9001-12000 rubles)</i>	184	11.4			
<i>Decile 4 (12001-15000 rubles)</i>	173	10.7			
<i>Decile 5 (15001-18000 rubles)</i>	156	9.6			
<i>Decile 6 (18001-21000 rubles)</i>	137	8.5			
<i>Decile 7 (21001-25000 rubles)</i>	125	7.7			
<i>Decile 8 (25001-30000 rubles)</i>	153	9.4			
<i>Decile 9 (30001-40000 rubles)</i>	142	8.8			
<i>Decile 10 (>40000 rubles)</i>	191	11.8			

The hypotheses will be tested using a 2-model multiple linear regression analysis. This type of analysis was chosen to compare the explanatory power of the variables with and without the interaction effects included. As trust in police was found to be relatively normally distributed,

a linear analysis suffices. Firstly, only the main effect and the control variables will be tested. Afterwards, the hypothesized moderating variables will be included in the second model.

Results

To examine the relationship between perceived corruption and trust in police in addition to the hypothesized moderating variables, a 2-model multiple linear regression analysis was conducted, as the level of trust in police was found to be relatively normally distributed. In addition, using 2 models The coefficients of the regression models can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

Coefficients of the regression models. Model 1 contains the base effect and the control variables, Model 2 includes the hypothesized moderating variables.

	Model 1			Model 2		
	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	β
Constant	3.301	.390		3.430	.365	
Perceived corruption	-.721***	.032	-.612	-.721***	.033	-.613
Age	.001	.004	.007	.000	.004	.001
Education (in years)	.018	.021	.019	.016	.021	.017
Recent victim of crime ¹	-.108	.162	-.015	-.132	.161	-.018
Gender ²	-.323**	.121	-.059	-.311*	.120	-.057
Household income	-.021	.022	-.023	-.027	.022	-.030
Police competence	.995***	.058	.464	.987***	.058	.461
Household income*perceived corruption				.027**	.009	.065
Police competence*perceived corruption				-.043*	.018	-.055
R ² (adjusted)	.251			.257		
<i>N</i>	1620			1620		

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$. Values for income, police competence and perceived corruption were centered.

1: Participants that had been a victim were given a score of 1.

2: Participants of the male gender were given a score of 1.

Firstly, the model without the moderating effects will be examined. In line with expectations, higher perceived police corruption was found to have a significant negative effect on the level

of trust in the police force ($\beta = -.612, p < .001$). Gender, specifically whether or not an individual is biologically male ($\beta = -.059, p = .008$) was found to have a significant negative effect on the level of trust in the police force of an individual. The effect of the number of years of full-time education an individual has completed ($\beta = -.019, p = .407$) was not found to have a significant effect on their level of police trust. Likewise, no evidence was found for a significant effect for age on the level of trust in the police ($\beta = .007, p = .781$). Whether or not an individual or one of their family members had been the victim of crime in the past 5 years was not found to have a significant effect ($\beta = -.108, p = .505$). Monthly household income was not found to have a significant effect on trust in the police force ($\beta = -.023, p = .333$) either, but perceived police competence had a significant positive effect on trust ($\beta = .464, p < .001$).

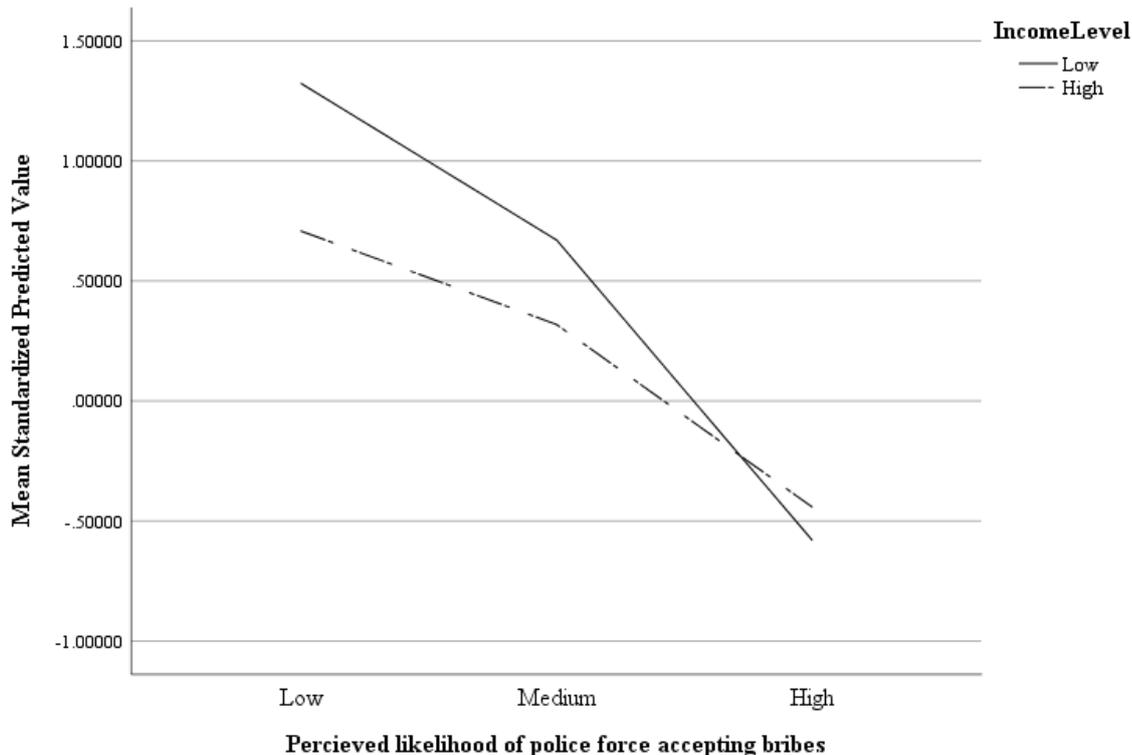
The regression coefficients of Model 1 seem to suggest that individuals that perceive a higher amount of corruption in the police force have a lower degree of trust in said police force. The standardized coefficient shows this effect to be of medium-to-large size ($\beta = -.612$). This seems to confirm Hypothesis 1, *Individuals that perceive higher amounts of police corruption have less trust in the police*. However, a more final conclusion regarding this hypothesis will be made after Model 2 has been examined.

In Model 2, the moderating variables hypothesized in hypotheses 2 and 3 were added to the analyses. The main effect of perceived corruption on the level of trust in the police was still found in this expanded model ($\beta = -.613, p < .001$). This means that hypothesis 1, *Individuals that perceive higher amounts of police corruption have less trust in the police*, is confirmed by these findings.

When examining the coefficients relevant to hypothesis 2, household income was not found to have a significant effect on the level of trust in the police ($\beta = -.030, p = .213$) at mean levels of perceived corruption, which is seemingly consistent with the findings in Model 1. However, the moderating effect of household income on the relationship between perceived corruption and trust in police was found to be significant and positive ($\beta = .065, p = .003$). This means that in line with expectations, higher amounts of perceived corruption is more damaging to trust levels for low-income Russians than for high-income Russians. To help interpret this difference, income was divided in two categories: low (1st through 5th income decile, 6000 or less – 18000 rubles monthly household income) and high (6th through 10th income decile, 18001 - 40000 or more rubles). Additionally, perceived corruption was divided in three categories: low (0-3), medium (4-6) and high (7-10). The difference between low and high income is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Effect of low or high monthly household income on the relationship between perceived corruption and the level of trust in the police force.



Note. Mean standard predicted value is the estimated level of trust in the police force.

Figure 1 shows that at low levels of perceived corruption, low-income Russians have relatively more trust in the police than their high-income peers. This gap in trust levels closes at medium levels of perceived corruption, but the most significant impact is seen when transitioning from medium to high levels of perceived corruption, where at high levels of corruption low-income Russians actually generally have a lower amount of trust in the police compared to their high-income peers. Therefore, financially well-off Russians are more forgiving of corruption than those with less financial resources, although this moderating effect is relatively small ($\beta = .065$). This means that hypothesis 2,

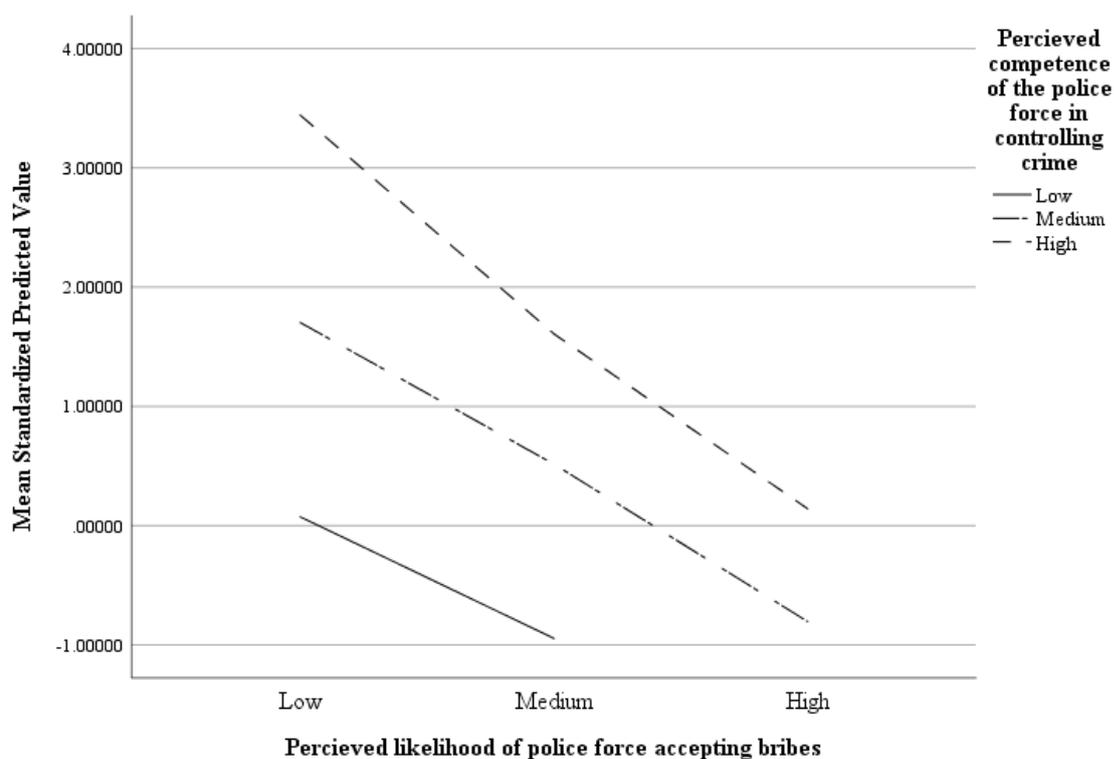
The negative effect of perceived corruption on trust in the police force is larger for low-income individuals, is confirmed by these findings.

Lastly, as in Model 1, the effect of perceived police competence on trust in police was found to be positive and significant ($\beta = .461$, $p < .001$) at mean levels of perceived corruption. However, the hypothesized moderating effect was found to be statistically significant and

negative ($\beta = -.055, p = .015$). This means that contrary to expectation, for those that perceived the police to be more competent in their role at preventing and/or controlling crime the negative effect of perceived corruption on the level of trust in the police was increased. To show this interaction in a less abstract way, perceived police competence was divided in three categories: low (0-3), medium (4-6) and high (7-10). The difference between these categories is illustrated in Figure 2, which uses the same three categories (low, medium and high) for perceived corruption as Figure 1.

Figure 2

Effect of low, medium and high perceived police competence in controlling crime on the relationship between perceived corruption and the level of trust in the police force.



Note. Mean standard predicted value is the estimated level of trust in the police force.

As is immediately clear from Figure 2, there is a factor complicating interpretation: there were no cases of participants perceiving the police force as both not very competent and highly corrupt. This means comparing the three levels of perceived competence at high levels of perceived corruption is not possible. However, there is still a significant difference seen when comparing 'low' and 'medium' levels of perceived corruption: whereas those that perceive the police to be low to medium levels of competent have a similar decrease in their level of

trust between these two levels of corruption, those that perceive them to be highly competent see a more negative effect on their trust level between these two categories. This means that hypothesis 3, *The negative effect of perceived corruption on trust in the police force is smaller for those that view the police as effective in controlling crime*, is **not** confirmed by these findings. In fact, it seems that those that view the police force as highly competent in their role at reducing and/or controlling crime are more negatively impacted in their level of trust by higher corruption, although it should be noted that this moderating effect is very small ($\beta = -.055$)

Comparing the two models, Model 2 has more explanatory power (adj. $R^2 = .257$) than Model 1 (adj. $R^2 = .251$), although the difference is small. To ensure the correct model is chosen, this increase in explanatory power between the 2 models was tested and found to be statistically significant ($F = 7.035, p = .001$). Both models found strong evidence in support of hypothesis 1. Model 2 found some evidence for hypothesis 2 and no evidence for hypothesis 3.

Conclusion and discussion

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between perceived police corruption and the level of trust individuals have in the police force, and to identify possible factors moderating this relationship. It was assumed, based on findings from prior research, that those who perceived more corruption in the police force had less trust in the police. For the context in which to examine this relationship, Russia was chosen, as the (fairly recent) history of this country has led to a very complicated and strained relationship between Russia's police force and its citizens. Additionally, it is one of the few countries in Europe that has enough corruption (according to the Corruption Perceptions Index) to accurately examine the relationships between the proposed variables.

Two possible factors that could moderate this relationship were identified. Firstly, it was hypothesized that those with more financial resources were more likely to benefit from police corruption, and therefore would be more willing to 'overlook' perceived corruption when determining their trust in the police. Secondly, it was hypothesized that as long as the police was competent in controlling crime, citizens would be willing (to a degree) to turn a blind eye to corruption. Lastly, multiple control variables were included in the analysis.

The empirical results of the regression analysis clearly showed a significant negative correlation between perceived police corruption and the level of trust in said police force in both models. In line with previous research, higher (perceived) corruption significantly

decreased trust in the police (e.g. Anderson & Tverdova, 2003; Kääriäinen, 2007). Citizens seem to expect the police force to be fair and impartial (e.g. Rothstein & Toerell 2005), and a breach of this impartiality principle in the form of bribes is visible through a significant drop in trust. Additionally, empirical evidence was found for the hypothesized effect of household income on the relationship between perceived corruption and trust in the police force. Whilst the well-off had less trust in the police at low levels of (perceived) corruption, when corruption was high this gap had closed and the low-income Russians had relatively less trust. This is in line with prior research: as (perceived) corruption and inequality increases, the “rich have more motivation and capability to behave corruptly . . . the non-rich have more to gain from combating corruption” (You & Kagham, 2005, p. 139).

However, the proposed effect for perceived police competence in crime control and/or prevention was not found and was in fact reversed: Russians that perceived the police as relatively more competent were slightly less tolerant on corruption compared to their peers that perceived the police as less competent. This seemingly contradicts previous findings: several studies found the “majority of Russians are more likely to be concerned with crime control than protecting individual rights and freedoms” (Semukhina & Reynolds, 2014, para. 75). It should be noted however that these studies examined the *priorities* Russians had when examining police effectiveness, and were not linking these priorities to their degree of trust in the police force. This is in fact consistent with the findings of this study: whilst perceived police effectiveness had significant positive effect on trust in the police, a large majority (88.5%) of those that perceived the police to be highly competent in preventing and/or controlling crime also perceived them as highly corrupt. This seems to imply that whilst police effectiveness and trust in the police are correlated phenomena, satisfaction with police effectiveness does little to ‘soften’ the negative effect higher perceived corruption has on this trust. Based on the results of this study, it might even be the case that those that view as the police as competent are relatively ‘more disappointed’ by these actions than those that already have less positive view on the police in the first place: “You have ten positive encounters with the police and that is good, but one negative encounter, and all the positives disappear” (Hillard, cited in Skogan, 2006, p. 99).

This study has a number of possible shortcomings, both from a theoretical as well as a methodological perspective. Firstly, one theoretical shortcoming is that there is no clear proof whether or not many of those with the financial resources to possibly benefit from corruption use them in this way. Practically, this means that this study does not account for an

individual's 'moral compass': many might opt not to use opportunities that arise from police corruption to their advantage even if they have the means to do so. There is a possibility that well-off individuals prefer a fair and impartial system over a corrupt system, even in the case that this leads to decisions and measures that have more negative effects to the individual. A 2001 study did find that citizens placed the highest importance on the impartiality of the judicial system even if this system did not generate the best individual-level outcome for them (Tyler).

The choice of dataset did also lead to some methodological shortcomings. The most prominent of these is the lack of multiple measures to construct scales; both perceived corruption and the level of trust in the police are only measured in a single question. For the level of trust in the police this is not as problematic, as this is measured in a very straightforward way, but for perceived corruption only the likelihood of engaging in bribery is considered. Whilst bribery is probably the most common form of police corruption, there are other (often more violent forms) of corruption that are not considered in this study (Gerber & Mendelson, 2008). Additionally, only the perceived likelihood of engaging in bribery is measured. Whilst the accuracy of this perception is not particularly impactful to this study, the reasoning each participant used to arrive at their estimation probably varies wildly from person to person. Some individuals might simply be more 'trusting' of institutions than others based on basic social values, and these factors were not considered in this study. Lastly, there was no variable included to measure personal experiences with the police, which could have a significant impact on the attitudes an individual has on the institution as a whole.

Regardless, it is clear that much is still unknown on what impacts citizens' attitudes on the police force. Whilst there is ample proof that a corrupt police force garners less trust from the citizens it is supposed to 'protect and serve', understanding of moderating factors is still lacking and whilst this study has examined some of these possible factors, many others remain and new questions have arisen. One of these questions is if there is a distinction between bribery and other forms of corruption: on one hand, police officers that physically abuse individuals are also more likely to ask for bribes (Kolennikova et al., 2002) and there is some evidence that Russian citizens make little distinction between these phenomena and group them under the larger phenomenon of 'police corruption' (Semukhina & Reynolds, 2014). On the other hand, Semukhina and Reynolds' study did find statistically significant distinction between the concepts of police bribery, abuse and unfair treatment, and it is plausible more violent forms of corruption have a larger negative effect on the level of trust in the police compared to nonviolent forms of corruption. Furthermore, prior research has shown

belonging to minority groups can have a negative effect on citizens' trust in the police (Frank et al., 2005): the role ethnicity possibly plays in moderating the relationship between perceived corruption and the level of trust in the police has yet to be examined. Future research will have to carefully consider which of these factors to study further, as well as new ways to construct scales to more accurately encapsulate the entirety of the concepts that are to be examined. In particular, studying personal experiences with the police and distinguishing between corruption perceived and corruption experienced could have profound impact on our understanding of this topic.

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Appendix

Appendix 1

Descriptions of questionnaire variables

Variable in study	Question code in ESS	Question	Scale
Age	F31a	And in what year were you born?	
Years of education	F16	About how many years of education have you completed, whether full-time or part-time? Please report these in full-time equivalents and include compulsory years of schooling.	
Gender	F21		Male (1), female (2)
Recent victim of crime	C5	Have you or a member of your household been the victim of a burglary or assault in the last 5 years?	Yes (1), No (2), Refusal (7), Don't know (8), No answer (9).
Perceived police corruption	D25	How often would you say that the police in [Russia] take bribes?	0 (Never) – 10 (Always)

Appendix 1 - continued

Variable in study	Question code in ESS	Question	Scale
Trust in police	B4-10	Using this card, please tell me on a score of 0-10 how much you personally trust each of the institutions I read out. 0 means you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust. Firstly... ..the police?	0 (No trust at all) – 10 (Complete trust)
Perceived police corruption	D25	How often would you say that the police in [Russia] take bribes?	0 (Never) – 10 (Always)
(Part of scale) perceived police competence	D12	Based on what you have heard or your own experience how successful do you think the police are at preventing crimes in [Russia] where violence is used or threatened?	0 (Extremely unsuccessful) – 10 (Extremely successful)

Appendix 1 - continued

Variable in study	Question code in ESS	Question	Scale
(Part of scale) perceived police competence	D13	And how successful do you think the police are at catching people who commit house burglaries in [Russia]?	0 (Extremely unsuccessful) – 10 (Extremely successful)
Monthly household income	F41	Using this card, please tell me which letter describes your household's total income, after tax and compulsory deductions, from all sources? If you don't know the exact figure, please give an estimate. Use the part of the card that you know best: weekly, monthly or annual income.	J – 1 st decile (1), R – 2 nd decile (2), C – 3 rd decile (3), M – 4 th decile (4), F – 5 th decile (5), S – 6 th decile (6), K – 7 th decile (7), P – 8 th decile (8), D – 9 th decile (9), H – 10 th decile (10)