

## **Exploring Citizen's satisfaction and Distributive Justice: A Quantitative Study of Policing in Trinidad and Tobago**

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### **Abstract**

The research tried to accurately determine the distributive justice and the satisfaction of citizens with the police service in Trinidad and Tobago (T&T). The study included an online survey that incorporated various closed-ended multiple-choice questions. This quantitative online survey only consisted of closed-ended questions. The results can stimulate and animate the police service in Trinidad and Tobago to be more competent and effective in discharging their duties. The information can motivate and inspire officers to seriously consider their attitude and the type of service they provide.

**Keywords:** *Satisfaction; Distributive Justice; Policing; Citizens; Trinidad and Tobago; Post-Colonialism.*

### **Introduction**

#### Overview

It is important for both police officers and citizens of Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) to develop proper working relationships and collaborate to maintain safe communities, uphold the moral fabric of society, reduce criminal activities and the fear associated with crime (Mathura, 2022; Sani et al., 2022). To foster such a working relationship, should have meaningful and pleasant experiences with police officers and the police institution. When these encounters are not positive, this could seriously compromise the integrity and legitimacy of the police institution negatively and further impact on citizens' morale, obligation to comply with the law (Tyler, 1990; Mathura, 2019).

According to Julien & Mathura (2024), citizens' satisfaction with the police is greatly dependent on legitimacy. It was highlighted by Adams (2019) that legitimacy can only be possible when citizens receive justice through fairness from their experience with the police. Therefore, fairness is imperative for developing positive attitudes and shaping satisfaction. A debate from Tyler (1990) highlighted that citizens were more likely to become satisfied with the police based on procedural and distributive justice.

### Statement of Problem

According to research from Mathura (2019) and Julien & Mathura (2024), citizens of T&T were discontented with the performance of police officers, and this created a negative impact on legitimacy and compliance with the law. A study from Pino & Johnson (2011) showed that citizens in T&T often accused police officers in the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) of being impolite, unmannerly, discourteous, and unsympathetic when discharging their duties. Their study also highlighted that irregularity and malpractice within the TTPS were institutional problems for interactions and working relationships with the public. Unsurprisingly, police officers in the TTPS were found to be involved in drug trafficking (Scott, 1984) and gang activities (Pawelz, 2018). As a result, concerned citizens who reported criminal activities were frequently victimised by corrupt officers.

A recent study conducted by Mathura (2019) suggested that citizens in T&T held unsatisfactory and negative perceptions towards the TTPS. Mathura (2019) further noted that police officers were not being held accountable for their actions, and consequently, citizens did not trust the police service since many officers abuse their power and authority for personal gain. Misconduct in the TTPS was highlighted as a major problem which compromised growth and development in the institution and resulted in a poor relationship between officers and citizens (Mathura, 2019).

It is important to note that previous studies often measured satisfaction with the police by using variables such as demographic characteristics and services provided. Those studies focused mainly on developed countries such as North America, Europe, and Asia. However, it must be acknowledged that there is a nascent body of research and literature that exists on policing in T&T and even less on satisfaction with the police. At the start of this study, there was no evidence to demonstrate that satisfaction with the police using distributive justice as an independent variable had been

attempted in T&T. Due to minimal research and literature on policing in T&T, there was a gap that existed, and this created challenges for the police institution of T&T and its ability to serve, protect, and enjoy a harmonious relationship with citizens in the communities.

### *Aim of the Study*

This research carefully examined citizens' satisfaction and distributive justice from police officers in Trinidad and Tobago. To achieve this aim, the following research questions needed to be addressed.

- Do police officers in T&T use distributive justice when dealing with citizens?
- If "Yes," how does it influence citizens' satisfaction with the police?
- If "No", how do citizens view distributive justice?

This research is not aimed at generalising the outcomes to suggest a universal or standard approach but was intended towards developing relevant knowledge and adding to the nascent body of research on policing in Trinidad and Tobago. Whilst the focus of this research was specific to T&T, the outcomes can also be important to other post-colonial policing systems if applicable.

### *Justification for this Study*

Research previously conducted on satisfaction with the police often used demographic characteristics and service delivery (Moore & Brage, 2003; Maslov, 2015; Sani et al., 2022). Furthermore, most of this research was conducted within North America and Europe, and the finding not compatible with the Caribbean, especially Trinidad and Tobago (T&T) culture and policing systems (Mathura, 2019). As a result, this research was important for developing a specific body of literature and research on policing and satisfaction with the police that applied to T&T.

### **A Review of Previous Research**

Mathura (2019) resolutely opined that the police institution has been in existence for a considerable period, and its role and function are frequently impugned and viewed with a high degree of uncertainty and suspicion. Mathura (2019) also believed that although many citizens lack confidence in the police service, they still depend on it for protection and guidance. On the one hand, citizens heavily rely on the services

of the police. On the other hand, these same citizens frequently criticise and condemn the actions of officers. Nonetheless, Ferdik et al. (2019) suggested that it was paramount that citizens perceived the police as legitimate figures of authority because it is necessary for good working relationships and moral compliance.

Bolger et al. (2021) and Ferdik et al. (2019) opined that the stinging criticisms of police continue to escalate at alarming proportions. In addition, they claimed that these incessant complaints are direct consequences of the increasing number of casualties and deaths that are chiefly attributed to the police because of how they address certain scenarios where law enforcement is concerned. Bolger et al. (2021) further indicated that these dissident perceptions of citizens can fundamentally shape vital outcomes that are essential to officers. Since the perceptions and views of the public are of paramount significance, Wheelock et al. (2019) believed that it is imperative to properly research the satisfaction of citizens. Hence, it is not uncommon for researchers to investigate some of the factors that cause the dissatisfaction of citizens with the police service (Ferdik, et al., 2022). Consequently, Ferdik, et al. (2022) affirmed that some of the work of the police required the collaboration and perspectives of the public. When there is a void, it grossly encumbers the officers from accomplishing their job expeditiously. While Bolger et al. (2021) and Ferdik et al. (2019) supported this venture, they also claimed that research about the satisfaction of police is not unfamiliar. However, Merenda et al. (2020) insisted that research among the police must be extensive and thorough and cannot be based only on crime. They made this claim because they were firmly convinced that the job specifications of many police officers are not only confined to solving crimes. The job of some officers often included regular and consistent interaction with the public and the protection of citizens and community policing at large.

According to Kristina (2009), it can be conjectured that growth-promoting relations between the public and the police promote public cooperation with the police and ameliorate the plausibility and trustworthiness of the officers. It is also didactic to highlight that optimistic and favourable attitudes toward the police could be instrumental in trying to decrease the rate of crime. As custodians of the distributive justice system, one of the chief functions of the police service is to try to stimulate and nurture the bona fide attitude of citizens toward the distributive justice system.

### Satisfaction with the Police

Brown & Benedict (2002) conducted exhaustive research on the satisfaction of citizens with the police and concluded that there are three essential models. According to (Bolger et. al., 2021; Zhao et al., 2014; Reisig & Parks, 2000), many researchers have also embraced these three models. The first examines demographics, the second prior contact with the police, and the third neighbourhood conditions.

Research about the satisfaction of citizens towards police should include the demographics of citizens. Ivkovic (2008) and Taylor et al. (2001) affirmed this perspective and also claimed that females generally possess pleasant attitudes toward the police. Further, the socialisation of women renders them more peaceful, communicative, and cooperative. These qualities and attributes accredited to women customarily decrease potential tensions with the police (Ivkovic, 2008; Taylor et al., 2001). On the contrary, men are more adversarial and bellicose in respect. Hence, they could be less courteous and intimidating to the officers and could easily discredit favourable views of the police (Johnson, 2015).

Like gender, the age factor is crucial. The exhaustive research by Johnson (2015) found that mature people repeatedly express more affirmative attitudes toward the police than their younger counterparts. Aday and Krabill (2006) offered this possible explanation. They claimed that younger people are more likely to be interrogated obstreperously and frequently. Hence, their satisfaction with the police is likely to be very low. Aday and Krabill (2006) further explained that officers habitually approach mature citizens with a high degree of discretion and professionalism. Moreover, they explained that the community element is sympathetic where mature citizens are concerned. While the perspective offered by Aday and Krabill (2006) has merit, citizens must be sagacious since investigations among the police cannot be limited to age.

According to Davenport-Klunder and Hine (2023), the issue of race can be a possible demographic when researching citizens' satisfaction with the police. It also supported this perspective but claimed that while some citizens may have an optimistic attitude toward the police, many African Americans do not always hold officers in high regard (Garcia & Cao, 2005; Reisig & Parks; 2000, Sharp & Atherton, 2007; Taylor et al., 2001). Studies conducted by Azevedo et al. (2021) and Michelle et al. (2021) also corroborate this narrative.

The interaction of citizens with police could be another key factor that can predict citizens' satisfaction with police (Cheurprakobkit, 2000). Citizens are generally more confident with the police when they start encounters rather than when the police initiate them (Lisendra et al., 2024). When the police establish encounters like law enforcement and traffic violations, there is always great tension between citizens and the officers. Weitzer and Tuch (2005) affirmed this position. When this scenario occurs, the satisfaction of the officers is often diminished and viewed in a purely adverse light. Citizens who live in a community with high crime rates are inclined to be less satisfied with the police. For the most part, residents of distressed neighbourhoods also tend to express low satisfaction with the police, and that is the case with communities with low socio-economic status and prominent levels of poverty and unemployment (Gonzalez and Wang, 2022). Also, more incidents of police misconduct are usually reported in these communities. Persistent police misconduct frequently fosters a culture of mistrust of the officers, and consequently, the officers are viewed negatively.

### *Distributive Justice*

Dagan and Dorfman (2024) opined that distributive justice is concerned with the just allocation of resources, goods, and opportunities in a society. It also tries to allocate resources equitably among citizens. According to Ha and Kuk-Kyoung (2023), distributive justice refers to the impartiality of rewards and benefits that citizens receive. They experience distributive justice when they perceive that both input and output are proportionally matched (Organ, 2018). Conversely, citizens feel that the police service is biased when justice is not dealt with properly. Sani et al. (2022) strongly believed that when there is a lack of distributive justice, citizens become disenchanted, and this is a cause of grave concern. Proper distributive justice encompasses the following: Equality, Equity, Power, Need, and Responsibility. For example, in a post-colonial society, distributive justice from the police was challenged by the lingering legacy of colonial policing, which fostered militarised, class-based, and often exploitative practices rather than service-oriented approaches (Baines2022). This leads to a lack of trust and ineffective relations between police and marginalised communities. Obiagu (2023) noted that to achieve distributive justice, post-colonial forces had to abandon rigid colonial models towards service-oriented policing, building community relationships and focusing on inclusivity, though this is hindered by institutional and resource insecurities that perpetuate punitive practices.

According to Grenfell et al. (2022), colonial policing was chiefly rooted in maintaining control of the state. This was often done through paramilitary structures and punitive practices, rather than serving the public. This model persisted in many post-colonial societies, contributing to public resentment and a focus on security over welfare. Colonial policing frequently treated citizens based on their socioeconomic status, which is a pattern that continues to affect police interactions in post-colonial contexts, leading to unequal treatment and a perception of injustice. These foundational principles of policing in many post-colonial societies were built on a Western-based, hierarchical model that perpetuates exploitation, especially for marginalised communities who have historically faced repression (Beals et al, 2021). A history of oppressive colonial practices has led to a significant lack of trust and confidence in the police among citizens, particularly in communities that experience continued marginalisation or exploitation. In post-colonial societies, police forces often face professional and financial insecurities, which can push them towards more punitive practices and reliance on established colonial-era structures, further hindering their ability to act justly. The continued emphasis on the colonial rule of law enforcement and public order, rather than community engagement, makes it difficult for police to adopt a more responsive and just approach. Firdausa Nuzula and Nurmaya (2020) and Alwin (1987) noted that adopting Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) allows police to proactively engage with communities, fostering stronger relationships and becoming more effective and efficient in providing public safety and justice. Critically engaging with the history of colonialism and the experiences of marginalised populations is essential to understanding and challenging ongoing systems of oppression within policing. Moving away from the rigid, colonial model towards a more service-oriented approach requires fundamental institutional changes to redefine the role and function of police in building harmonious, trust-based relationships with citizens (Firdausa Nuzula & Nurmaya, 2020; Alwin, 1987).

### *Trinidad and Tobago Police Service*

Tobias (1977) and Sinclair (2006) highlighted that the colonial policing model has its origins in the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC). The RIC was implemented principally to sustain order and address political issues in Ireland. According to Tobias (1977) and Anderson and Killingray (1991), the RIC police force closely followed the regulations of the army since many officers were ex-soldiers and continued to establish a military

ethos, such as military drills, firearm training, and public order duties. They further stated that senior officers and most inspectors were mainly white and recruited from the army because of their military training. Mawby (2005) suggested that the recruitment of white senior officers was to maintain minimal interaction between these officers and the local citizens, whilst Junior officers (constable to sergeant) were recruited locally or from other colonies. This strategy ensured that local personnel never attained a management rank which could have endangered and compromised the objectives of colonisation. Mathura (2022) opined that this model of policing was directly transferred to newly acquired British colonies, which included Trinidad and Tobago (T&T). However, it was frequently opposed and met with great antagonism and opposition from the citizens because colonies varied in size, race, ethnicities, and culture, which differed from those of Ireland.

As noted above, King (2009) believed that the colonial model of policing was introduced to Trinidad and Tobago around 1797 when the British ceded power. Nearly all the senior officers were from England and Ireland, while the junior officers were recruited locally or brought from other colonies (Johnson, 1991; Sinclair, 2006). By the year 1843, the T&T police force had 12 police stations and approximately 100 officers across the entire country (De Verteuil 1986; Pino, 2009). Before gaining independence in 1962, the duties of officers were principally focused on calming political tensions and pacifying state affairs (Anderson & Killingray, 1991; Brereton, 1996). However, by the late 1960s, the police force was officially recognised as a service and adopted the name, Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS).

Job (2004) and Mathura (2022) claimed that over the years, there were numerous attempts to reform the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. The Lee Committee in 1959 recommended changes to the rank structure, and in 1964, the Derby Committee recommended administration upgrades, accountability procedures, higher education and training, and advanced investigation techniques. The Carr committee in 1972 also advocated changes for effectiveness and efficiency. In 1984, the Bruce committee suggested a comprehensive restructure of the TTPS, and the O'Dowd (1991) committee recommended improved resource management, advanced training, and revised duties for all officers (Job, 2004; Mathura, 2022). However, most of these recommendations were completely ignored by the government (Job, 2004; Mathura, 2022). Apart from reform committees, a nascent body of policing research in T&T has recommended various institutional changes. The literature, Johnson et al.

(2008), King (2009), Wallace (2011), Pino and Johnson (2011), Ryan et al. (2013), Seepersad (2016) and Adams (2019) strongly advocated several policy and practice changes within the TTPS. However, many of these suggestions were completely ignored by the governments and police executives (Job, 2004; Maguire et al., 2017; Watson & Kerrigan, 2018).

Wilson et al. (2011) claimed that during the early 2000s, there was a striking increase in the number of drug trafficking activities, homicide, kidnappings, and gang-related violence, as well as utter corruption and inefficiency within the police service in Trinidad and Tobago. To forge a possible new direction, the government appointed a Canadian as commissioner and deputy commissioner of police in 2010. It ought to be carefully noted that although the TTPS aspired to become a more service-oriented organization there were several disadvantages. There were racial and political tensions and a scarcity of tangible evidence to support and corroborate. There was also little evidence-based scholarship to properly inform and support organisations. Deosaran (2002) posited that this approach demonstrated that attempts to maintain law and order in T&T were inappropriate to adequately address this scenario. In 2001, the government of Trinidad and Tobago tried to restructure the TTPS. Hence, there were seminars, workshops, and community outreach with the principal objective of creating a positive consciousness and awareness of the police service among citizens. Despite several efforts to reform the police service, many officers remained isolated, disconnected, and detached from citizens. This only exacerbated the situation. Nonetheless, special anticrime units operated and attempted to address crime in difficult and deprived areas in Port-of-Spain and environs, as well as in towns such as La Horquetta and Arima. Mention ought to be made that those citizens often claimed that they experienced tremendous pugnacity, truculence, and aggression during their interactions with officers. These citizens also bitterly complained that the constant assertive force used by the police service frequently reflected the negative interactions between police and citizens.

Ruano-Chamorro et al. (2021) opined that distributive justice is chiefly concerned with fair processes. Similarly, Martin et al. (2015) claimed distributive justice is also concerned with how decisions are made. It also incorporates the perceptions and experiences of those who are impacted by the quality of service rendered to them. people's behaviour. Lind and Tyler (1988) suggested that this perception of distributive justice often inculcates emotions and attitudes, with important implications for

subjective well-being and the behaviour of all citizens. Tyler (2006) strongly believed that when police officers interact with citizens with a high degree of fairness, deep respect, and transparency, citizens are more willing to perceive them as trustworthy and legitimate. In the criminal justice context, most distributive justice research strongly focuses on the interactions between police officers and citizens. In general, distributive justice refers to the process and manner that is included in the decision-making. It must be impartial, objective, and fair. When it is objective, it addresses the facts (Lind & Tyler, 1988). When it is subjective, it could be rash and judgmental (Konovsky & Cropanzano, 1991). To establish a high level of distributive justice, the following ought to be seriously considered. Police officers must discharge their duties with dignity and respect, and in doing so, they provide a voice for citizens. The decision-making must be objective and transparent, and accentuate credibility and plausibility.

## **Methodology**

### Research Design

Due to the recent emergence of research on policing in T&T, this study was inductive in nature and was specifically aimed at exploring citizens' satisfaction with the police through distributive justice. A quantitative approach was used to gather a spectrum of responses from participants, which was important for reaching a large and diverse audience to represent the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago. According to Bryman (2016), quantitative data provides a kaleidoscope of views and opinions, and the data were more likely to be credible (Clark et al., 2021).

### Research Population and Sample

Trinidad and Tobago is a twin-island republic state within the southern Caribbean islands and is located approximately seven miles from the South American continent (Mathura, 2022). It is home to approximately 1.5 million citizens, representative of diverse backgrounds, with those from an African and Indian heritage forming the two major ethnic groups (Brereton, 1996; Mathura, 2019).

Citizens were more likely to have personal experiences, views and opinions about policing in T&T, which would be most suitable for answering the research questions. This study was designed using an online survey, which was populated on

social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp and LinkedIn. It utilised seventeen closed-ended multiple-choice questions which provided participants with several options that related to the topic and their experiences using the Likert scale.

The survey was initially distributed to a small number of citizens and later snowballed to a wider population. Snowball sampling was used to access participants for this study because it utilised a small number of participants and was distributed to other potential participants across T&T. Thus, this approach provided greater diversity amongst participants and responses (Parker et al., 2019; Foster et al., 2021).

### Data Analysis Method

The findings were analysed by cross-tabulating the categories through a multivariate analytical approach (Bryman, 2016). A comparative analysis was conducted using participants demographics characteristics, which highlighted patterns and correlations within the data. This research used the Thematic Analysis (TA) analytical framework from Braun and Clarke (2006) to scrutinise the data and identify patterns and trends, which were then used to develop themes.

### Ethics

Participants in this research were not provided with any financial rewards, and their participation was voluntary. No personal data was requested, so anonymity and confidentiality were maintained to the highest possible standard. All data was kept secure, which only the authors had access to, and it was destroyed after publication. To uphold ethical standards during this study, participants under 18 years were not recruited, and this study was conducted in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (2018), acknowledging lawfulness, fairness, storage limitations, integrity and confidentiality and accountability of data acquired from participants. Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the University of the West Indies, Reference number, CREC-OC. 0277/07/2024.

## **Results**

### Mode of Participation

Table 1 shows the platforms on which the survey was distributed. The most used platform was WhatsApp, then Facebook, Instagram, and the least used was LinkedIn. (See table 1).

*Table 1: Survey distribution and participants' choice of use.*

Mode	n	%
WhatsApp	1090	66.4
LinkedIn	88	5.4
Facebook	356	21.7
Instagram	106	6.4
Total Participants	N = 1640	100%

Table 2 highlights the five main categories used which were based in the Likert chart. They were, “not satisfied” (47.5%, n = 780) followed by “little satisfied” (24.1%, n = 397.6), then “satisfied” (15.8%, n = 262), “very satisfied” (10%, n = 165) and finally “unsure” (2.1%, n = 34.4). (See table 2).

*Table 2: Participants satisfaction with police based on distributive justice.*

Variable	Sample size	Very % (n)	Satisfied	Little	Not	Unsure % (n)
<b>Gender -1640</b>						
Male	814	5 (82)	8.7 (144)	13.3 (218)	21 (344)	1.6 (26)
Female	686	3.9 (64)	6.4 (106)	13.9 (228)	16.4 (270)	1.1 (18)
LGBT+	140	1.1 (18)	1.3 (22)	2.3 (38)	3.2 (54)	0.4 (8)
<b>Education -1640</b>						
Primary School	568	2.8 (46)	6.6 (108)	8.6 (142)	15.7 (258)	0.8 (14)
Secondary School	542	3.5 (58)	5.1 (84)	7.4 (122)	16.2 (266)	0.7 (12)
University	530	5.3 (88)	8.7 (142)	8.9 (146)	9 (148)	0.3 (6)
<b>Age -1640</b>						
18 to 34	696	4.5 (74)	6.7 (110)	11.2 (184)	19 (312)	0.9 (16)
35 to 64	720	5 (82)	8.9 (146)	10.4 (172)	18.2 (298)	1.3 (22)
65 or above	224	2.4 (40)	4 (66)	2.3 (38)	3.7 (62)	1.1 (18)
<b>Marital Status - 1640</b>						
Married	416	2.8 (46)	4.9 (80)	4 (66)	13.3 (218)	0.3 (6)
Partnership	472	3.8 (62)	3.6 (60)	5.3 (88)	15.5 (254)	0.5 (8)
Single	524	1.1 (18)	2 (34)	9.1 (150)	19.4 (318)	0.2 (4)

Other	228	1.3 (22)	1.7 (28)	3.7 (62)	6.7 (110)	0.3 (6)
<b>Professional Status -1640</b>						
Unemployed	492	2.1 (36)	4 (66)	6.3 (104)	16.7 (274)	0.7 (12)
Employed	620	3.2 (54)	5.6 (92)	9.5 (156)	18.9 (310)	0.4 (8)
Self Employed	528	5 (82)	5.9 (98)	8.1 (134)	12.5 (206)	0.4 (8)
<b>Ethnicity -1640</b>						
Afro Trinidad/Tobago	494	2.8 (46)	3.8 (62)	5.7 (94)	17.2 (282)	0.6 (10)
Indo Trinidad/Tobago	606	3.9 (64)	5.3 (86)	11.7 (192)	15.6 (256)	0.4 (8)
Mixed	500	2.3 (38)	3.8 (62)	6.7 (110)	17.3 (284)	0.3 (6)
White	40	0.3 (3)	0.2 (6)	0.6 (10)	1.1 (18)	0.1 (2)
<b>Location -1640</b>						
North Trinidad	328	1.5 (24)	3.2 (52)	3.8 (62)	11.3 (186)	0.2 (4)
South Trinidad	438	1.8 (30)	3.3 (54)	8.4 (138)	12.5 (206)	0.6 (10)
East Trinidad	302	1.6 (26)	3.3 (54)	3 (50)	10.1 (166)	0.3 (6)
West Trinidad	216	1.3 (22)	2 (26)	1.9 (32)	8.2 (134)	0.1 (2)
Central Trinidad	356	1.9 (32)	3 (48)	3 (48)	13.7 (226)	0.1 (2)

According to Table 3, most participants, 40.2% (n = 660), stated that the police's final decision was not fair and transparent at the end of their contact. The results also showed that 33% (n = 540) of the participants felt unsure about the police being fair and transparent, whilst a minority number of participants, 26.8% (n = 440), felt that the police were not fair and transparent when reaching a final decision. The results further indicated that most participants, 41.6% (n = 682), were of the firm view that the police were biased during the contact, and 34% (n = 558) noted that the police were not biased when reaching an outcome. However, 24.4% (n = 400) of participants felt unsure about the police being biased. When they were asked about being satisfied with the outcome and the police decision, the majority, 58.8% (n = 960), highlighted that they were not, and 41.5% (n = 680) mentioned that they felt satisfied with the outcome. The majority, 66% (n = 1082) of participants expressed that the police did not treat them with respect and dignity during the contact, and this influenced the officer's final decision and outcome. On the other hand, 34% (n = 558) highlighted that the police treated them with respect and dignity. When participants were asked about the police professionalism, the majority, 59.1% (n = 969), expressed "no" and 40.9%

(n = 671) stated “yes.” The results also indicated that most participants, 73% (n = 1197), believed that the police were inconsistent with procedures, decision-making and reaching an outcome. However, 27% (n = 433) felt that the police were consistent during the contact.

*Table 3: Inferential factors for predicting satisfaction with the Police based on Distributive Justice*

Questions	Distribution % (n)
<b>Was the officer’s final decision fair and transparent?</b>	
Yes.....	26.8% (440)
No.....	40.2% (660)
Unsure.....	33% (540)
(N)	1640
<b>Did you feel that the officer’s final decision was bias?</b>	
Yes.....	41.6% (682)
No.....	34% (558)
Unsure.....	24.4% (400)
(N)	1640
<b>Were you satisfied with the outcome and officer’s decision?</b>	
Yes.....	41.5% (680)
No.....	58.5% (960)
(N)	1640
<b>Were you treated with respect and dignity which influenced the outcome?</b>	
Yes.....	34% (558)
No.....	66% (1082)
(N)	1640
<b>Did the police use a professional approach which influenced the outcome?</b>	
Yes.....	40.9% (671)
No.....	59.1% (969)
(N)	1640
<b>Were the police consistent in the process used to reach as outcome?</b>	
Yes.....	27% (443)
No.....	73% (1197)
(N)	1640

(N)	
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## Discussion

It is widely accepted that police officers are the most visible sign of law enforcement in most societies. Generally, they are required to manage citizens' moral behaviour and compliance with social policies and legal principles (Reiner, 2010; Mathura, 2022). According to Tyler (1990), Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux (1994), and Mathura (2019), whilst the police are instrumental in preventing and resolving crime and the fear that accompanies criminality, they cannot achieve this mandate on their own and therefore require cooperation, information and compliance from citizens in the communities. Thus, for police officers to accomplish this task, citizens must be satisfied and convinced that the police have the community's best interest, and officers perform their role and function in a professional and dignified manner (Brown & Benedict, 2002; Mathura, 2022). According to Tyler (1990), officers must gain respect and sustain legitimate acceptance from citizens, and this can be achieved when officers practice distributive justice whereby citizens are treated with respect, courtesy, and dignity during interactions and the outcome of a police contact (Reiner, 2010; Mathura, 2019). Whilst it is important to appreciate citizens' satisfaction with the police from a global perspective, it is also significant to first have an emerging body of knowledge and literature on citizens' satisfaction with the police in a developing nation such as Trinidad and Tobago, because of the nascent body of research that presently exists. It is also important to understand the developments in such a society since the needs of citizens could be demanding and their problems complex. Cultivating a body of knowledge could enhance working relationships between citizens and the police, promote sustainable communities, foster citizens' satisfaction with the police, and implement purposeful change and development for police practice and policies (Merenda et al., 2021; Sani et al., 2022; Mathura, 2022). When citizens feel satisfied with the police, this could enhance trust and confidence between both parties and strengthen community policing and simultaneously promote authentic information dissemination and shared values (Tankebe, 2014; Sani et al., 2022; Mathura, 2022).

The majority group of participants (40.2%) highlighted that the police's final decision was not fair and transparent, whilst a small number (26.8%) stated the police were. However, 33% of participants stated that they were unsure about the police

being fair and transparent. These results were aligned with research from Tyler (1990) and Tyler and Huo (2002), who indicated that citizens frequently considered the final decision made by police officers when evaluating satisfaction. According to these authors, people often felt satisfied when the police reached a final decision that was fair and justifiable, and this eventually led to citizens accepting the police as legitimate. According to Jackson and Bradford (2010), it is important to acknowledge and respect the authority of police officers, but it is equally important that officers justify how such authority is used to develop outcomes and serve justice to citizens.

The results from this study highlighted that most of the participants (41.6%) felt that the final decision made by the police during a contact was biased, and the second highest number of participants (34%) stated that the police were not biased. On the other hand, a small number of participants (24.4%) stated that they were unsure. These results were consistent with research from Beetham (1991) and Maguire et al. (2017), who found that it was important for police officers to be transparent and fair during their interactions with citizens. According to these authors, transparency and fairness were more likely to generate citizens' satisfaction with the police and lead to legitimate acceptance of the police. A debate from Jackson and Bradford (2010) suggested that police officers must be fair in their dealings with citizens and be transparent with the policies and practices used to make decisions.

When participants were asked if they felt satisfied with the outcome and officers' decisions at the end of a contact, most of them (58.5%) stated that they were not satisfied, and the minority group (41.5%) stated that they felt satisfied. According to Adams (2019), police legitimacy is established when citizens feel satisfied with the outcome of their contact with the police. This author highlighted that it was important for officers to include citizens through dialogue before reaching a final decision. Tyler (2003) highlighted that citizens were more likely to comply with the law if they accepted the police as a legitimate law enforcement institution, and this was only possible when citizens felt satisfied. The findings of this study are aligned with the work of Adams (2019) and Tyler (2003), which showed that citizens' satisfaction with the police is imperative towards enhancing legitimacy.

According to many participants (66%), when asked about being treated with respect and dignity during their contact with the police, they stated "no". On the other hand, the minority number of participants (34%) stated "yes". Mathura (2019) indicated that it is important for police officers to treat citizens with respect and dignity because

this was crucial for citizens to become satisfied with their contact with the police. Mathura (2019) further stated that citizens' satisfaction with the police is necessary for positive community relations and crime prevention initiatives. This could also be aligned to community policing strategies from Trojanowicz et al. (2002), who stated that community police were only possible when citizens felt satisfied that the police had their best interest and treated people fairly.

It is instructive to mention that (59.1%) of the participants noted that the police officer they had contact with did not use a professional approach. On the other hand (40.9%) expressed that the officer did use a professional approach. According to Julien and Mathura (2024), the behaviour of police officers during contact with citizens could have a significant impact. For example, if an officer uses a professional approach when in contact with a citizen, the individual is more likely to feel satisfied. However, if an officer uses unprofessional behaviour, this can lead to dissatisfaction.

The results from this study also indicated that the majority group of participants (73%) expressed that the police were not consistent during their interaction. However, only (27%) of participants stated that the police were consistent during the interaction. According to Sunshine and Tyler (2003) and Tankebe and Asif (2016), the power holder (police) needs to distribute their authority evenly and be consistent with the service they provide because any form of inconsistency could show bias, favouritism and a lack of transparency, which can negatively affect how satisfied citizens are with the police.

## ***Conclusion***

This study carefully explored citizens' satisfaction with the police in Trinidad and Tobago accurately and carefully. To accomplish this task, three research questions were used.

- Do police officers in T&T use distributive justice when dealing with citizens?
- If "Yes," how does it influence citizens' satisfaction with the police?
- If "No", how do citizens view distributive justice?

The results accurately demonstrated that most participants felt dissatisfied with officers from the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service. According to the results, distributive justice can be linked to the country's colonial policing system, whereby officers were unprofessional in performing their duties. Such a lack of professionalism

led to poor community relations, failure to comply with institutional policies, poor accountability, officers' lack of respect for citizens, and failure to modernise the institution and its practices. Based on the findings from this study, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service would benefit from institutional reform. Some of these reforms should include facilitating advanced training, such as customer service, greater accountability, and better management of the entire institution. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) would be imperative for improving officers' skills, knowledge, and behaviour (KSB), which could become a platform for augmenting the services they provide to citizens and ultimately enhance officers' and citizens' relations.

Whilst the data showed that most participants were discontent, it also noted that many citizens remained indecisive and incredulous towards satisfaction with the police. This inconclusive position indicated a non-committed pattern of satisfaction and dissatisfaction and raised grave concerns. Citizens' satisfaction with the police ought to be a steadfast and meaningful relationship between both parties, which can ensure that officers perform their duty with dignity and pride.

### ***Theoretical Implications***

When researching citizens' satisfaction with the police, it is important to include variables such as fairness, bias, respect, professionalism and consistency because these were influential towards how citizens felt satisfied citizens felt with police officers. These variables were fundamental throughout this research.

### ***Future Research***

This research used a quantitative method for collecting data via an online survey. Closed-ended questions were used to promote diversity amongst participants, but this was unable to attract rich, detailed accounts of participants and their experiences. As a result, it will be beneficial for future research to use a qualitative methodology so that open-ended questions and face-to-face interviews can be used to obtain explanations.

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