

## The participation of public officials and their relationship with organized crime in a district of the province of Chiclayo

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**Abstract:** The present scientific research study was associated with SDG 16: peace, justice, and strong institutions. Our general objective was to determine the relationship between the participation of public officials and organized crime in a district of the province of Chiclayo. To obtain the data, a basic research methodology with a quantitative approach was developed, which fits a non-experimental correlational design. The population consisted of 165,456 residents aged between 25 and 45 years in the district of José Leonardo Ortiz, and a total sample of 384 participants was obtained through probabilistic sampling. Given this, non-experimental correlational statistics were applied, and using the Spearman statistical method, data were obtained to respond to the proposed objectives. The main result revealed a correlation between the variable public officials and organized crime, which was verified through the Spearman statistical process, yielding a result of  $r=0.660$ , considered moderate. Additionally, a medium level of participation of public officials (55.7%) and a high level of organized crime (64.3%) were found, related to the dimensions of corruption ( $r=0.427$ ), abuse of power ( $r=0.610$ ), and institutional response ( $r=0.579$ ). It is concluded that public officials are elements that facilitate the establishment and expansion of organized crime because the latter enjoys the protection provided by these officials.

**Keywords:** Abuse of power, Corruption, Institutions, Organized crime, Public officials.

### 1. Introduction

Organized crime has been established for many years as a complex crime that enjoys undeniable power, contaminating state entities. According to Gaussens [1] the main cause of the persistence of organized crime is state protection; without it, their operations would decline, as it is impossible to believe that criminal activities persist because they have not been detected by the regulating bodies. Consequently, the protection provided leads to the expansion of this criminal phenomenon and generates a weakening of the law and justice. Pérez [2] states that this propagation is related to the incapacity of public institutions to enforce the law in society, which has facilitated the transnational expansion of criminal networks.

Pino [3] points out that criminal persistence is due to the inaction of the government, which is responsible for public policies that eradicate these social problems. This has caused private investments to flee the country. According to Cabral and Diaz [4] the causes that determine the willingness of public officials to engage in criminal activities are ambition and a thirst for power, which endangers national security and stability. Madrid Valerio and Palomino Ramírez [5] indicate that political corruption reflects the improper use of power to obtain unethical benefits, violating laws that affect the legality of state functions. Martinez [6] notes that in Latin America and the Caribbean, Peru has a

significant margin of corruption in public service; according to citizens, its causes are associated with the lenient penalties provided for this crime, as despite corruption being the greatest problem in Peru, penitentiary reports do not indicate any sentences for such offenses.

In Chiclayo, cases have been reported of links between public officials and organized crime; these behaviors are associated with corruption and influence peddling, where authorities and mafias collude to obtain economic benefits through public tenders. The causes stem from a lack of professional ethics, which grants discretionary power to organized crime. The research topic aligns with the third Sustainable Development Goal, which seeks to restore peace and justice. Therefore, the question arises: How is the participation of officials related to organized crime in a district of the province of Chiclayo?

This research is theoretically justified by the foundation of author [7] who through her article facilitated the determination of the variables and their dimensions. Practically, it is justified by the importance of the results, as this data will allow for highlighting the relationship between criminal behaviors of public officials. Methodologically, it is justified by the need to use quantitative techniques, methods, and instruments that facilitated data collection.

The general objective was established as: Evaluate the relationship between the participation of public officials in organized crime in a district of the province of Chiclayo. Likewise, the specific objectives are: Determine the level of participation of public officials in a district of the province of Chiclayo. Additionally, determine the level of organized crime according to citizens' perceptions in a district of the province of Chiclayo, and finally, determine the relationship between the dimensions of the variable public officials and organized crime in a district of the province of Chiclayo.

## 2. Literature Review

Moya Diaz and Paillama Ramián [8] analyzed corruption and criminal behaviors in municipalities in Chile from the perspective of residents. A qualitative methodology was developed, and 159 interviews were conducted regarding the municipalities in the south, resulting in the finding that one form of corrupt association arises from governmental administrative aspects. Similarly, Di Cataldo and Mastrococco [9] aimed to analyze the impact of collusion between criminal organizations on government finances in Italy. They employed the “difference-in-differences” method, focusing on local governments in the south. The result indicates that criminal groups use collusion with politicians to distort the allocation of public resources toward strategically criminal interests.

Erazo [10] aimed to explore the interrelation between criminal groups and the corruption of public officials in Ecuador. Through a quantitative data analysis approach, three regions were studied. The results indicated that corruption is the mechanism that facilitates micro-trafficking. Adorno and Alvarado [11] aimed to analyze two social metropolises using research based on official documents, statistics, and specialized literature, focusing on Mexico City and São Paulo, Brazil. The results showed that city governance and crime are interconnected. On the other hand, Fynn, et al. [12] aimed to demonstrate how the current government of Uruguay has been involved in scandals related to drug trafficking and organized crime. They used a descriptive analysis methodology and found that the government's involvement in criminal phenomena has led to a loss of public trust regarding its regime.

Mello and Novaes [13] aimed to highlight the relationship between state agents and organized crime operators represented by militias in Brazil. They employed a theoretical research methodology, concluding that the formation of militia institutions promoting organized crime has been facilitated by the existence of prior state structures that have allowed their penetration into power. Lee [14] aimed to conduct a multifaceted review to understand the institutional elements or causes that allow the persistence of organized crime in Mexico. A descriptive methodology was applied, focusing on public institutions. The results indicated that judicial systems and corruption have generated questioned distrust, leading to an incapable and ineffective justice system. Caio [15] aimed to study the case of Odebrecht, a well-known criminal company in Brazil for its involvement in governmental corruption. The methodology used was a case study, focusing on four books and videos of 49 prominent figures

involved in the “Lava Jato” investigation. The results showed that unethical governmental behavior and a deficiency of values have led to the rationalization of corruption and its destructiveness.

Boyer [16] explains that the participation of public officials involves engaging in a specific public activity, understood as the legal regime that links the State and natural persons who exercise the powers granted by law and penetrate public power. On the other hand, organized crime, according to Rivera and Rubert [17] is a hierarchical structure composed of two or more people whose purpose is to execute criminal acts that represent a threat of abstract danger. Among the characteristics that allow the persistence of organized crime are its evolutionary and transnational nature, the latter being evidenced by the political and legal protection provided by public officials.

Therefore, we have established the hypothesis: the participation of officials is related to organized crime in a district of the province of Chiclayo.

### 3. Research Methodology

The type of research is basic and has focused on determining the participation of public officials and their relationship with organized crime. According to Hernández Sampieri, et al. [18] basic research aims to increase knowledge, whether scientific or theoretical, and thus focuses on developing theoretical foundations or principles that contribute to the understanding of phenomena relevant to specific disciplines.

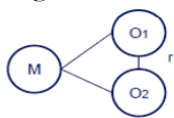
Additionally, this research has employed a quantitative approach, which adapts to a non-experimental design; therefore, it does not allow for the manipulation of the variable. As expressed by Arias and Covinos (2021), non-experimental design is characterized by the absence of variable manipulation, meaning that researchers only observe and analyze phenomena without intervening, thereby maintaining their original state without alterations.

Where:

M: Citizens

O1: Public officials

O2: Organized crime



In this research, the variable participation of public officials was measured quantitatively. According to Arias and Covinos [19] the operationalization of a variable is crucial because it allows for a thorough evaluation of it. For this variable, three dimensions were employed: the first was corruption, which had three indicators: number of reported bribery cases, protection or concealment of criminals, and facilitation of illegal activities. Similarly, for the dimension of abuse of power, three indicators were used: manipulation of state contracts, manipulation in the assignment of positions, and violation of ethics and transparency. Lastly, for the dimension of institutional response, three indicators were used: lack of sanctions against corrupt officials, absence of effective convictions, and obstruction or blocking of investigations. It is important to note that this variable and each of its dimensions were measured using a Likert scale.

The variable organized crime was also measured quantitatively. According to Hernández (2018), the operationalization of the variable consists of bringing an abstract idea to a practical level in the research. For this variable, three dimensions were utilized: the first was social impact, which had three indicators: perception of security, perception of violence related to organized crime, and perception of the impact on community relationships; the second dimension was activities of organized crime, which had three indicators: frequency of crimes, territorial control, and economic impact; and finally, the dimension of influence on public institutions had three indicators: control over other officials, manipulation of legal processes, and decay of democracy. Its operationalization was generated using a Likert scale.

According to Hadi Mohamed, et al. [20] in the field of research, the concept of population refers to the total set of individuals, events, or elements that possess common characteristics and are the subjects of study from which data will be collected. Therefore, in this case, the total population consisted of 165,456 inhabitants, where the inclusion criteria were residents of the Jose Leonardo Ortiz district, individuals aged between 20 and 45 years, and those interested in collaborating with the research.

However, the exclusion criteria were: individuals who, due to their connection with public officials, did not wish to respond, individuals holding public positions for greater objectivity in the research, and individuals without internet access for the survey. A probabilistic sampling method was used, which, according to Medina Romero, et al. [21] is employed to simplify a large population through a strategy and is characterized by giving every individual in the population an equal chance of being selected, as it is based on chance. Therefore, inferences about the general population will be made from such data. Consequently, the sample consisted of 384 citizens residing in the Jose Leonardo Ortiz district – Chiclayo.

On the other hand, the technique used for data collection was the survey, and two questionnaires were employed as instruments, one for each variable. These questionnaires were validated by three specialists in the field, and their reliability was determined using Cronbach's alpha. The reliability of the questionnaire for the variable participation of public officials was 0.861, and for the variable organized crime, it was 0.909; therefore, they were deemed reliable.

Regarding the data process, descriptive statistics were used to determine the levels of each of the study variables. Additionally, inferential statistics were utilized, as it was suitable for finding the causal correlation between the variables and their respective dimensions. Consequently, it was necessary to process the data using Excel and SPSS Statistics version 25.

Moreover, to ensure the suitability of the research, principles that allowed for its objective development were prioritized. Firstly, it is essential to specify the reliability represented by the validation of specialists in the field. Additionally, efforts were made to ensure the accuracy of the data collected from the study sample. In terms of ethical principles throughout the research process, intellectual honesty was maintained, guaranteeing the authenticity of the data and employing appropriate mechanisms for its collection. There was also respect for intellectual property, reflected in the caution exercised when using ideas or contributions from other authors that formed the foundation of this research. Also, objectivity and impartiality were upheld, as the work was conducted while avoiding biases or subjective influences from the researchers. Finally, it is important to emphasize that this research study aligned with the expectations of ethical and scientific standards provided by the Code of Ethics contained in resolution RCU N° 0470 – 2022-UCV, which outlines the guidelines and norms for the optimal development of research, as well as the commitment and honesty that should characterize researchers.

#### 4. Findings

The results obtained through the instruments detailed above have addressed the research objectives, which are reflected as follows:

Specific Objective 1: Determine the level of participation of public officials in a district of the province of Chiclayo.

**Table 1.**  
Level of participation of public officials.

		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Low level	15	3.9%
	Intermediate level	214	55.7%
	High level	155	40.4%
	Total	384	100.0%

According to the data presented in Table 1, which pertains to the first variable, the following results were obtained: 55.7% of surveyed citizens believe that the participation of public officials is at a medium level, followed by 40.7% of citizens who estimate that it is at a high level, and finally, 3.9% perceive that it is at a low level.

Specific Objective 2: Determine the level of organized crime in a district of the province of Chiclayo.

**Table 2.**  
Level of organized crime.

		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Low level	18	4.7%
	Intermediate level	119	31.0%
	High level	247	64.3%
	Total	384	100.0%

Similarly, regarding the data presented in Table 2, which corresponds to the second variable, the following results were obtained: 64.3% of respondents believe that organized crime is at a high level, followed by 31% of participants who indicate that organized crime is at a medium level, and finally, only 4.7% of the total report that organized crime is at a low level.

Specific objective 3: Determine the relationship between the dimensions of the variable public officials and organized crime in a district of the province of Chiclayo.

**Table 3.**  
Relationship between corruption and organized crime.

Correlations				
			Organized crime	Corruption
	Organized crime	Coefficient of correlation	1.000	.427**
		Sig. (bilateral)	.	<.001
		N	384	384
	Corruption	Coefficient of correlation	.427**	1.000
		Sig. (bilateral)	<.001	.
		N	384	384

According to the data presented in Table 3, it was deduced that there is a relationship between the dimension of corruption and the variable of organized crime, this is affirmed because a bilateral significance of less than 0.001 was obtained ( $< 0.005$ ); therefore, it is considered moderate or medium ( $r = 0.427$ ).

**Table 4.**  
Relationship between abuse of power and organized crime.

Correlations				
			Organized crime	Abuse of power
	Organized crime	Coefficient of correlation	1.000	.610**
		Sig. (bilateral)	.	<.001
		N	384	384
	Abuse of power	Coefficient of correlation	.610**	1.000
		Sig. (bilateral)	<.001	.
		N	384	384

According to the data presented in Table 4, it was concluded that there is a relationship between the dimension of abuse of power and the variable of organized crime, as a bilateral significance of less than 0.001 was obtained ( $< 0.005$ ), which is considered to fall within a moderate or medium category ( $r = 0.610$ ).

**Table 5.**  
Relationship between institutional response and organized crime.

Correlations			Organized crime	Institutional response
	Organized crime	Coefficient of correlation	1.000	.579**
		Sig. (bilateral)	.	<.001
		N	384	384
	Institutional response	Coefficient of correlation	.579**	1.000
		Sig. (bilateral)	<.001	.
		N	384	384

General Objective: Evaluate the relationship between the participation of public officials in organized crime in a district of the province of Chiclayo.

**Table 6.**  
Relationship between the participation of public officials and the prevalence of organized crime.

Correlations			Public officials	Organized crime
	Public officials	Coefficient of correlation	1.000	.660**
		Sig. (bilateral)	.	<.001
		N	384	384
	Organized crime	Coefficient of correlation	.660**	1.000
		Sig. (bilateral)	<.001	.
		N	384	384

Regarding Table 6, it can be determined that there is a clear correlation between the participation of public officials and organized crime according to the perspective of the study population, this assertion is made as a result of obtaining a bilateral significance of less than 0.001 ( $< 0.005$ ), which is considered moderate, where ( $r = 0.660$ ).

## 5. Discussion

Regarding the general objective, it has been corroborated that the participation of public officials is related to organized crime. These results align with what Fynn, et al. [12] established in their research, which determined that there is a significant implication between governments and organized crime, leading to a loss of trust among citizens in the governmental regime, as the latter have ignored the ethical duties that all officials should adhere to. Everything stated is associated with the theoretical study developed by Boyer [16] who indicates that being a public official means enjoying public power to exercise the authorities established by law; however, frequent evidence shows that this power allows them to achieve personal objectives for themselves or their own, undermining the common interest.

Furthermore, concerning the first specific objective, it was noted that more than half of the citizens perceive that the participation of public officials and their link to organized crime is at a medium level, followed by a significant portion that considers it at a high level, and only a very small number of respondents believe that public officials do not engage in such illicit activities. These findings relate to the research conducted by Adorno and Alvarado [11] who found that government functions are closely linked to acts of organized crime, which, according to Rivera and Rubert [17] is understood as a hierarchical group that, through a set of actions, aims to commit serious crimes, which is entirely alien to the functions that public officials should legally exercise, as it is generally known that their activities should be directed towards the care and preservation of social welfare.

Similarly, regarding the second specific objective, a number that significantly exceeds half of the respondents believe that organized crime is at its peak with a high level, followed by a notable number of respondents indicating it is at a medium level, and a small portion indicating it is at a low level. This result is similar to the findings of Di Cataldo and Mastrococco [9] who assert that organized crime is

driven by collusion with politicians to divert public resources to their domain, which will then be used for criminal purposes. This aligns with the conceptualization by Rivera and Rubert [17] who point out that organized crime possesses characteristics that allow its prevalence, some of which include the political and legal protection offered by colluding public officials.

On the other hand, regarding the third specific objective, the result indicated that there is a correlation between the dimensions that comprise the variable of public officials' participation and the variable of organized crime. This finding is similar to the research study by Erazo [10] which evidenced the link between the dimensions of the first variable, termed public officials' participation, and the second variable, organized crime, as it explains that corruption is the mechanism that facilitates micro-trafficking, constituting one of the most frequent activities and operations that organized crime engages in.

## 6. Conclusion

Firstly, based on the general objective, it was evaluated whether there is a significant relationship between the variables of public officials' participation and organized crime from the perspective of the citizens. This relationship is supported by obtaining a bilateral significance of less than 0.001 ( $< 0.005$ ), which is considered moderate, where  $r = 0.660$ . Therefore, it is recommended that the Municipal Management of the district of Jose Leonardo Ortiz comply with Article 119 of Law No. 27972 (Organic Law of Municipalities), which stipulates the open council, essentially a public meeting where the district's inhabitants can participate in community interest topics to improve the negative perception they have.

Regarding the first specific objective, it was corroborated that 55.7% of citizens perceive that the participation of public officials in organized crime is moderate, 40.7% believe it is at a high level, and only 3.9% say it is at a low level. In light of this perception, it is recommended that public servants be transparent in their functions and redirect their activities, dissociating themselves from any type of link aimed at covering personal interests; instead, their efforts should be directed towards serving the community.

Concerning the second specific objective, 64.3% of respondents affirm that organized crime is at a high level, while 31% of participants indicate that organized crime is at a medium level, and finally, only a tiny percentage of 4.7% reports that organized crime is at a low level. Therefore, it is recommended that the commissioner of Jose Leonardo Ortiz direct his efforts and those of his subordinates to dismantle the criminal gangs that instill fear and distress in the population, which limits approval and trust in public security entities.

Lastly, regarding the third specific objective, it was determined that there is a relationship between the dimensions of public officials and organized crime. Given these results, the imminent danger present in the district is notable; therefore, it is recommended that the head of the Public Ministry, being the authority responsible for safeguarding the common interest, effectively direct their functions so that all perpetrators of the various crimes experience the punitive power of the State through imprisonment, as these behaviors cannot go unpunished due to the danger they represent within society.

## Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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