

**THE POLICE FORCE: CRIME MANAGEMENT AND PREVENTION IN
NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF EDO STATE**

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ABSTRACT

The paper discussed the relevance of the police force and the extent they have been effective and efficient in crime control and management. The paper was of the opinion that there is massive increase in crime wave because of the method by which some migrants and drop outs are recruited into the police force. It went on to ascertain that since these sets of people are in the force, corruption will multiply. The paper discovered that the use of obsolete equipment, poor logistics and communication gargets are part of the militating factors in their performance. The paper concluded by recommending among others proper training and re-training of policemen, motivation and better equipment and communication can go along way to increase their efficiency.

Keywords: Police force, inefficiency, corruption, ineffectiveness management, and motivation.

INTRODUCTION

The police force is an institution established to maintain law and order in the country. One of the major duties of the police force is to prevent crime in the society. Jemibewon (2001) Section 4 of the police Act stipulates some of the duties of the Nigerian police force to include:

“Prevention and detection of crime, apprehension of offenders, the preservation of law and order, the protection of life and the due enforcement of all laws and regulations with which they are directly charged, and shall perform such military duties within or without Nigeria as may be required of them by or under the authority of this or any Act”.

In a bid to make the police command realize its objectives and to become relevant with the changing situations in the country, they have undergone series of structural changes in line with force re-organisation” which has become a common phenomenon in the force with successive inspector General of Police, trying to devise strategies to guide the security of the country. The question that rightly comes to mind is to what extent has the police been able to achieve these noble objectives, and the work entrusted over to them? Ideally, the police supposed to be the friend of the people, the masses supposed to trust them, and rely on them and reveal secrets to them. But the opposite is now the case. The public is afraid of them since there have been cases where the public have been intimidated and maltreated by the police because they refused to offer them money. These have made it necessary for many of them to be transferred and certain reorganization and changes taken place in the police force.

Some of these changes and re-organisation have certain consequences and effects on the general performance of the policemen. The point is that certain strategies are adopted to make the Nigerian police force to be in line with the general practices of the police all over the world and also in keeping with the force re-organisation policy. Section 194 of the 1979 constitution spelt out the main objectives of the Nigerian police force to include the enforcement of all laws and regulations made by the federal and state governments as well as the bye laws made by the local government authority, the protection of lives and property, the prevention and detection of crimes.

The mass transfer of policy is used with a view to check and correct certain behaviors and to avoid overstay actions, which often hinder effective and efficient performance of policemen in that area where they have overstayed. Sometimes, if a policeman has overstayed in an area, he becomes too familiar with the people and may not be very active in his duty post and sometimes people believe that he sometimes connive with the criminals to perpetuate evil (Nwokocha 2000).

THE ORIGIN OF THE NIGERIAN POLICE FORCE

The Nigerian police force started with the British colonization of the country called Nigeria. When the British consul was appointed to oversee the area, he mounted pressure on the Home Government for the establishment of police force to assist them in their duties, in this part of the world. In April 1861, the consul obtained permission from the Home government to establish a “consular Guard” comprising 30 men and following the annexation of Lagos in 1861, Mecosky who had become the first Acting Governor of

Lagos established police force later that year on receiving approval from the home Government.

In January, 25th 1862, Mr. E.S Freeman assumed duty as the substantive governor of Lagos colony. He inherited 25 constables then known as “CONSULAR GUARD” but later became known as “HAUSA GUARD” because members were mainly Hausas. He eventually increased this number from 25 men to 113 men in 1863 and by 1866, the Number had been increased to about 1,200 men, (Osaretin, 1999).

It was further regularized in 1879 by an ordinance creating a constabulary for Lagos colony, and those recruited were mainly Hausas, hence they were known as “HAUSA CONSTABULARY”. The force which was then mainly military in character however performed some civil police duties and was under the command of an Inspector General of police. Ever since 1930, the Nigeria police force has grown from strength to strength. In 1968, it was decided to merge the Local Government and the Local authority police force in the country with the Nigerian police force. The lifting of the ban on political activities in the last quarter of 1978 was followed by an unprecedented tempo of political campaign early in 1979.

In an attempt to combating public disturbances and violent crimes as well as for the effective and efficient administration of the Nigerian police, new ideas were brought into the Nigerian police.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Since after the 1970 civil war in Nigeria, there has been general rise in the level of crime and violence in the country (Nwokocha, 2000). In fact, the rise or incidence of crime and violence have become the major threat to the Nigerian democratic system. There is general insecurity everywhere, at home, banks, market and high ways. People feel insecure, the citizens and residents in the cities have resorted to self help personal vigilantes as an alternative means of policing (Oladeju, 2002).

The inability to control or bring down the level of crime has made the general public to cast aspersion on the nation’s security agencies particularly the police, because it is their responsibility to maintain law and order and fight against crime. The activities of the Nigerian police force since the third republic 1999 till date have clearly indicated high level of indiscipline and gross professional misconduct. There have been series of increasing evidences of police involvement in wholesale extortion, corruption, extra-judicial killings and armed robberies (Umar-Omale, 2001).

In recent times, the Nigerian police force has been characterized by low productivity, exploitative and oppressive disposition to the Nigerian citizens. It is not an understatement to say that the Nigerian police are saddled with the responsibility of maintaining law and order, generally, to ensure the safety of life and property. Unfortunately, the Nigerian police have shown that the task of combating crime in the country is very enormous and they alone cannot handle it hence they have called for the emergence of community policing.

Part of the major problems facing the Nigerian police force is acute shortage of logistics to combat crime. Some of the vehicles are outdated and out of use. Lack of necessary gajects for communication and crime management, training facilities are in short supply especially in skillful training. The most dangerous aspect is the poor salary structure of the policemen in Edo State police command. This has in many ways affected the level

of their performance and effectiveness, particularly in area of crime control and discipline. It has brought in generally, low morale of officers in the force, low level of motivation and lack of adequate supply of logistics to enhance performance. It is a common knowledge that for any organization to achieve its set objectives, the human factor must be given priority attention. Since this is lacking in the Nigerian police force, these men have found it very difficult to put in their best. Against this background, the paper seeks to proffer solution to the following questions:

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

The word crime has many interpretations by different individuals and authors. In the criminal code, section 2 as stated by Aigbiremolen (1993), Crime is defined as an act of mission, which renders the persons doing the act or making the mission liable to punishment under the code. This presupposes that crime is an offence, which renders the persons making the omission or commission liable to punishment for the omission of a specified act under the laws of the land. Crime is an unacceptable act or action, which of the person indulging in it should understand that no matter how smart he or she is, one day, he or she must be caught and if caught will surely face the wrought of the law, which has various sentences and conditions (Nwokocha,2000).

To Soyombo (2003), he categorises the types of crime committed in Nigeria into two, namely, economic property crimes such as Larceny, Pick pocketing, extortion, robbery, burglary, store breaking, shoplifting, employee pilferage and theft, while collar crimes include fraud and embezzlement, piracy, obtaining by false pretence, cheque forgery, credit card crime, murder, assassination, assault and kidnapping. Crime can be broadly classified into three. According to Shaw (2002), the first category is that violent inter personal crime such as murder, assault and rape where the victim is in direct physical contact with the offender. The second category is property crimes such as the ordinary theft or burglary where there is no contact between the victim and the offender but property is stolen with victim not being present when the crime is committed. Third category is violent property crime, which includes all forms of robbery including vehicle hijacking which is characterized by contact often physical between the victim and offender with the aim of acquiring property. According to Osaghae and Idehen (2015), it is obvious that corruption is tantamount to harm or injury the indulger intrinsically and or extrinsically inflicts on another person or the generality of the people in an attempt to make personal gain.

CORRUPTION AND NIGERIAN POLICE FORCE

Corruption is a difficult, slippery and contested concept. hence there is no widely accepted definition as to what it means (Billion, 2005:686). Though, a number of scholars have attempted to define corruption, there is no consensual agreement on what corruption is, the lack of an incontrovertible and generalized definition is attributable to variety of activities and behavioural tendencies characterized as corrupt, and the fact is that the definition ranges from moral decay and abuse of office to strict legal reference. The puritanical exponents of corruption see it as an evil, a monster or malaise, malignant disease or cankerworm, a vice or wickedness, and a pollutant, decay and putridity. According to Ohubunwa (2007), corruption derives from the Latin word corrupt, which literally means “to destroy” it is a process of becoming evil or wicked. It is synonymous with rot, and decay, and putridity. Churta (2004) defines corruption as putrefaction,

training of purity or falling away from standard of integrity or rectitude defined by law, upheld by social norms or conscience or recognized by general conscience of mankind.

Drawing similar concern, Azenabor (2007) conceives corruption as an immoral or dishonest action or way of offering and accepting bribes in cash or kind or using the power of one's office or position for personal enrichment. Based on the above definitions, it has been seen that the Nigerian police force in so many occasions have been criticized for being corrupt (Osaretin 1999). It is characterized by low productivity, corrupt practices, exploitation and oppressive disposition to the Nigerian citizens. How often have we read over the pages of the newspapers, where a police man shot a citizen to death because he refused to give him ₦20, and many innocent citizens have been wasted by the police, and they referred to it as accidental discharge. The police force have been known for several cases of bribery and corruption. The police which is saddled with the responsibility of crime prevention have in many occasions been involved in crimes and infact, they have been convicted in many occasions with the case of armed robbery, while many believe that most of the kidnapping cases are sponsored by some disgruntled police. They supply them guns and information; the case of Iyamu in Benin City, Edo State shocked a lot of people that a serving inspector of police was the one who gave guns, information and supervision, which led to the dead of so many people (Osaretin, 1999). They are saddled with the responsibility for the control and direction of road traffic. But at times, people have seen that they are there to collect money and other negative behaviors.

EFFECTIVENESS OF POLICE IN CRIME PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT

One of the cardinal duties and objectives of setting up a police force according to section 4 of the police Act stipulates that the police shall be employed for the prevention and detection of crime, apprehension of offenders etc. It is equally the duty of the police to protect lives and properties, and to reduce crime rate to the Lowest esteem.(Tamuno 1992). Looking at the above mandate, one would come to a conclusion that the Nigerian police force have not performed creditably in this regard. There have been increasing rate of crimes, armed robbery, kidnapping and murder. The view of most Nigerians in this increasing rate of crime and criminality is whether the criminals have over powered the Nigerian police force (Vanguard October 22:2001).

This is because of the increasing rate of evils and crimes in Nigeria particularly since the enthronement of democratic government from 1999 till date. It is not very easy and safe for people to work freely in the streets and go about their normal businesses. This is because the increasing rate of crimes in the country has become very alarming and the Nigerian police force are finding it difficult to detect and prosecute criminals. The list and record of unsettled cases of kidnapping, murder and assassination that have been swept under the carpet in Nigeria are so many. The major ones now are the activities of the Fulani cattle rearers and Herdsmen in Nigeria. Every day, most Nigerian newspapers carry the report of Fulani cattle killings. There are cases of Fulani killings in Enugu State 2016, Okada in Edo State 2016 and Benue State 2016 to mention but three. Every day in Nigeria, newspapers carry news of Fulani killings of the citizens and civilians in different parts of the country. In most of these crimes, the police were informed far ahead of time by the secret information of the people of what the Fulani were threatening to do or about to carry out, but until the action is successfully carried out, the police never did anything or attempt

to arrest the culprits. People have begun to ask whether the Nigerian police force is alive to their responsibilities.

In most cases, if you visit some police stations, the police will display their distress phone numbers for citizens to call the police in case of emergency and serious problem. However, people complain that in cases of armed robbery attacks or thieves robbing people, when you call the police they will not come until after about two or three hours when the robbers and thieves must have finished their notorious activities, then police will come around to arrest the innocent citizens and people passing by to collect money for bail. All these have contributed to the disgust of the general public who are asking whether the police force is still alive to their responsibilities. Even when we are told that bail is free, the police still engage in collecting money for bail. Infact, the discouraging and most disheartening one is the issue of what the police call accidental discharge. What people are asking is, is there anything like accidental discharge? Almost every day in our pages of newspaper we read cases of police shooting to death innocent citizens with life bullet, and calling it accidental discharge, should police be using live bullets and putting hands on the trigger when it is not a case of war or armed robbery? Here many innocent citizens have been murdered by the Nigerian police at the least provocation?

Infact, there is the general loss of confidence in the Nigerian police because of poor performance. This has resulted in the invitation of the military to help control crimes. Presently, the operation Thunderstorm and some others with different names are present to help consolidate the efforts of the police and to control crimes. Lack of public confidence and low level of operational capacity of the police have accounted for the increased use of alternative security management like the village vigilantes and community policing (Umahi and Chime 2001). This is the reason why many citizens in the urban areas spend a lot of money in securing the services of private security guards.

We think the clarion call for the restructuring and reorganization of the police force is in line with this poor performance. This has also resulted in the demand for state police by certain individuals. Most well – to – do individuals and government Agencies connected have sponsored state security guards in different names. In Edo state, they are called Oshiomhole police or Obaseki police, in Anambra during the time of Mbadinuju, they were called the “Bakassi front” and others also in Anambra during the time of the last dispensation of Peter Obi they were called the “Ikemba front (Nwokocha 2000).

THE REASONS FOR POLICE FAILURE

The institution called police force is not foreign and not established by God in heaven who is only perfect. The police is part and parcel of our society, and it is established by imperfect persons, so we should not expect miracle from them. They will perform like an average politician or those who established it. No wonder police has been associated with bribery and corruption.

Evidently, it appears there is a very dangerous spirit in the police force, which anytime a police man sees you, he is always in an expectation of what he will get and what you will give him. He is not ready to give, but he is always ready to get from somebody like the usual syndrome from the police “what did you bring”? This attitude of always trying to get and being in an expectation to get have given them bad names. There are many factors militating against the efficient and effective performance of the Nigerian police force. Some of them are as follows:

1. Inadequate and obsolete equipment: the issue of crime prevention demands the use of sophisticated equipment. The latter day criminals use very powerful instruments and weapons in comparison with the obsolete ones in the hands of the Nigerian police force. Perhaps, this may account for the reason why most times if there is an armed Robbery case, the police hardly come if you call them until the armed Robbers have finished their operation. The Nigerian police force cannot face the criminals in a face to face encounter. The police in Nigeria is grossly under-equipped. The armory of most police stations is stocked with obsolete weapons.

2. Inadequate modern weapons and logistics: it is this kind of condition as Odeniyi (2002) noted that makes the police to sometimes ask the citizens to provide the vehicle to convey police to the scene of crime. If the police is well equipped materially and morally, they will be able to perform better (Odeniyi, 2002).

3. Inadequate number of police men: It is a well known fact that the number of policemen available for work is grossly inadequate. If you go to some police stations, they will tell you to wait until those who have gone for arrest to comeback. This has reduced the level of efficiency and effectiveness of their performance. The number of police in Nigeria falls below the requirements for effective policing of the country. The United Nations organization (UNO) recommended a minimum of one policeman to two hundred (200) persons. But the case in Nigeria is where you have one police incharge of over the whole community (Odeniyi 2002) .The ratio of police personnel to residents in Edo State is one police man to 647 persons. This is based on Edo State population of 3,233,366 (National population commission, and National population and Housing census, 2006) with Edo State police command personnel of 5000.

By December 2012 with a National population of approximately 160 million and a police population of 360,000, the ratio will stand at one policeman to four hundred and forty five (445) people. This does not guarantee proper policing for the state. No-wonder the police cannot withstand some of the activities of the criminals in the state and could not be able to perform to their optimum expectation in the country (Ugwu 2001). The inadequate manpower in the police still persists in spite of efforts by various regimes in Nigeria to upgrade the number.

Another factor is that of character and Bad behavior: It is a well known fact that most of those sacked from other businesses are recruited into the police; school drop outs join and criminals have found their way into the police force. This is the only job where they could stay and exhibit their wicked characters. It is because of this indiscipline that we hear that policemen kill or shoot somebody dead because the person refused to give him (₦20). Twenty Naira, coupled with the whole lot of cases of accidental discharge we hear and read on the pages of newspaper everyday (Oni 2001). It is also this behavior that has given rise to the increase of serving policemen involved in armed robbery everyday (Okpugie, 2002).

Another serious factor is the lack of motivation (the punch June 8, 2000). Oladeji, (2002), stated that the salaries and allowances of police personal are grossly inadequate and usually not paid on time (This day July 12, 2002). The insurance scheme in the police is poor and most times the allowances that are supposed to be paid to those who died on active service are most times delayed or denied (Odiaka 2001). The accommodation programme is very much inadequate and hardly comes as at when due. All these contributed in the attitude and bad behaviour visible today in the police force in Nigeria.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF ANALYSIS

The leadership style can be used to analyse this work. The most appropriate is the Autocratic leadership style. This approach of leadership style concentrates all powers and authorities in the leader. The organizational decision is the responsibility of the leader. Infact, powers and authorities are centred on the leader alone, the functional leader gets his position by virtue of his function (Okoh 1998). This type of leadership is a reflection of leadership style in the Nigerian police force known as command structure. Under this condition, there is no devolution of powers. Authorities and powers are within the ambit of the inspector General of police (IGP) as stipulated in the police Act. The IGP on quarterly basis organizes briefing for commissioners of police nationwide to discuss issues bordering on security of the nation. There and then, the IGR will inform the commissioners of police of what is expected of them in terms of performance coupled with the method of operation to be used in achieving such task; situation report is equally given to the inspector General of police (IGP) on the state of security nationwide, thus, is a kind of feedback. Communication moves in this direction down to the least constable in the force. A leader in achievement of group task is rewarded by way of promotion, while disobedience to order by recalcitrant(s) attracts punishment.

This style of leadership is also used in the military. It has the following advantages, it gives room for speedy decision making, the police IG does not need to obtain group members approval before deciding on what action to take on any issues.

It also has some disadvantages, it could be negative if in the process of stimulating or influencing one's subordinate fear, threat and force are used. But where the approach used is based upon incentives and rewards, and then it is termed to be a positive approach. Decision making is one of the major prerogatives of the autocratic leader.

MAX WEBER'S BUREAUCRATIC ORGANIZATION

According to Max Weber, the major elements of bureaucracy is fixed authority, hierarchy impersonality etc. Weber holds the view that bureaucracy is the best and most efficient form of organization. In relation to the police force or command, he believes that police force would be better organized based on the principles and features of bureaucracy. The police personnel therefore may require expert knowledge which may require special training in the use of rules in crime control.

Applying the element of hierarchy of the bureaucracy in this context, some hypothetical assertions can be followed. It can be hypothesized that for effective police performance in crime control, there must be a sharp distinction between the superior police officers and the rank and file and even within each cadre of police, there should be clearly defined levels and authority, the application of this principles will be better in the crime control function of the police.

With regard to impersonality characteristics of bureaucracy, it can be asserted that impersonality allocation and application of laid down rules or exercise of authority in police will influence efficient crime control. In order words, the allocation and operations of rule based on ill will and favoritism would tend to undermine efficient performance of the police in crime control.

CONCLUSION

Crime control, prevention and protection of life and property is one of the basic factors that make life smooth and easy going. Nobody can be happy and free to move around where there is robbery, kidnapping, assassination and other wicked vices. This has become a very important and difficult task for the police in Nigeria, and this is the reason for the application of other methods of policing. The Nigerian police is very much trained and will be able to do better if the necessary factors are put in place to encourage them. For them to put in their best some factors like leadership style and motivation are very necessary. No police can work or put in his best in the presence of poor equipment and bad leadership. This is the reason why people are calling for state police where they could be better handled, so that crime wave can be reduced to its bearest minimum. The present police logistic factors are not in order. Most of the vehicles have gone out of use and when there is emergency, most times, the vehicles may not be able to cover the areas necessary.

THE WAY FORWARD

For the Nigerian police force to put in their best, certain factors need to be revisited ones again. The most important ones are:

1. The up to date equipment and function that can make them be able to face criminals squarely;
2. The issue of upgrading the logistics is very important; most times when you see the kind of vehicles the police use to pursue criminals, you pity them;
3. The government should encourage and motivate the Nigerian police force if we should expect the best from them.
4. There is need for adequate accommodation; government should build and maintain adequate befitting barracks for them;
5. There is need for constant training and re-training so that they could be knowledgeable on the modern methods of crime control;
6. One of the most important factors is that police should sanitise itself of the bad eggs among them. There are many rotten eggs in the police force, who constitute a clog in the wheel of progress by their corrupt activities in the police force and are not interested in the work but their own personal interest and as such should be shown the way out of the police force; and
7. Finally, Government should ensure better welfare package for those who lost their lives in active service so that the vacuum created by their exit can be atleast mitigated or covered.

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