

MEASUREMENT OF POLICE EFFECTIVENESS IN THE DETECTION AND FIGHT OF CRIMES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The Nigeria Police Force is an entity created by the constitution with a mission to maintain a crime free society. The study investigated the Nigerian Police efficacy in crime detection and combat in Rivers State. Consequently, the research questions that guided the study were as follows: what is the degree of achievement by the Nigerian Police Force in crime detection and combat in Nigeria? What are the obstacles encountered by the Nigerian Police Force in crime detection and combat in Nigeria? The study used strain anomie theory as its theoretical framework and utilised both survey research design and simple random sampling approach, respectively. The research employed both primary and secondary data. The secondary data obtained from journals and textbooks were analysed using content analysis. The primary data collected from questionnaire items were presented in tables and analysed using the 4-point Likert scale, with a criterion mean standard of 2.50. The research results demonstrated that the Nigeria Police force has difficulties like inadequate funding, insufficient staff training, and a lack of modern crime-fighting equipment's. In conclusion, the research, among others, suggests that there should be adequate budgetary provisions for the Nigeria Police Force, personnel should undergo modern combat and police training, as this would enhance their performance in delivering services.

Keywords: Police, Policing, detection, fight, crimes.

Introduction

The basic duty of the police in every organised society is to tackle the issue of crime and insecurity. The police, as an authorized agency, are entrusted by the state with the responsibility of safeguarding lives and property, upholding laws, mitigating civil unrest, preventing and investigating crimes, and apprehending those who violate state laws (Alpert & Dunham, 2004). Ideally, the police as a security mechanism in any society is believed to be ever ready in the detection of insecurity and crime suspects before they execute their plans. Law enforcement agencies, both worldwide and in Nigeria, perform investigations into millions of offenses annually. However, a significant proportion of these investigations lack the use of efficient criminal identification tools. The failure to use appropriate identification procedures is associated with the lack of apprehension of many offenders, leading to the misidentification of innocent individuals as wrongdoers (Bertomen, 2005).

The police play a crucial and strategic role in society, as they are essential for maintaining peace and order, promoting development, and upholding democracy. Therefore, every responsible government must take into account both the supportive and restrictive functions of the police in the society. The main function of the police is to enforce existing laws and maintain social order. However, there are various security systems that significantly assist the police in carrying out their duties. Policing has always been indispensable in every society for the maintenance of order, security, and social cohesion. The importance of law enforcement becomes increasingly apparent in contemporary societies due to the presence of various diversities and contradictions resulting from population heterogeneity, urbanization, industrialization, and conflicting ideologies regarding the appropriate socio-political and economic structure (Reiner, 2000).

Weber (1968) argued that in the past, policing was seen as the duty of all adults in a community. During medieval times, all adult males were required to help prevent and control crime and disorder in society. However, the rise of the state led to a shift in policing philosophy. The state introduced large bureaucracies with centralized power structures and professional staff, which changed the traditional idea that policing was the responsibility of everyone. The worldwide research on police has mostly concentrated on four fundamental categories of police conduct: detection, provision of services, use of arrest, and employment of force (Sherman, 1983). Specifically, police use of detection includes field interrogation, traffic stops and other investigative techniques. The use of force by law enforcement agents is seen in instances of police torture, violence, and arrests carried out with or without a search warrant (Zhao & Ren, 2015). The amalgamation of these four fundamental police behaviours is often used by law enforcement agencies in industrialized nations such as the United Kingdom and the United States. In Nigeria, field interrogation and stop-search activities have been discovered to be connected to the situational variables related to criminal identification, which in turn influence the behavioural tendencies of the police (Otu, 2006).

Statement of Problem

The correlation between the suitability of police conducts and the contextual factors influencing it has been recognized as the primary cause for the inadequate criminal identification process conducted by law enforcement agents in many societies. The efficacy of the police in criminal identification and apprehension is influenced by the many techniques used by law enforcement agents. The Nigeria Police Force, along with other security organisations in some societies, seems to exhibit a deficiency in the ability to thoroughly and meticulously investigate, or re-examine, if necessary, criminal accusations against suspects in order to establish their guilt or innocence. This may be attributed to the challenging circumstances surrounding criminal activities in the present world. According to a news article as captured by Haruna (2016), the Nigerian Army apprehended and subsequently freed 249 individuals who were detained at various periods due to suspicions of their affiliation with the violent Boko Haram group in Borno State. The individuals in custody, comprising of 34 minors and 46 females, were handed over to the State government subsequent to the army's declaration that they were absolved of the charges for which they were detained. More so, in a report published by the International Centre for Investigative Reporting (ICIR), Chijioke (2021) highlighted the case in which the Enugu Police officers arrested nine individuals, falsely accusing them of murder. Shockingly, among those detained was a 14-year-old kid whose age was manipulated to 18 in order to subject him to trial and imprisonment. The Police have accused them of committing the murder of three police officers and causing damage to a Hilux Van owned by the Nigeria Police Force. To effectively combat crime and criminality, it is crucial for security agencies such as the Nigeria Police Force to conduct thorough investigations of crimes and perform comprehensive background checks on suspected criminals prior to making arrests. This approach will greatly contribute to the efficient management and prevention of crimes and criminal activities within the society.

Furthermore, Enumah (2019) reports how a Judge from the Federal High Court in Abuja penalized the Nigeria Police Force with a fine of N5 million for unlawfully detaining Esther Olubode, a nursing mother. Olubode was arrested and held by the anti-robbery squad of the Police in different police stations within the Abuja metropolis. The court, while pronouncing the verdict, strongly criticized the personnel of the Nigeria Police for violating the plaintiff's basic human rights by their arbitrary arrest and imprisonment of the plaintiff. This research therefore aims at evaluating the efficacy of the Nigeria Police Force in identifying criminals and combating illegal activities in Nigeria.

Research questions

- i. What is the degree of achievement by the Nigerian Police Force in crime detection and combat in Nigeria?
- ii. What are the obstacles encountered by the Nigerian Police Force in crime detection and combat in Nigeria?

Research Objectives

- i. To examine the level of achievement by the Nigeria Police Force in the detection and combat in Nigeria.
- iii. To identify the obstacles which the Nigeria Police Force face during crime detection and combat in Nigeria.

Scope of the study

This study focused on the Nigerian Police Force effectiveness in the detection and combat of crimes in Nigeria and the challenges they face in the detection and fight against crime in Nigeria. The geographical area of this study is Rivers State. The study gathered the needed data from 3,532,990 voting population as registered by the Independent National Electoral Commission (Tolu-Kolawole & Blankson, 2023).

Literature and Theoretical Review

The Concept of Police and Policing

The police force is a governmental organisation tasked with upholding public order and combating criminal activities in every society. In Nigeria, Policemen are government officers whose primary responsibility, as outlined in the constitution, is to effectively combat and manage illegal activities, as well as prevent and regulate crime (Odekunle, 2000). Law enforcement organisations have the primary duty of identifying criminal activities, capturing the individuals responsible, and presenting compelling evidence to persuade judges and juries of the guilt of the offenders beyond any reasonable doubt (Nicol, 2008). Policing encompasses the efforts made by various formal and informal institutions and groups within a society to regulate social interactions and behaviours, ensuring the safety of community members and adherence to societal norms and values. It is a subset of control procedures that include establishing a system of monitoring together with the imposition of penalties for any detected deviation (Reiner, 2000).

Theoretical Framework

Strain Anomie Theory

The Structural Strain Theory was developed by American sociologist Robert Merton in the late 1930s. The theory postulates that crime does not just arise from deprivation, but rather from a disconnect between desired objectives and the available means to achieve them. Merton maintains that deviation is not caused by abnormal people, but rather by the cultural and structural aspects of society, which give rise to social difficulties. He starts with the conventional functionalist standpoint of value consensus, which posits that all members of communities have identical values. However, due to the varying positions individuals have within the social system, such as differences in class status, they do not have equal opportunities to actualize the shared ideals.

According to Haralambos and Heald (2001), social and cultural systems exert pressure on individuals positioned within such structures, leading to the manifestation of socially

deviant behaviour. Individuals who strive to conform to the societal expectation of economic success, but are unable to attain it due to lack of education, financial resources, or other necessary means, can encounter significant stress. Merton therefore posits that there are three potential reactions to this strain. Initially, one may attempt what Merton refers to as innovation. Despite still valuing success within their culture, individuals may resort to unlawful methods, such as theft or robbery, to get money due to the unavailability of legitimate ways to reach this goal. Another potential reaction is what Merton referred to as retreatism. The individual abandons the quest for financial achievement and indulges in self-harming conduct, such as substance addiction. Merton's analysis revealed the reaction of rebellion, in which individuals reject the culturally prescribed objective of economic success and instead participate in revolutionary actions or seek to modify the existing system (Lynch, 2009).

In Nigeria, like in other contemporary nations, education plays a crucial role in facilitating social mobility. Consequently, persons who possess a strong educational background are more likely to get lucrative employment opportunities and achieve professional success. Individuals without access to high-quality education have challenges in establishing social connections, thereby impeding their ability to achieve a high social status. Individuals who are unable to achieve success via conventional means often have a strong need to resort to socially approved methods in order to reach their goals (Onwuenme, 1986). In Nigeria, the absence of education, employment opportunities, and effective government are seen as catalysts for crime and criminal behaviour within the society. These circumstances often lead individuals to engage in what Merton referred to as innovations, such as criminal activities, robbery, arson, and corruption.

Methodology

The study used survey research design since it allows the researcher to get the views of a wide and representative sample of the public. The sample for this research was selected from the voting population of 3,532,990 individuals registered by the Independent National Electoral Commission for the 2023 general elections in Rivers State (Tolu-Kolawole & Blankson, 2023). Moreso, the simple random sampling approach was used to choose a total of 450 individuals residing in Rivers State, Nigeria. These individuals were chosen from three specific local government areas which are Obio/Akpor, Eleme, and Ikwerre local government areas respectively. The research used both primary and secondary data acquired via surveys, journals, and textbooks, all pertaining to the subject area. A total of 150 questionnaires were sent to respondents and police officers in each designated local government area, resulting in a total of 450 questionnaires. However, only 370 questionnaires were collected and used for the research. There were a total of 10 questionnaire questions that addressed the topic of police efficacy in crime fighting and the issues faced by the police in Nigeria. The data from the respondents' were presented and analysed using statistics tables and a criterion mean based on four-point Likert rating scale. Additionally, thematic content analysis was used as a technique to analyse the secondary

data. In addition, the analysis outcomes were used to determine the agreement or disagreement with the questionnaire items and address the research inquiries of the investigation. A criterion mean is determined as follows: SA = 4; A = 3; D = 2; SD = 1

Hence; criterion mean
$$\frac{\text{Weighted total}}{\text{Sample size}}$$

and;

$$\text{This } \frac{4 + 3 + 2 + 1}{4} = \frac{10}{4} = 2.5$$

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Therefore, the average of the scores, obtained by dividing the sum by the entire number of alternatives, is defined as the criteria mean, which in this case is 2.5. Those with a mean score below 2.5 are considered negative and are thus disagreed with and rejected. Conversely, those with a mean score of 2.5 and above are considered positive and are therefore agreed with and accepted.

DATA PRESENTATION AND PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Research Question One: What is the degree of achievement by the Nigerian Police Force in crime detection and combat in Nigeria?

Table 1: descriptive statistics on the level of success by the Nigerian Police Force in fighting crime.

S/N	Level of success by the Nigerian Police Force in the detection and fight against crimes	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
1.	The Nigerian Police is efficient in-service delivery in Rivers State	31 (124)	70 (210)	94 (188)	165 (165)	370 (587)	1.59	Rejected
2.	The police employ divers' crime detecting mechanisms	196 (784)	67 (201)	94 (188)	13 (13)	370 (1186)	3.21	Accepted
3.	They have really improved in detecting crimes in Rivers State	199 (796)	96 (288)	58 (116)	17 (17)	370 (1217)	3.29	Accepted
4.	Some detected crimes were swept under carpet by the Police in Rivers State	206 (824)	93 (279)	39 (78)	32 (32)	370 (1213)	3.28	Accepted
5.	The rate of crime has declined in Rivers State due to Police professionalism	65 (260)	80 (240)	172 (344)	20 (20)	370 (864)	2.34 (864)	Rejected

Source: Field work, 2023

The table above contains 5 questionnaire questions related to the subject topic. The interpretation of the table is based on the frequency of the respondents' replies, which are shown in various percentages for each item. This interpretation will be further described below.

The result from table 1 showed that questionnaire item numbers 2, 3 and 4 were accepted by the respondents as the level of success by the Nigerian police in the detection and fight of crime in Rivers State, because the mean values of the accepted items were above the criterion mean of 2.50; while items 1 and 5 were rejected by the respondents. Respondents rejected items 1 with a 1.59 mean score meaning that there is need for the Nigeria Police Force in Rivers State to improve in service delivery so as perform efficiently on their duties. Responses from respondents prove that no doubt, the police have improved in their efforts at detecting crimes with a mean score of 3.28, however, some members of the force take part in corrupt practice while investigating assigned cases and this is not good for the image of the force

Research question two: What are the obstacles encountered by the Nigerian Police Force in crime detection and combat in Nigeria?

Table 2: Descriptive statistics on the challenges faced by the Nigerian Police Force In crime detection in Nigeria

S/N	Some challenges faced by the Nigerian Police Force in the detection and fight against crimes	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean	Decision
6.	Poor salary structure and motivational packages for police personnel	205 (820)	85 (255)	47 (94)	33(33)	370 (1202)	3.25	Accepted
7.	Lack of modern crime fighting equipment	146 (584)	80 (240)	124 (248)	20 (20)	370 (1092)	2.95	Accepted
8.	Some police officers engage in bribery and corruption in the course of their duties	149 (596)	96 (288)	75 (150)	50 (50)	370 (1084)	2.93	Accepted
9.	Lack of professionalism in the discharge of their duties	199 (796)	96 (288)	58 (116)	17 (17)	370 (1217)	32.9	Accepted
10.	Lack of police-citizen relationship	31 (124)	70 (210)	94 (188)	165 (165)	370 (587)	1.59	Rejected

Source: Field work, 2023

Table 2, seen above, contains 5 questionnaire questions pertaining to the subject matter. The interpretation of the table was determined by analysing the frequency of the respondents' replies, which were expressed as percentages. The following discussion elaborates on the varying degrees of percentages for each item.

The results from table 2 shows that respondents accepted items 6, 7, 8 and 9 but rejected item number 10. The accepted items are all above the 2.50 criterion mean standard. With a mean score of 3.25, respondents agreed that one common challenge faced by the Nigerian police in the detection and fight of crime in Rivers State is the poor salary structure officers receive and the lack incentive packages which act as a motivation to officers. Again, respondents accepted that the lack of modern crime fighting equipment with a mean score

of 2.95 and the unprofessional nature of some members of the force affect their service delivery level in Rivers State with a mean score of 32.9. To Zhao and Ren (2015) one reason why the Nigerian Police fail to effectively combat crimes is as a result of lack of funding, no motivation and not collaboration between the police and the rural dwellers.

Conclusion/ Recommendations

The police in every society act as an institution established and recognised by the government to maintain peace, order and at same time fight against crime and criminality. The police employ different mechanisms and procedure in her efforts to fighting crimes. However, in Nigeria, it the police has over time being bedevilled by different challenges. This study further establishes the fact as a crime fighting agent, the police has improved in some aspect, however, there is need for further improvement. Sequel to the study findings and conclusion, the study recommends as follows:

- i. There is need for adequate funding and budgetary provisions for the Nigerian Police Force. The government should properly fund the police at all levels to ensure they improve in their fight against crime and criminality in the country.
- ii. Officers of the Nigeria Police Force should be sent on modern combat and police training within and outside the country. There is need for training and retraining of the officers so as to get them abreast with modern day policing techniques
- iii. The federal government should create jobs and employment opportunities for the citizens as this will further help curb crime rate in the country. When citizens are engaged in gainful ventures, they won't have the opportunity to be engaged in crimes and illegal activities.
- iv. There is need for police-citizen relationship and collaboration as this will help fight crime and promote community policing. When there is synergy amongst the police and the people, crime would be reduced to its barest minimum.

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