

Image of Police in Nigeria: An Introduction

Charles Chidi Eleonu, Phd¹, Madume, Winston²

^{1,2}*Department of Public Administration, Port Harcourt Polytechnic, Rumuola, Rivers State, Nigeria*

Abstract: - The police are the physical visible arm of the criminal justice system and the principal law enforcement agent in Nigeria. This paper therefore examines how the police as the chief law enforcement agent in Nigeria soil their image by the abuse of the rights of citizens in the course of performing their statutory functions. The research found that in Nigeria, the police have in their daily functions of policing and law enforcement violated the rights of Nigerians. Other findings include the issue of lacking credibility in the police force and that due process as neglected work ethics was prevalent. Again there is the finding that the issue of police image has generated interests in the nation today and that it is observed that the police system in Nigeria as inherited at independence was militaristic. This approach to policing and law enforcement has remained so till today. In this research emphasis was placed on the fundamental rights to life, dignity and liberty as the basis for other rights which affects the image of the police during rule implementation. The research concludes that proper orientation to respect of law and strict adherence to law enforcement rules will result to a positive change to redeem the image of the Nigeria police.

Keywords: Statutory functions, Militaristic, Enforcement agent, Implementation, Orientation.

I. BACKGROUND

The police are the principal law enforcement agent of the state. According to Alemika (1993 31-32), the police are the agents of the executive empowered to enforce the law and ensure social order through the legitimized use of force. The police as an agency of government are men and women organized by the state as a paramilitary force with the sole purpose of defending the status- quo. This explains that the police is to enforce the laws, values and ideologies that justify, legitimize and defend prevailing distribution of power and wealth in society. According to Opolot (1995), policing on the other hand, has to do with protection. It means the protection of people's rights to life, dignity, liberty and property usually against criminals or law-breakers. Policing is a phase in every modern criminal justice system, and functions to curb or eliminate crime in society. In a criminal society like Nigeria, policing is indeed a tasking endeavour. It requires a good deal of training, skills and experience to be functional and effective in crime prevention. As the principal law enforcement agent of the state, Opolot further explains that policing as the one aspect of police work requires so much sacrifice from the police, which may also include their lives. Of course, the nature of any police and the form of policing in a given society is a reflection of the state that established it. During the colonial rule, the police and policing style was highly paramilitary in nature.

The issue of police public image generates interest not only in Nigeria but in the world today. The public image of Nigeria police is practically battered because of extra judicial killings, abuse of human rights, extortion and bribery, neglect of official duties and nonchalant attitude towards the public. In Nigeria the police have in their daily function of policing and law enforcement violated the rights of Nigerians. The general public observes that there are several ways in which receiving bribery and public extortion of money batters the public image of the Nigeria Police, that recorded extra judicial killings affects the public image of the Nigeria police (Nigeria Police Watch, April 19, 2014). This means that a relationship exists between abuse of human rights and public relations image of the police in Nigeria. The long neglect suffered by the Nigeria police from both military and civilian governments has led them to seek other illegitimate means of meeting societal institutionalized goals. When opportunities are closed to reach the societal approved goals, actors may likely seek other alternative means no matter how illegitimate. This structural defect with the frustrating ignoble treatment by successive regimes has constantly led to smearing and denigration of the police in Nigeria.

The Nigeria police is said to have performed creditably well on missions outside the shores of Nigeria, but their performance at home has been unethical. This has invariably led to being seen as corrupt, inept and unproductive by the public. In the face of the acts of gross violation of human rights in Nigeria, many seminars and symposium have been nationally and internationally by the Human Rights Activist groups, Non Governmental Organization (NGO's) and Civil Societies, not only to educate the people on what their rights are but also to assist in the demand and defense of such when abused by state and its apparatus. There are challenges facing the police include lack of vehicles, upgraded ammunitions and up to date weapons and electronic gadgets for effected policing. The police are the constitutional protective arm of the Nigerian criminal justice system. They are the constitutional principal law enforcement agent of the Nigerian state. But the police in Nigeria in discharging their daily function of policing and law enforcement violate the rights of Nigerian citizens. The police abuse the justice by receiving bribery, abuse of human rights and extra judicial killings, the issue of loss of credibility and due process are neglected work ethics and involving in public extortion of money thereby battering the public image of the Nigeria Police (Nigeria Police Watch, April 19, 2014). The rights of individuals, groups of individuals, communities and nations have grossly been undermined with impunity in our contemporary time. There are also mass movements by

individuals, groups of individuals, communities, nations and oppressed class to demand, defend and enforce their rights like now, particularly from the state and its repressive agents like the police and the military.

The questions that need to be addressed are the issue of bribery, police involvement in extra judicial killings, abuse of office duty by responding late or not responding at all to emergency calls and neglect of office rules. Emphasized is the troublesome issue maltreatment of suspects, release of police uniforms, arms and release of police rifles to criminals. There is no doubt that the public image of the Nigeria Police is adversely affected by various problems such as inappropriate policing, orientation and strategies with emphasis on reactive instead of proactive or preventive measures, brutality against citizens, including extrajudicial killing, corruption and extortion, poor performance in the areas of intelligence analysis and utilization as well as investigation and perversion of the course of justice etc In Nigeria, the police have in their daily function of policing and law enforcement violated the rights of Nigerians.

Onoge observes that the sloganeering “Police is your friend” in present-day Nigeria notwithstanding, the rival popular image of the police as corrupt kill and go squad has not abated. It wonders that despite three decades after independence Nigeria still quests for a social order based not on brute force but on just and moral consensus. Violent inter-communal and religious conflicts abound, looting of the national treasury is no longer news and continues to occur, and all sorts of violent crime are committed with impunity in the full glare of the police who are statutorily charged with maintenance of public peace and order. All of these signal the lack of commitment to orderly development of the Nigeria sociopolitical space (Onoge, 1993). Till date it is somehow very disturbing that despite the constitutional powers granted to the police to maintain public peace, safety and general security in Nigeria, the quality of security is grossly short of expectation and it has, no doubt generated a great deal of controversies (Odekunle, 2004). Jike (2003), Ekpeyong (1987).

This paper therefore investigates those contextual issues that affect the public image of the Nigeria Police. Efforts can be made to institute agencies by Nigeria and the police as an institution to erase those bad images long created in the psyche of the Nigerian populace. The objective of this study is to explain the reasons for the battered public relations image of the police and identify ways of boosting the public relations image of the police in Nigeria. Specific objectives of the study include to identify how bribery battered the public image of the Nigeria Police, to explain the ways extra judicial killings affected the public image of the Nigeria police, to illustrate link between abuse of human rights and public relations image of the police in Nigeria, to illustrate the challenges facing the redemption of the public image of Nigeria police. To conduct a credible study as related to the image of the Nigeria police in Nigeria and for a reliable work

and knowledge, the following are the research questions are presented. Are there indications of how bribery battered the public image of the Nigeria police, explain the ways extra-judicial killings affected the public relations image of the Nigeria police, what is the link between abuse of human rights and public relations image of the police in Nigeria and explain the challenges facing redeeming the public relations image of Nigeria police?

The significance of this study lies in the ability to identify the factors responsible for the low image of the Nigeria police and extent to which the functions and duty of police in Nigeria are exercised. Having examined the abuse of citizens by government agencies especially the police in Nigeria, the challenges of the Nigeria police and the illustration of the low image of the Nigeria police today, the research could contribute in no small measure in shaping and aiding political advancement in the political system of the nation. The research work will act as information source for scholars who may embark on similar research in the future. Again, it provokes the interest of the governments, organizations and researchers for further investigative studies. Research of this nature requires adequate finance for accurate gathering of information. The inadequacy of this financial resource affected this research. Finance reduced movement to see respondents. This issue of finance has been the major problem in all types of project. Unfortunately the high cost of transportation affected the researcher.

This research work had faced some challenging problems by the researcher which includes unavailability of relevant information. Access to relevant materials to enable putting the information necessary for the study together was not easy as too many information resources was available and takes a limited time to harness and gather the proper information needed. There was limited time that would have allowed the researcher to compare and contrast certain factors discovered in the course of the research to limit productivity in the civil services. The period expected for the completion of the research work was not adequate. Also the high demand of other academic engagements marginally affected the quality of this research.

II. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

In the course of this work, some key words have been selected. These include: Police, Image, Public Relations, Security, Peace maintenance, Corruption, Brutality

Police and Policing

The Police are an agency of government that is responsible for maintaining public order, preventing and detecting crime. The basic police mission is preserving order by enforcing rules of conduct or laws was the same in ancient societies as it is in sophisticated urban environments today. They are the principal law enforcement agent of the state. Policing on the other hand, has to do with protection. It means the protection of people's rights to life, dignity, liberty and

property usually against criminals or law-breakers. Policing is a phase in every modern criminal justice system, and functions to curb or eliminate crime in society. In a criminal society like Nigeria, policing is indeed a tasking endeavour. It is a very dangerous work. It requires a good deal of training, skills and experience to be functional and effective in crime prevention.

Image

In psychology, image is a perception process by which organisms interpret and organize sensation to produce a meaningful experience of the world. Sensation usually refers to the immediate, relatively unprocessed result of stimulation of sensory receptors in the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, or skin. Perception, on the other hand, better describes one's ultimate experience of the world and typically involves further processing of sensory input. In practice, sensation and perception are virtually impossible to separate, because they are part of one continuous process. According to Foley (2008) our sense organs translate physical energy from the environment into electrical impulses processed by the brain. For example, light, in the form of electromagnetic radiation, causes receptor cells in our eyes to activate and send signals to the brain. But we do not understand these signals as pure energy. The process of perception allows us to interpret them as objects, events, people, and situations. Without the ability to organize and interpret sensations, life would seem like a meaningless jumble of colors, shapes, and sounds. A person without any perceptual ability would not be able to recognize faces, understand language, or avoid threats. Such a person would not survive for long. In fact, many species of animals have evolved exquisite sensory and perceptual systems that aid their survival.

Public Relations

Public relations are a function which creates and to build prestige for an individual or a group, to promote products, and to win legislative battles. It develops and carries out policies and programs to influence public opinion or public reaction about an idea, a product or an organization. Public relations activities in the modern world help institutions to cope successfully with many problems. The field of public relations is an important part of the economic, social and political pattern of life in many nations. The field includes publicity, promotional activities, advertising and press contact. Public relations also coexist in business with marketing and merchandising. Public relations activities are a major part of the political process in many nations. Politicians seeking office, government agencies seeking acceptance and cooperation, officials seeking support for their policies, and foreign governments seeking aid and allies abroad all make extensive use of counseling services provided by public relations specialists. Other public relations clients are educational, social service, and charitable institutions, trade unions, religious groups, and professional societies. To avoid

misuse of professional skills, several public relations organizations have developed a code of ethics for members.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study utilized the descriptive approach. This is to gain an insight into this study as to explain the reasons for the battered public relations image of the police and to identify ways of boosting the public image of the police in Nigeria and its implication on overall sustainable development in Nigeria. In order to investigate and confirm the factors responsible for the battered public relations image of the police, the study employed the descriptive survey method, with the researcher setting out to illustrate the association that exists between the dependent and independent variables. The researcher's main goal in a descriptive study is to describe accurately the relationship between performance and the battered public relations image of the police in Nigeria. This method is useful because the study is interested in finding an understanding of the issues under investigation. In order to elicit respondents' opinion on work content for the battered public relations image of the police and the cluster sampling technique was adopted in order to collect a balanced view and ensure representativeness of the sampled survey. Yet, equal numbers of respondents were selected in order to ensure equitable representation and to reduce bias.

The decision to limit the study to Nigeria was based on the need to have a manageable sample. This is in line with the law of small and large numbers as noted by Best and Khan (2006). Thus it was deemed a representative sample with regards to the research purpose and considering the fact that the problem under investigation manifests the same way in all the Nigerian public sector organizations. Therefore, the findings can be used to make inferential judgment on the entire tertiary education system in Nigeria. This section is designed to show the method and techniques used by the researcher in gathering data for the purpose of the study. These method and techniques are presented under the following sub-headings: Research design, Area of the study, Population of the study, Sample and sampling techniques, Research instrument, Administration of the instrument, Method of data analysis.

The major area for the research work is Nigeria. Nigeria is located in West Africa. With a population of more than 140 million people, it is the most populous nation in Africa and the world's number nine most populous nation. Nigeria was under British colonial rule and gained independence in 1960. At present Nigeria is administratively structured into 36 states and a federal capital. The study examines Nigeria within the capitalist international community. The population of this study consists of the general public in Nigeria. The population of the study consists of selected. The method of analysis for this study is the use of simple correlation analytical techniques, which is used to establish a relationship between the structure of civil service and productivity. We shall make use of primary and

secondary data. The researcher also employed the survey method, discussion and interview to elicit appropriate responses from the civil servants. The researcher used the purposive sampling techniques. Ajoku (2006:103) explained that a purposive sampling technique is the selection of a sample on the basis of information judgment that the group selected is likely to be representative of the population.

The analysis involved to generate insights, make inferences and draw conclusions about work content in the Nigerian police service and its implication on sustainable development. For primary data collection, questionnaire was used to gather information useful from the respondent about the study. Highlighted as pointed out was the police background while the other section of two represents the so item statement used for the study in accordance to the research questions. The study relied heavily on primary and secondary data. They were based on observations as well as through the use of questionnaires. Typically, a combination of questionnaires and observations provides more powerful data than

other methods. In this regard, questionnaire was used as an instrument for collecting primary data. To supplement the data from primary source, secondary materials were sourced from academic literature on the subject matter. The data for this study was collected through library research. The study used secondary sources of gathering information for a credible research. The instrument for data collection was library research in which books, journals, newspapers, bulletins of organizations and the internet were consulted. The secondary source of materials also includes monographs, published and unpublished works. We believe our approach made our study analytical and credible and will help to contribute to knowledge. The method of analysis for this study is the use of simple percentages and correlation analytical techniques. Data gathered was analyzed with the use of the research questions and the objectives of study. The study employed the quantitative technique using table and simple percentage in the analysis of information collated.

IV. HISTORY OF POLICE

The founder and leader of the Conservative Party in Britain, Sir Robert Peel served as British Prime Minister from 1834 and 1835 and again from 1841 to 1846. As home secretary in 1829, he reorganized the London police, who have been called “bobbies” after his first name. Since that time the conception of the police force as a protective and law enforcement organization developed from the use of military bodies as guardians of the peace, such as the Praetorian Guard of ancient Rome. The Romans achieved a high level of law enforcement, which remained in effect until the decline of the empire and the onset of the middle Ages. Beginning in the 5th century, policing became a function of the heads of fiefdoms and principalities. During the middle Ages, policing authority, particularly in England, was the responsibility of local nobles on their individual estates. Each noble generally appointed an

official, known as a constable, to carry out the law. The constable's duties included keeping the peace and arresting and guarding criminals. For many decades constables were unpaid citizens who took turns at the job, which became increasingly burdensome and unpopular.

By the mid-16th century, wealthy citizens often resorted to paying deputies to assume their turns as constables. As this practice became widespread, the quality of the constables declined drastically. In France during the 17th century King Louis XIV maintained a small central police organization consisting of some 40 inspectors who, with the help of numerous paid informants, supplied the government with details about the conduct of private individuals. The king could then exercise a kind of summary justice as he saw fit. This system continued during the reigns of Louis XV and Louis XVI. After the French Revolution (1789-1799), two separate police bodies were set up, one to handle ordinary duties and the other to deal with political crimes. In 1663 the city of London began paying watchmen, generally old men who were unable to find other work to guard the streets at night. Until the end of the 18th century, the watchmen as inefficient as they were as well as a few constables remained the only form of policing in the city. The inability of watchmen and constables to curb lawlessness, particularly in London, led to a demand for a more effective force to deal with criminals and to protect the populace. After much deliberation in Parliament, the British statesman Sir Robert Peel in 1829 established the London Metropolitan Police, which became the world's first modern organized police force.

The development of the British police system is especially significant because the pattern that emerged not only became a model for the American police system but also had great influence on the style of policing in almost all industrial societies. The Metropolitan Police force was guided by the concept of crime prevention as a primary police objective; it also embodied the belief that such a force depended on the consent and cooperation of the public, and the idea that police constables were to be civil and courteous to the people. The force was well organized and disciplined and, after an initial period of public skepticism, became the model for other police forces in Britain. Several years later the Royal Irish Constabulary was formed, and Australia, India, and Canada soon established similar organizations. Other countries, impressed by the success of the plan, followed suit until nations throughout the world had adopted police systems based on the British model. In the United States, the first full-time organized police departments were formed in New York City in 1845 and shortly thereafter in Boston, not only in response to crime but also to control unrest. The American police adopted many British methods, but at times they became involved in local partisan politics. The British police, on the other hand, have traditionally remained aloof from partisan politics and have depended on loyalty to the law,

rather than to elected public officials, as the source of their authority and independence.

V. THE HISTORY OF POLICE IN NIGERIA

The police are a recognized and indispensable organization of our modern state charged with the responsibility of maintaining law and order and an instrument of social control in society. They are the most visible and closest arm of the criminal justice system. They are agents of the executive empowered to enforce the law and ensure social order through the instrumentality of legitimized use of force. The police are the principal law enforcement agent of the state. The police are men and women organized by the state as a paramilitary force with the sole purpose of defending the status- quo that is, to enforce the laws, values and ideologies that justify, legitimize and defend prevailing distribution of power and wealth in society (Alemika, 1993 31-32).

The protection of the lives and property of the local people was not in the mind of the colonial masters. Instead, the colonial police was chiefly for the protection of the lives and property of the colonial masters. The colonial police was an instrument of coercion and oppression in order to manipulate and exploit the people and their resources. The colonial police was policing the colonial master, protecting their lives and property, and enforcing their obnoxious laws, which was in its entirety, alienating and oppressive. The police officered and commanded by the British, according to Imobighe (2003 p79), did not change after independence. Rather than shed their colonial heritage, successive post-independence government simply sharpened the oppressive instrument of the police for the promotion of their own selfish interest. Before our encounter with and subsequent immersion into the world capitalist economy, the various ethnic groups whether big or small had an age long internal arrangement and mechanism for the maintenance of social order in their various enclaves. All communities had and still have laws, and values which have been passed down from generation to generation that regulate the behavior and activities of their members.

The violation of such highly cherished laws and norms always often provoked stringent sanctions

on the violators from their community through its specialized instrument of law enforcement like the age-grade, secret cults and oracles. In Nigeria, before the British colonial rule was foisted on our territory and psych, religion played an invaluable role in the guaranteeing of law and order. According to the constitutional rights project in many communities, religion played a very important role in the maintenance of law and order. Religious offences attracted public attention and amounted to social abominations. Among some Igbo communities, such offences included murder, theft, adultery, birth of twins, and deformed babies. The oracles and supernatural forces were the basic feature of the pre-colonial police system. However, an investigation of the origins, development and role of the British-inspired police force in Nigeria reveals that they were shaped by the nature of

European interest in the country and the reactions of the indigenous people to their activities. Long standing European interest in West Africa was commerce, (Tamuno, 1971)

The first form of organized police service in Nigeria was enunciated in April 1861, when the British consul charged with the administration of the colony of Lagos, among other things, authorized to form a consular guard to help in the maintenance of law and order in the colony. Much later, in 1863, the 30 man consular guard became known as the Hausa Guard, due mainly to the fact that they were all made up of Hausa people. This 30 man consular guards was in 1879 regularized by an ordinance establishing a constabulary for the colony of Lagos. The ordinance earned it the Hausa Constabulary. The Hausa Constabulary was mainly military in nature, but still performed some civil police function. In 1896, the Lagos police force was created and armed like the Hausa Constabulary. For the areas now known as Edo, Rivers and Cross River state, a Niger Coast Constabulary, modeled on the Hausa Constabulary was formed. With the proclamation of Northern and Southern protectorates in 1900, the Royal Niger Constabulary was split into the Northern Nigerian Police Force and the Northern Nigeria Regiment which eventually gave birth to Nigerian Army (Igiebor 1986).

The Northern Nigeria Police in the words of Membere (1982:13) was reorganized and enlarged in 1903. The name again changed in 1906 to Northern Nigeria Constabulary and expanded. A further reorganization took place in 1908 and its name changed again to Northern Nigeria Police with its strength reduced. In 1914, the Southern and Northern protectorate was amalgamated but, the South and North had its own police force until 1st April 1930 when the two separate police from the North and South were merged to form the present Nigeria Police Force (NPF) under the police ordinance No 2 of 1930 with its headquarters in Lagos (Membere, 1982). The British inspired police was an instrument for suppression, oppression, subjugation and exploitation of the local people. They were awful instrument at the beck and call of the exploiters. Its emergence as a force in the hands of the imperialist was to whittle down the insurgence and opposition against the colonizer.

According to Tamuno (1971), by far the most crucial factor in understanding the existence of semi military police lay in the nature of Nigerian opposition to British Jurisdiction and rule. Opposition increased during the period of European scramble for Africa. It became more pronounced when in the wake of the Brussels Conference of 1880's and 1890's. Britain began to undertake seriously the international obligation to make effective its control over the protectorates claimed in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa" In Africa and indeed Nigeria, the formal policing organization created by the British was meant to protect their lives and property which was in no way extended to people. Their emergence enabled the "white" to oppress the people and cat away their valued resources. They were instrument of exploitation and violation of the right of the local people. The police was a weapon in

the hand of the rich against the poor and have remained so till now. This is why Kayode (2008:15) supports that: “British Colonialism in Nigeria was a mixed bag of blessings and curses. Human Rights were certainly not a central feature of the erstwhile colonial administration of the country. Many of the atrocities committed against Nigerians in that dispensations were inconceivable in the metropolis. Such atrocities were disguised as necessary incidents of the civilizing mission of the colonialists”.

Also, Ake (1996) writing on the nature and characters of the colonial state and why Human Rights were necessarily not part of the state policy, states that, the power of the colonial state was not only absolute but arbitrary. The colonial situation was not unlike, Hobbes pre-political state, in which all claims are arbitrary and all rights are only powers. In the essential military situation of imposing and maintaining colonial domination, the colonizers had no choice but to reject in principle any restriction on their use of power. The import of this is that of a necessity, the colonial police force was a culture bearing organization. They bear and reflected the culture of the state that established them. The colonial state in its entirety and dealings with their subjects was, in the words of Ake, absolute and arbitrary, so was the police. Suffice it to state that the post colonial state and its police force still wear the mark of absolutism and arbitrariness, a negation of the human rights of her citizens.

The powers of the Nigeria Police Force are clearly stated in the Nigeria Police Act. It is within these constitutional and legal provisions that the Nigeria Police derives its power to function as the chief law enforcement agent of the Nigerian State. The Police Act section 23, has it that: Subject to the provision of sections 174 and 211 of the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 which relate to the power of the Attorney- General of the Federation and of a state to institute and undertake, take over and continue or discontinue criminal proceedings against any person before any court of law in Nigeria, any police officer may conduct in person all prosecutions before any court whether or not the information or complaint is laid in his name. Others bordering on the power of the police stated in the Act are: Section 24 power to arrest without warrant power to arrest without having warrant in possession power to summon or serve summons power to bail person arrested without warrant power to search power to detain and search

suspected persons power to take finger prints. The Police Act section 4 stipulates the general functions of the police. These function falls within the powers of the police. They are: the prevention and detection of crime, the apprehension of offenders, the preservation of law and order, the protection of life and property, the due enforcement of all laws and regulation with which they are directly or indirectly charged and to perform such military duties within and outside Nigeria as may be required of them by, or under the authority of this or any Act.

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