

Elucidating Empirical Research Methods in Criminology and Criminal Justice in Nigeria

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Abstract: The crime situation in Nigeria and indeed other parts of the world continue to be monstrous despite the efforts of the criminal justice system. The foundation of overcoming this challenge may be found in the adherence to well articulated empirical research/studies aimed at understanding and providing solutions to the ramifications of crime problems in Nigeria. Therefore, there is the urgent need to examine and highlight the methods of research in criminology and criminal justice. This is a theoretical paper which relied on secondary sources, observations and desk reviews to collect data. The data collected were analyzed using relevant thematic schemes. Relevant themes like types of research, research ethics data collection, qualitative and quantitative research and actual research process were examined. It was recommended that adherence to empirical research rather than media reports is the pathway to solving the crime problem in Nigeria.

Keywords: Elucidating; empirical research methods; Criminology; Criminal justice; Nigeria.

I. INTRODUCTION

Criminology is the systematic study of the nature, extent and development of criminal behaviour while criminal justice administration refers to all the agencies and administrative processes that deals with the detection, apprehension, prosecution, conviction and punishment of a criminal offender. The major agencies of the criminal justice system are the police, judiciary and prisons. The approach to understanding and solving the crime problem in Nigeria, has put the use of empirical research at the back burner. Rather, they rely more on committee of enquiries and even media reports. This situation has not effectively helped the course of understanding and finding solutions to crime in Nigeria.

This paper therefore, provides the reader with basic knowledge of research in criminology and criminal justice. It provides the students, working professionals and interested stake holders with the necessary conceptual and methodological tools for undertaking criminological research applicable to a wide variety of topics, contexts and situations.

Study Objectives:

There are good reasons to learn about research methods in criminology and criminal justice.

1. The paper offers a good understanding of research methods in criminology and criminal justice.
2. The paper affords readers opportunity to learn more about the methods and procedures of using interview

and questionnaire instruments to collect data when doing research in criminology.

3. The paper will enable the reader to gain more nuanced understanding of why, where, and how crime takes place and possible knowledge about the solutions using empirical research.
4. The reader should be able to understand and critically interpret and analyse relevant data on crime based on statistical indicators that are a future of general claims on crime (University of Sussex, 2016).
5. The reader will understand the best ways to conduct research in criminology and criminal justice.

Understanding research methods in criminology and criminal justice

According to Babbie (2010), science is a familiar word, yet images of science differ greatly. For some, science is mathematics, physics or chemistry. For others, it is white coat and laboratories. However, for the purpose of this paper, science is regarded as a systematic method of enquiry about phenomena and the world around us.

The word research is derived from a modern French usage 'recherche' which means to investigate thoroughly, to search-a careful diligent search. Therefore, Obikeze, (1990) defined research as a systematic process of investigation carried out in accordance with laid down scientific procedure for the purpose of finding answers and solutions to a set of defined problems. From the above definition, it is important that we understand the following:

- a. A research activity is planned and not a spontaneous activity. Therefore, investment in mental capacity, time and reasoning is required to design a research.
- b. A research activity is purposeful and aimed at achieving specific objective.
- c. A research activity is systematic and carried out according to laid down procedures to allow for repeatability and verifiability.

Monette, Sullivan & Dejong (1998), defines social research as a systematic examination or re examination of empirical data, collected first hand, covering the social forces operating on a phenomena. Obikeze (1990) further described social research to include any research which has as its subject of investigation human groups, human interactions human relationships, human organizations and institutions. Crime is a human conduct which affects individuals and groups and

usually takes place within social settings. It is a form of human conduct which is considered to be against the collective social norm as contained in the laws of the society. The meaning of crime and the conducts that constitute crime are also socially determined hence researching crime is an aspect of social research. Research methods in criminology and criminal justice therefore refers to the application of social science methods in the investigation and examination of crime and criminal justice administration for the purpose of explaining and predicting the phenomena. It is the systematic investigation of crime and criminal justice using empirically collected data with the aim of understanding, explaining and seeking solutions to the problem of crime and criminal justice in society.

Types of research in criminology and criminal justice

On a general level, criminological research can be conducted either as applied research, action research and policy research (Guthrie, 2010). Applied research is concerned with research that is aimed at practical application for the purpose of solving existing crime problems. It is a research that is aimed at solving or finding solutions to existing practical problems of crime in society. For instance a research on the causes and consequences of corrupt practices among government officials in Abuja aims to investigate the causes and consequences of corruption which is an acknowledged crime and social problem in Nigeria so as to proffer possible solutions and mitigate the consequences. Action research is concerned with working on particular activity in order to make direct interventions and improvements. For instance, doing a research on low motivation as a driver of corruption among police officials in Abuja, which eventually finds that low motivation is a major cause of corruption among the police officials may inform an increase in motivation to prevent corrupt practices among the officials. Policy research is based on practical issues of interest to government and decision makers. Government authorities may have a policy of reducing crime and want to know if the capacity of the Nigeria police is adequate for the crime reduction policy they want to implement. The outcome of this study will determine whether they would embark on new recruitments or otherwise. At more specific levels, research in criminology and criminal justice can also be categorized as below.

According to Monette, Sullivan & Dejong (1998), there are various forms of research which can be used to conduct studies in criminology:

Descriptive crime research: The goal of this form of research is to arrive at a systematic description of phenomena. It attempts to discover facts and describe reality. An example is a research on the awareness of cyber crime among undergraduates of University of Nigeria Nsukka, or the nature and extent of corruption in the private sector in Lagos, Nigeria. The objective in these studies is to describe the awareness and extent of these crimes within selected groups in Nigeria.

Predictive crime research: This research is focused on predictions about the future direction, manifestation, implications, consequences and occurrence of crime. It is concerned with making projections about the phenomenon of crime using the research results. The outcome of the research forms the basis for future projections about crime. Example, if a study on the relationship between motivation and corruption found that low motivation is a driver of corruption among public servants in Nigeria. It may be safe to predict that if motivation is increased, the rate of corruption among public servants in Nigeria will decrease. Also if corruption is found to be detrimental to the sustenance of the private sector in Nigeria, it may be safe to predict that the prevalence of corruption will lead to low inflow of direct foreign investment in Nigeria.

Explanatory crime research: This involves researches that are focused on the explanation of the phenomenon of crime. It goes beyond description to explain the various ramifications of the phenomenon of crime. Crime like any other social conduct is complex. Therefore, there is the need to engage in diligent rigorous research activities to be able to unravel this complex and difficult phenomenon. For instance criminological research will provide answers to so many questions like: what are the causes of crime, which category or class of people mostly commit certain kinds of crime, what types of crime are mostly committed in Nigeria, who are the major perpetrators of these kinds of crime, Why do certain kinds of crime flourish so much in Nigeria. These are pertinent questions whose answers could be found through explanatory research.

Evaluative crime research: This is the use of research to assess and examine existing or past situations like present or past manifestations of crime, kinds of crime or the performance of existing policies or programmes of crime reduction, the implementation of new programmes and the planning and performance of interventions. For instance, such research can be carried out to determine the effectiveness or performance of anti-corruption agencies in Nigeria like the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) or the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC).

II. RESEARCH ETHICS IN CRIMINOLOGY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESEARCH.

Introduction

Every field of human endeavour have ethical standards that guide the activities of practitioners. Research is a very systematic activity which is carried out according to laid down principles. Therefore, there is the need to ensure that these tenets are adhered to in order to arrive at acceptable findings and conclusions. Unlike the natural sciences, the subject matter of most crime research is the human individual who are sometimes abused and violated in the course of research. Therefore, it is important to put in place rules that will protect and guarantee the rights of the human subjects in crime research. These rules or principles are called research ethics.

The following are the ethical principles:

Research Integrity

The researcher is expected to maintain a high level of personal and professional integrity throughout the duration of the research. Research integrity requires that the researcher conforms with all the standard practices of a research endeavor. For instance the researcher is expected to actually obtain the data from the field, report the data collected without falsification and analyse the results with utmost objectivity. Bias, sentiments, subjective considerations should be avoided in a research activity.

Ethical board approval

Research proposals involving human subjects require that the researcher obtains the approval of an ethical board which ensures that the subject's rights and interests are protected. In order to ensure compliance to this provision which has become part of legislation in some countries, most academic institutions establish an Institutional Review Board (IRB), a panel of faculty which perform this responsibility. However, some social research studies are exempt from IRB review, (Babbie 2010). For instance, an anonymous survey sent to a large sample of respondents which does not affect the rights of the respondents, or a research conducted in an established educational setting involving normal educational practices do not necessarily require ethical board approval. However, a study involving prison inmates or juveniles in custody may require such approval.

Voluntary Participation

A major principle of crime research ethics is that subject's participation must be voluntary. Criminological research often takes the time and energy of the respondents. It also involves their privacy in some cases and information they cannot share with people. Therefore, it is important that they accept on their self volition to be part of a research. Indeed any data collected by coercion or force has been rendered invalid and cannot be used for any research analysis. Also, at any point in a research, the subject is at liberty to terminate the participation.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

A major concern in the protection of the interest of the research subject is the protection of their identity and the confidentiality of the information received. The anonymity of a research subject is guaranteed when the researcher and anybody who reads the data cannot link a given response to a particular respondent, (Babbie, 2010). To ensure compliance to this tenet, anything that can identify the respondent like names, personal markers are removed from the research instruments and replaced with numbers or alphabets

It is further required that any information collected in the course of a research should only be used for the purpose of the research and should not be divulged to any other person or put

to any other use. The guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality should also be made known to the respondents before the start of any research.

Permission to Participate in the Research- Informed Consent

The researcher is expected to obtain the permission of the respondent before the respondent participates in a research activity. The request for this permission is often contained in the letter of introduction of the research instrument, either a questionnaire or an interview schedule. Sometimes it is obtained first by a front desk officer before the administration of the instrument. In other cases, researchers are required to obtain an informed consent from the subject while the research is going on. In this case, the informed consent form which accurately informs the subject about the nature of the research will be given to the subject to obtain a verbal or written consent to participate. In the case of a minor, the parents can consent on their behalf.

Plagiarism

The researcher must have full ownership of the research. Researchers must avoid the temptation of copying and pasting another person's work. Plagiarism is the presentation of another person's research work as if it is your own without acknowledgement. According to the University of Sussex, plagiarism is the use without acknowledgement of the intellectual work of other people (Hellman, 2014). This principle is also against the copying of passages or repeating phrases without acknowledgement of the source. For instance, it is against the rule of plagiarism for an author to include a paragraph, quotation, statement, idea, from another document without acknowledging the original author of the work. An obvious case of plagiarism is the total replication of another person's book, intellectual property, research, or manuscript in one's name.

III. DATA COLLECTION FOR CRIMINOLOGICAL AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESEARCH

Introduction:

The actual information that a researcher collects from the field of research is known as data. It is through data that research turns out possible outcomes that are used to explain or predict a phenomenon. The purpose of any research is to generate accurate and sufficient data with which to provide answers to the research questions and to test the hypotheses. A good knowledge of data collection methods is therefore very relevant for criminological research.

Objectives

- a. The readers are expected to understand the basic concepts in data collection.
- b. They will also have a good understanding of the quantitative approaches in criminological research.
- c. They are also expected to be familiar with the qualitative approaches in criminological research.

- d. They should be able to undertake data collection exercise in criminological and criminal justice research in any selected area of the field.

Basic concepts in data collection for criminological and criminal justice research

▪ *Research Population:*

The research population is the aggregate list of individuals that can be part of a research project. They comprise the population of people that are being studied. The research population can be the population of the whole country, a state, a local government or a community. It can also be a category or group within a particular population; like public servants, the police, the judiciary or students. For instance a crime study can be done which covers the whole country, like “Socio economic factors associated with kidnapping in Nigeria” or which covers a region or combination of states, like “banditry and insecurity in Northwest region of Nigeria”. It can also cover a category within the population like corruption among males in Abuja.

- *General population and target population in research:*

The general population often represented with capital N, refers to the entire population of study. For instance, in a study about corruption among judicial officers in Enugu state, Nigeria; the general population ‘N’ is the population of judicial officers in Enugu state. However, the focus of the research/study may be Nsukka judicial division. This segment of the population on which the research is centred is the target population. This is usually represented with the small letter ‘n’. Therefore, the target population is that population which is the centre of the study.

▪ *Sampling:*

Sampling according to Babbie (2010), is any procedure for selecting units of observation in a research. However, sampling generally is the practice of selecting a smaller unit from a larger population on which the research activity is based. Researchers in Criminology can adopt simple random method or systematic sampling method to draw a sample for studies involving statistical or mathematical computation. They can also adopt purposive, availability or quota sampling for studies that does not require statistical or mathematical computation. The concept of sampling in social research has made it possible for researchers to study large populations using a smaller population that is drawn from the large population. There are two main types of sampling, probability and non probability sampling.

- *Hypothesis:* This is a tentative statement that establishes cause and effect relationship between two variables. For example, ‘there is a significant positive relationship between poor condition of Nigeria prisons and lack of successful rehabilitation of prison inmates’ or ‘marital instability is significantly

related to juvenile delinquency in Enugu State’. The two variables in the first example are poor condition of prisons and lack of successful rehabilitation. In the second example, the two variables are marital instability and juvenile delinquency.

- *Variables:* A variable is anything that has a quantity or quality that varies. It may be a place, person thing or phenomenon that is being studied.

Quantitative Approaches in Criminology and Criminal Justice Research:

This method emphasize objective measurements and the statistical, mathematical or numerical analysis of data collected through polls, surveys and questionnaires. It is the systematic, empirical investigation of observable phenomenon with the use of statistical, mathematical or computational techniques. Indeed, quantitative data is any data that is in numerical form, such as statistics, percentages, ratios, proportions etc.

The use of statistical methods to describe and qualify crime poses a number of methodological challenges. A reliable approach to overcome this challenge is assessments of crime based on representative sample surveys of a given population (UNODC 2009). These could be households, business, private sector, public sector, institutional or population categories. Through the use of sample surveys, direct collection of data on crime experience could be conducted. Sample survey also allows for the full investigation of several aspects of crime activity, with the benefit to better understand modalities, purposes and actors involved.

A survey is a research design in which a larger population is studied using a small portion called sample which is selected systematically, with the view that the result from the study will apply to the larger population. Doing a study on corruption for instance, sample survey when conducted in a methodologically sound manner can provide answers to vital questions like:

- What portion or percentage of individuals had to pay a bribe in a given year
- What are the characteristics of victims and perpetrators of corruption
- What is the level of corruption over a period of time
- Are there certain population groups more at risk of being victims of corruption-vulnerability studies
- What are the sectors/regions most affected by corruption
- How much corruption is reported to competent authorities and factors affecting decision to report
- What amounts are paid, when, how and by whom, in a corruption process
- What sectors are more at risk of corruption.

There are various types of corruption surveys which target different groups with different roles and experience of corruption like:

- Surveys of individuals/households
- Surveys of the private/business sector
- Surveys of the public/civil sector
- Surveys of specific sectors; banks, industries, police, judiciary etc.

Household Surveys: In household sample survey, respondents are asked about their experience of corruption as victims or even perpetrators. Different aspects of corruption episode can be fully investigated with the view to better understand the relationship between public officials, services provided and private citizens. In addition to an understanding of the prevalence of corruption, it is possible to also explore how corruption takes place, for what purpose, in what sectors and for which operations. Survey results allow for setting baseline data for monitoring and evaluation, assisting in identifying corrective measures and determining the success rate of tailored interventions.

Business/Private Sector Surveys: Sample surveys can also be conducted in the private/business sector. In this case, respondents could be executives or sample of enterprises or workers. A range of topics can be investigated, from experiences, to opinions and perceptions. The aim of these surveys among others could be to measure the frequency and impact of corrupt practices among the private/business sector. It could be to know the tax behaviour/compliance of private sector companies in Enugu, Nigeria. Such measurement is relevant because corruption is among the crimes most frequently affecting successful economic development of the Country. There are existing international business surveys like the International Crime against Business Surveys (ICCBS) and the Crime and Corruption Business Surveys (CCBS), (UNODC, 2009).

Surveys of Civil/Public Sector: This is another type of sample survey which directly targets public officials. These assessments and investigations are sometimes focused on specific sectors like the police, judiciary, prisons, customs, political office holders. In most cases, these surveys have a broad focus and aim at collecting information/data on the working conditions of workers, with a view to identify weaknesses in work organization and environment and possible hot spots for corrupt practices, involvement in criminal activities by public or civil sector workers. It may also aim at understanding the experience and perceptions of respondents on recruitment, promotions, job mobility, work incentives, satisfaction with salary and career. Finally, information on crime experiences and perception provide crucial data for elaborate policy measures.

Survey on category/types of crime: Sample surveys can be conducted to understand the practice, awareness, prevalence, nature, causes, effects or implication of any particular crime. For instance, drug trafficking, human trafficking, armed robbery, kidnapping, rape, burglary, assault, theft or homicide. The study could be on the perpetrators or the victims.

Collection of data in survey research: Data in a survey study can be collected through several processes like questionnaire, interview, telephone, online-internet, email, mails etc.

IV. QUESTIONNAIRE METHOD

The questionnaire is the major instrument for data collection in survey research. A questionnaire is a data collection technique in which information is gathered from individual called respondents by having them respond to questions with options. They are flexible and versatile tools that can be used for several types of research. They are usually used for obtaining data representative of a population too large to be studied by other methods (Monette, Sullivan & Dejong, 1998; Babbie, 2010). In most survey studies, the survey method is combined with other methods like the interview method in a process called mixed technique to derive quality data.

In the questionnaire method, the researcher constructs sets of questions based on the hypotheses, the research questions and the research objectives, with possible options, and the respondent is expected to choose from the available options or state an opinion. For instance, a questionnaire on a research topic in criminal justice, specifically the judiciary could read like this: what do you suggest is the reason for delay in delivering justice in the Nigeria judiciary: (a) Lack of judges [] (b) lack of courts[] (c) Delay by lawyers[] (d) Lack of diligent prosecution by police[]. The respondent is expected to tick the option that fits the selected option. A questionnaire item may be closed or open ended. If it is closed, it means all the possible options are stated, but if it is open ended, it means the respondent is given the opportunity to state the response. Closed ended questionnaire is mostly used because it is easier to compute and analyse.

A questionnaire may be self-administered. In this case, the researcher gives the questionnaire form to the respondent to fill and he either collects it immediately or come back later. It can also be other administered in which case the researcher or the assistants in a face to face encounter with the respondent, reads out the questions and the corresponding options and fills in the choice of the respondent. The questionnaire can also be administered through the telephone or the internet. The researcher makes contact with the respondent on phone, reads out the questions and options, then fill in the responses. It can also be delivered by mail through the respondent's mail box.

Structured interview: This is another method of data collection in survey research in which the researcher constructs sets of questions based on the hypotheses, research questions and study objectives contained in a standardized format and the same questions are asked to each interviewee in the same order (McLeod, 2014). Interviews are usually recorded using a recorder or manual note taking. Therefore, the process requires an interviewer and a note taker or recorder. The information/data collected is transcribed, translated and later analysed. The language of the interview must be understood by those studied. An interview can be

conducted through on-line internet facility or through telephone.

Experimental and Quasi-experimental Research: This is the conduct of a research in a controlled environment which could be the laboratory for the natural sciences, or in the field, social setting for the social sciences. There are three elements in a field experiment research: a) Two groups for comparison- an experimental and control group. b) Variation or change in the independent variable before assessing the effect or impact on the independent variable.

Most experiments contain a pre-test and post-test. The pre-test measures the dependent variable before the experimental intervention or the introduction of the independent variable. On the other hand, the post-test measures the outcome after the introduction of the treatment or independent variable on the experimental group. In this case the experiment is conducted using one group. For example perception of crime rate by community A. The researcher could do a pre-test to know the perception of crime rate. Then the intervention or independent variable could be the increase in police patrol and visibility, check point, stop and search for six months, then a post-test study could be conducted to know if the intervention has affected the perception.

Cross-sectional research: This is the study of a group of people at the same point in time. It offers a snap shot study of the phenomena using representative sample. It also enables the generalization of the findings especially if the sample is drawn systematically so as to give all the subjects equal chance of being represented. For instance, a research in criminology that is focused in Enugu State Nigeria; it would be difficult to cover all the population of Enugu State, therefore, a cross section of the State like local government or senatorial zone may be selected for the study.

Longitudinal research: This is the study of a group of people or a crime event over a period of time to assess within and between group or event change. There are two types of longitudinal study: The panel study and the cohort study. The panel studies a group of people over a certain period of time. For instance, a study of drug abuse in Abuja, Nigeria within a ten year period. This study would include the types of drugs, the likely sources, the traffickers, those mostly affected, etc. In the cohort study, a homogeneous category of the population is studied as they change over time. A research or study on the inmates of a correctional centre could fit into a cohort study. The panel study has a definite period of time, but the cohort study is progressive.

Time-series study: This is the study of crime rate, crime event or pattern within multiple times. It involves multiple observation of the same group. Time series research is useful in the study of trends.

Meta-Analysis research: This is the quantitative analysis of findings from multiple studies in order to make summary

empirical statements about possible cause and effect relationships (Law.jrank.org, 2018).

Qualitative Approach in criminological and criminal justice research:

The qualitative method is the investigation and examination of observable phenomena using non statistical, mathematical or computational techniques. Qualitative research is designed to capture life as participants experience it than in categories determined by the researcher. Qualitative method basically involves data in the form of words, pictures descriptions or narratives. Major qualitative methods according to Obikeze (1990) are participant observation, in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussion, (FGD) and secondary or documentary sources.

The decision of whether a research is quantitative or qualitative depends on the subject of study and the method of data collection applied in the study. Also, the method of data collection determines the method of analysis that will be used. Qualitative method could be used as the primary tool for data collection. Qualitative method can also be used as a complement to the quantitative methods to obtain in-depth information that helps clarify key concepts and variables.

The Qualitative method can be used as prime research instrument when the subject matter has to do with sensitive issues, complex situations or informal relations. In criminological research, the qualitative method can be used to identify the existence of a particular crime in a society (crime detection). It can also be used to identify perpetrators and victims of crime. It can further serve as a tool to help collect good quality information about crime within targeted sectors. The information can be analysed and translated into effective policies to initiate or improve the effectiveness of crime prevention programs which can support the development of well designed corruption prevention components within relevant sectors. The major qualitative techniques are discussed below.

Observational Method

According to Monette, Sullivan & Dejong (1998), the observational method is the collection of data through direct visual or auditory experience of the behaviour and actions of the target of observation. The researcher actually sees, hears and records the behaviour or words of the research subject, which are later analysed. Observation is difficult, tricky and can be faulty, but it is at the core of both scientific investigation and human service practice. Research observations differ along three dimensions; are the data collected quantitative or qualitative, are the observations done in a naturalistic real life setting or in a contrived setting, to what extent does the investigator participate in the activities of the people being observed. Observational method is very relevant for data collection in corruption research.

There are various types of observation, participant observation, non participant observation, obtrusive

observation, non obtrusive, disguised observation and physical tracing (Monette, Sullivan & Dejong, 1998).

- *Participant Observation:*

This is an observational method in which the researcher is a part of the people, group or situation that is being studied (Babbie 2010). It is naturalistic and demands that the investigator participates and observes at the same time. In some cases, the researcher may belong to the group prior to the start of the research and then use his position as a group member to collect data. In other cases, a researcher must first gain access to a group unknown to the group in order to be a participant observer. This method is very relevant in the study and investigation of criminal practices especially on the spot when it is happening. For instance a researcher can be sent to a police formation as a police officer just to investigate and study the rationalization and practice of corruption among the personnel. This method is also suitable for qualitative data. In another example, a researcher who is conducting a study on the trafficking and abuse of cocaine in Lagos, Nigeria, may become a member of a group of cocaine sellers or buyers. This way, he would be privy to the traffickers, addicts etc.

- *Non participant Observation:*

This is the method in which the researcher studies a social process without becoming a part of it. The subjects may not be aware that they are being studied since the researcher is not directly involved in the process. For instance in order to study bus drivers and bribery among police and traffic warders in Abuja, the researcher can map out relevant routes in Abuja and enter different buses as a passenger for days, weeks and months in order to observe the practice and gather data. Also to study the condition of prisons in Enugu, a researcher can disguise as a prisoner so as to gather data.

- *Obtrusive observation*

This is the type of observation in which the researcher has a direct contact with the subjects he is studying while conducting the observation. This is close to participant observation, but obtrusive observation is different in the sense that the subject of study may be aware of the presence of the observer. For instance a team of researchers or a researcher may spend some time in a public sector like the judiciary to embark on a study or investigation of corruption in the sector.

- *Non obtrusive Observation:*

This is a system of observation in which the observer has no direct contact with those being observed. Those under study are not aware that they are being studied. This is because the intrusive impact of an outsider might change the behaviour of group members in ways detrimental to the research. It could take the form of hidden observation, disguised observation and physical traces. It can be done in a natural or contrived setting and can involve both quantitative and qualitative observation. This kind of study is most suitable for studies in

criminology and criminal justice, especially of criminal gangs, deviant sub cultures and organised criminal groups.

- *Hidden Observation:*

Hidden observation can be carried out through a one way mirror or by videotaping the activity with a hidden video camera or making use of mounted cameras to observe all the activity in the location. For instance video camera can be mounted within the premises of an establishment to monitor the behaviour of the workers. Similar instruments can be used to observe the corrupt practices of a workforce or the activities of criminals in vicinities with hidden cameras or close circuit television (cctv). Hidden observation can be done with electronic devices.

- *Physical traces:*

Physical Traces are the physical objects or evidence that results from people's activities that can be used as data to test hypotheses. It is commonly used in police investigations like finger prints, tyre tracks, dirt stains, blood stains and hair tissues.

- *Disguised Observation:*

This refers to observing people in a naturalistic setting without participating and without revealing that one is observing them. For instance a researcher may disguise as a customer who needs an international passport to study corruption and passport racketeering among Immigration officers in Abuja.

V. INTERVIEW METHOD

The interview is a method of data collection in which the researcher methodologically derive sets of questions called interview schedule from the research questions and hypotheses and reads the questions directly or through research assistants to the respondents and records their responses. Interviews are generally qualitative data instruments and are used as complementary tools for survey studies. Interview schedules can have differing levels of structure which determine the flexibility. The element of structure refers to the degree of freedom the interviewer has in conducting the interview and which the respondents have in answering the questions. There are three levels of structure in an interview:

- *Un-standardized interviews:*

The interviewer in this case, only works with a general topic as a guide, and develops his or her own questions and probes as the interview progresses. The questions are not very structured. This is good for exploratory research.

- *Non-schedule standardized interviews:*

This interview type adds more structure to the questions. The topic is the same and specific questions are asked to all respondents. The interview remains fairly conversational and the interviewer is free to probe and rephrase questions or take

the questions in whatever order that fits the particular interview.

- *Scheduled standardized interviews:*

This is the most structured type of interview. The interview schedule contains specific instructions for the interviewer. It also contains specific questions in a fixed order and transition phrases for the interviewer to use. This approach is fairly rigid with both the interviewer and respondent expected to stick to the structure of the schedule. This is the most preferred for quantitative studies with large sample size.

- *In-Depth Interview (IDI) and Key Informant Interview (KII):*

In-depth interview contain specific questions for all the respondents and are fairly structured. On the other hand, key informant interview are restricted only to selected members of the respondents who have privileged knowledge about the subject of study and are expected to provide insightful information. Key informants can be community leaders, women leaders, presidents of unions and others.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) In this method, the researcher gets groups of individuals from the study population and engage them in a discussion on the subject of the research. The group is preferably homogenous. For instance female youth groups, adult male or adult female. The number of participants should be between 8 and 10. The moderator only directs the discussion according to the FGD guide and allows the participants to freely express their views. FGD's are usually recorded, transcribed and analysed.

Case studies and life histories: Case studies and life histories are in-depth qualitative studies of one or two illustrative cases. For instance, a study of a particular community or group out of others or an autobiography story of a notorious armed robber taking note of the experiences, influences, attitudes, weaknesses and values (Criminal-justice.iresearchnet.com,2018)

VI. AN OUTLINE OF NORMAL RESEARCH ACTIVITY IN CRIMINOLOGY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Introduction

It is important at this stage to look at the process and stages of carrying out normal research activity in criminology. Social research follows a set of procedures which is known as the scientific process which consists of a number of stages that are interrelated. This process is linked such that what happens at one stage of the process affects the next stage. Therefore, the researcher should keep in view the requirements and implications of the various stages in the process. The following are the stages:

The problem Formulation Stage
The Design Stage
The Field/Data Collection Stage
The Data Analysis Stage/Reporting

The Problem Formulation Stage: Every research endeavour is driven by a perceived or real problem that needs to be addressed. This is the first stage in the research process and the researcher is expected to clearly spell out what the study is all about. Some problems though intriguing and interesting may prove difficult and pose methodological, ethical and financial challenges. A number of distinct but related activities are involved at this stage (Obikeze, 1990).

Choice of Research Topic: The researcher must couch a researchable topic to drive the research. The topic must be clear, precise and unambiguous. For instance a global and national concern on corruption may lead to the topic, the state of corruption in Nigeria. This topic could be good for an essay, but may be too broad and imprecise for a research topic. The topic needs to be narrowed down to more specific directional topic that can allow the gathering of empirical data. For instance the topic could be 'the level of corrupt practices among Nigeria police officials in Abuja'. The topic is now more narrow, precise and has a direction. Another example could be the relationship between unemployment and armed robbery in Enugu state Nigeria.

- *Clear Statement of the Problem:*

The researcher has to clearly state the problem he intends to study. This stage begins with stating the background to the research problem. It is important to further highlight both the seriousness of the problem and the ramifications within the context. How is the problem affecting the people and society, why is the subject worth studying, what research gap does the study intend to fill, what are the justifications for the study. For instance what are the background facts about corruption in Nigeria and specifically the police, what is the seriousness and ramification of corruption among the police in Abuja and Nigeria, what are the possible effects of the problem of corruption in Abuja and Nigeria etc, include official documents, statistics to buttress the point.

- *Formulation of Research Questions:*

The researcher needs to reduce the problems highlighted above to researchable questions. It is expected that these questions will direct and determine the nature of the data collection methods. It will form the basis of the questionnaire items and the interview schedules. For instance, what is the level of awareness of corruption among the police in Abuja; what is the extent of police corruption in Abuja, Who are the most victims of police corruption in Abuja. How does police corruption in Abuja take place, what are the causes of police corruption in Abuja, or what is the rate of armed robbery in Enugu, who are the perpetrators of armed robbery in Enugu, what are the reasons that people engage in armed robbery etc.

- *Specification of the Objectives of the Research:*

The researcher should also state the research objectives. The objectives necessarily derive from the research questions. They are also very important because the objectives set out the focus and direction of the research. The research

objectives could be general and specific. For instance the general objectives of the above topic could be: to investigate the level of police corruption among police officials in Abuja, the specific objectives could be; to know the level of awareness of corruption among the police in Abuja, to know the extent of police corruption in Abuja, to find out the most victims of police corruption in Abuja etc.

- *Outlining the Significance and anticipated contributions of the research:*

The researcher should indicate the anticipated contributions of the research, These contributions could be theoretical and practical. Does it contribute to existing social theory and literature in corruption research and criminology. Practically, how does the study contribute to the fight against corruption in Nigeria. Is it expected to contribute to the efforts to reorganize the Nigeria police for effective performance etc.

- *A review of Related Literature:*

The researcher needs to read and review what others have written about the concept, research subject, theory and topic. What arguments, issues have been raised on the concept and topic. What theories address the issue, what previous research exists, are there consistent or divergent findings, are there flaws in existing research that you think this research can remedy etc, (Babbie 2010) For instance in a research on correction and rehabilitation of inmates of correctional centres, the researcher would review relevant books, documents on the concept of correction and rehabilitation, related studies, research findings and official documents. Also, in a research on armed robbery, the rational choice theory can be adopted as the theoretical framework. Wilson (1975) in Siegel (2013) posited that criminals are rational actors who plan their crimes, fear punishment and deserve to be penalized for their misdeeds. He argued that efforts should be made to reduce criminal opportunity like in armed robbery, by deterring would be offenders and incarcerating known criminals/offenders.

The Design Stage

In this stage, the researcher lays out a comprehensive plan, a blue print showing how the researcher intends to go about solving the already identified research problems. What research design to be adopted, survey or experimental. This is the stage when the researcher sets out on an outline on who the research subjects are, their population, where they are, how to contact them, by whom when, what information to elicit from them, how to get this information etc. (Obikeze 1990). The researcher is expected to indicate the following:

Specification of the key variables: The key variables are the operationally testable concepts in the study. Variables are events that are capable of taking on more than one value. Variables in research are stated in such a way that one would be the cause or the effect of the other. The one who is the cause is called the independent variable while the one that is

the effect is called the dependent variable. In this study, the key variables are corrupt practices, police officials.

Formulation of Research Hypotheses:

Hypotheses are researchable problems that are presented as testable statements which indicate states presumed relationship between two or more variables. In the construction of hypotheses, the relationship between variables are stated either in a positive, negative or inverse relationships. A hypothesis is made up of the independent and dependent variables. The independent variable is usually stated first followed by the dependent variable in a causal relationship. The independent variable is the active or causal variable which produces change in the dependent variable while the dependent variable is the passive one that is affected. For instance in this study, the possible hypotheses could be, the nature of Abuja as the capital city gives rise to high level of police corruption or there is a significant positive relationship between unemployment and armed robbery in Abuja. The nature of Abuja as the capital city and high level of police corruption. In this case, the independent variable is the nature of Abuja and the dependent variable is high level of police corruption. Another could be, police officers who have low motivation are more likely to engage in corrupt practices than those who have high motivation. In this case, the independent variable is (low) motivation and the dependent variable is corrupt practices.

Identification of Study Population: The researcher should identify whom and what will be studied, from whom will the data be collected. For this study, the target population are the people in Abuja who usually have regular interaction with the police, or the people in Enugu who are disposed to armed robbery attacks, also the police officials in Abuja. It is important also to think about how to reach this population.

Determination of Sample and Sampling procedure:

The researcher would have to determine whether to study the whole population or use a sample of the population what is the sample frame if available. What is the sample size? This is determined using sampling fraction or other statistical formula. Also the sampling procedure should be determined, what sampling method would be used to select the sample, is it availability, simple or systematic sampling process etc.

Determination of the Research Instrument:

It is important to also identify the data collection method that would be used to collect data, is it the questionnaire, interview, focus group discussion etc. The chosen instrument needs to be properly constructed in other to effectively provide answers to the research questions, hypotheses and meet the research objectives.

Specifying the Analytical Methods:

The researcher should also indicate the analytical procedures that will be adopted in analysing the data collected and testing the hypotheses. The researcher may chose to use statistical

tables, frequency, charts, graphs to present and analyse the data or any of the software's for analysis like spss.

The field Stage/Data collection:

The researcher may need to pre-test the instrument or carry out a pilot study in which the instrument is first tested before proceeding to the actual field. At this stage, the researcher goes with the designed instruments to the field to collect the required information. In most cases the research instruments are combined where necessary to get the best required information from the respondents. For instance in sample surveys, the questionnaire is combined with the interview instruments, But if it is a qualitative research, purely qualitative methods will be used.

Data Analysing Stage/Reporting:

At this stage, the data are collated, organized and presented in such a way as to provide answers to the research issues. The researcher may use appropriate computer methods to run the study analysis. Data analysis is the process through which information and observation made during the research is giving meaning. Data analysis can be qualitative or quantitative.

Quantitative data analysis: In quantitative data analysis, observations are put into numerical form and processed according to their arithmetic properties. Analysis of quantitative data involves the use of statistics and numerical as procedures for assembling, classifying, tabulating and summarizing data so that some meaning and conclusions can be reached. According to Obikeze (1990), there are certain elements of the quantitative analysis that should be explained. 1. The data are numerical in form or quantified through the process of coding. 2. The important variables are clearly identified and are specifiable with regards to types and levels of measurement. It should be possible to distinguish among the dependent and independent variables. 3. The data are presented in the form of statistical tables and illustrated with the aid of graphs and charts. 4. The description and explanation of data are carried out through the application of appropriate statistics.

There should be a compilation of simple frequency distributions or summaries for all the variables. This provides a quick overview of the response pattern which helps the research to assess the relative importance of variables for explaining relationship trends. The methods normally employed in summarizing and describing both background and key study variables are simple frequency distribution and descriptive statistics. This includes the categorization of the preliminary information like the socio demographic data or other preliminary information (Obikeze, 1990).

The next stage is the thematic analysis of data. At this stage, the researcher tries to find answers to the various research questions and test specific research hypothesis. The outcome of operations at this stage determines the extent to which the research objectives have been achieved. The researcher needs

to ensure smooth flow and sequential ordering of the research report.

A summary of the research analysis and reporting begins with making a list of all the relevant research issues, research problems and research objectives. These research issues/elements are ordered according to some defined sequence or based on themes, Objective or questions. Then the construction of frequency distribution tables for each item in the instrument. The next is the description of the tables using appropriate statistics and graphic presentations, identifying trends, variations, relationships or any peculiar features of the data using appropriate statistics. Also testing specific hypothesis on the issue using appropriate statistics. Finally, making the necessary decisions, generalizations and interpretations of results using theory, relating it to other studies and specifying the implications of the research findings.

Qualitative data analysis: In the analysis of qualitative research, the first stage is to develop an analysis plan which is carried out during the research design. The purpose of the plan is to clearly spell out the strategy for targeting specific structural goals that necessitates the collection of particular forms of qualitative data. Data analysis in qualitative research begins with the inception of field work and both function simultaneously.

Qualitative data from the field must first go through data cleaning and be transcribed into a more readable and understandable format. Then it could be translated into the English language if the instrument administration is carried out in the local language. Then the data is collated, interpreted and reported according to relevant themes and subjects on the basis of the research questions, the research propositions and the research objectives. Qualitative research is mostly evidence based, so the researcher must ensure that relevant evidence either in the form of pictures, images, direct quotations and extracts from the respondents in the field are inserted in the report to justify or buttress an analytical position. The major aim at this stage is to identify the research findings which are clearly indicated. Based on the findings, appropriate recommendations will be proffered that can form policy and provide solutions to the identified problems.

Crime Classification Systems: There are three main systems to measure and track crime:

1. The Uniform Crime Report (UCR). This is the classification system used in the United States which measure and assess the type and magnitude of crime in a country. Data for the report are based on crimes reported to the police. In Nigeria there is the police crime statistics which is derived from monthly crime data submitted by all the police formations in the country. The data are released annually and used to calculate rates of crime by place and type of crime

2. *Crime Victimization Survey*: This is the measurement of crime on the basis of interviews about individual experiences with crime.
3. *National Incident based Reporting System*: This system goes beyond the count of crime to include information about each criminal incident.

Crime Mapping: Crime mapping is the process through which crime researchers and analysts use location information about crime events to detect spatial patterns in criminal activity. (Criminal justice research, 2018). At early times, patterns of criminal activity were determined through visual inspection of maps with physical markers of crime locations. However, with advances in computing, geographic information systems (GIS) and global positioning systems (GPS), coordinates are used with visual maps to detect and examine patterns of criminal activity.

Special Crime Research and Planning Interventions: These are crime research that rely on the space and environment of crime. It is based on the understanding that certain crimes are more related to peculiar spaces, emphasising the relevance of environment to criminal behaviour.

Hot Spots of Crime: Hot spots of crime refer to the areas of the town or city where most criminal activities are concentrated. Empirical evidence suggest that a small number of places account for the majority of crime committed within a city. Therefore, the detection and explanation of hot spots is a major concern of research in crime mapping. There are community based factors that contribute to the emergence and maintenance of hot spots.

City Features and crime locations: The detection of hot spots areas of crime requires the consideration of micro level place characteristics that promote crime. Studies have shown that hot spots of crime tend to emerge around particular features of the urban environment like bars, clubs, uncompleted buildings, public housing, slums and public transportation. These locations may promote crime by juxtaposing motivated offenders and suitable targets in the absence of capable guardians.

VII. CONCLUSION

This paper extensively examined and highlighted the various aspects and processes of empirical research methods in criminology and criminal justice in Nigeria. The paper began with types of research and research ethics in criminology and criminal justice. It further looked at the different kinds of data collection techniques in the field. This includes basic concepts in data collection, but most importantly, an exposition of the quantitative and qualitative approaches in empirical research. Finally, the paper demonstrated the various stages of the research activity in criminology and penology, beginning from the problem formulation stage to the stage of analysis and research reports.

VIII. RECOMMENDATION

At the moment in Nigeria, the use of empirical research in understanding and finding solutions to crime is not adhered to. The paper therefore recommends that to effectively address the problem of crime, experts, professionals and practitioners should rely more on empirical research. This is important to effectively understand the nature, ramifications of different types of crime and also understand better the solutions to these crimes.

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