

Assessing the Challenges to Effective Crime Control and Management by the Nigerian Police Force

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the challenges to effective crime control and management by the Nigerian Police Force in Kabong, Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. The study indicates that the Nigerian Police has been playing a vital role in the fight against crimes and other security challenges. However, its efforts have not yielded the much-needed peace and security because of weak cooperation that exists between the force and the public. Based on the findings of this study, it was however recommended among others, that the police force should foster and strengthen community engagement, as well as articulate continuous evaluation and improvement in the Police Force. The government on its part must be actively involved in affairs of the Nigerian Police by providing adequate funding. This will help in addressing some of the challenges facing the Nigerian Police.

Keywords: Nigerian Police Force, Crime, Crime Control, Public Perception, Community Policing.

INTRODUCTION

The government entrusted the maintenance of internal crime to the Nigerian police to carry out this obligation. The Nigerian police is tasked by law with preventing, curtailing, and detecting crime, maintaining national peace and order, and enforcing all laws and regulations. They are also expected to accomplish these tasks effectively and efficiently. The Nigerian police force is an integral aspect of the country's civil society. As a result, in addition to the challenges that have rendered their job ineffective in recent years, they face human issues that not only exacerbate its material deficiencies, but also have a significant negative impact on its overall day to day performance. Under-funding and under-utilization of monies for essential aspects of force expansion, such as training, logistics, weaponry and ammunition, and so on, are paramount on the rim of competent and productive police performance. Morality is not a virtue among cops. It was discussed that police corruption and the theft of money from individuals is a big concern, as they are expected to be moral and valuable as law enforcement officers. Officers slaughtered efficient and productive performance of duties on the verge of corruption in their desire to meet up with mates in the community (Adegoke 2013).

Nigerian Police Force (NPF) incapacity to ensure that crime rates are minimized, lives and properties are protected, and the country's ongoing crime challenges are tackled, is frightening. The causes of crime in the country are far too many to list, and they cannot be attributed to a single component of the system. They range from the government to the police and finally to the general public. On the police's side, there are a number of factors that serve as enhancers to their exceptionally poor performance.

A large number of Nigerians have characterized the police as a group of lazy, inept, corrupt, uniformed men and women who contribute to the commission of crimes such as mass murder, intimidation, rape, extrajudicial killings/summary executions, accidental discharge and other hateful and evil crimes against the Nigerian citizens they are paid to protect. The extrajudicial killing of Boko Haram's commander by Nigerian police is linked to the group's quick and wide-spread violence in the northern part of the country. It is also typical for the police authorities to erroneously designate innocent people as armed robbers, while the real criminals operate freely in society and do what they know best.

They forged post-mortem results, and to make matters worse, persons, both criminals and non-criminals, mysteriously vanish from detention with no explanation, leaving innocent victims' relatives vulnerable to extortion. In its annual report, the Nigerian Police Force stated that the police force is handicapped due to a number of issues, including a lack of resources, insufficient government backing, poor service conditions, a lack of proper and enough training, and ill-equipped personnel.

The issue of police extortion and corruption, as well as other vices endemic in the police system, are dealt with, contributing to their inefficiency. Roth et al (2004) noted that police corruption is a serious issue because they are expected to be moral as law-enforcement agents. If the police who were hired and paid with the citizen's taxes to protect them and identify crimes for them are corrupt and involved in crimes themselves, then the entire society is at the mercy of criminals. The foregoing, among many other factors, contributes to the decay in the Nigerian Police Force with respect to the issues of crime control and management.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the descriptive survey design as the strategy or plan of action regarding events upon which implementation will enable the researcher to investigate the problem of this study. In this study, questionnaire and in-depth interview were used as research instrument. For the uniqueness and peculiarity of the subject of the study, the triangulation or mixed method of data collection was employed in order to get accurate and reliable information. The instrument of data collection used in this research was structured questionnaire and in-depth interview.

The design is suitable for this study because data was collected from respondents using questionnaires and in-depth interview to give an assessment of public perception of the Nigerian police force in the fight against crime, prevention, control and management. The study was conducted in Kabong, Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. The study population for this research consists of the total number of people residing in Kabong, Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State.

The total number of people residing in Kabong is 83,454 based on the National Population Census of 2006. Cluster Sampling Technique method was used for this study. The quantitative data obtained from the field were processed and analyzed using descriptive statistics such: the use of simple percentages, tables and frequency distribution.

Data obtained from respondents through the administration of questionnaires was collated and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 20.0). Three hundred and eighty-two (382) questionnaires were administered within the study area, out of the total number of questionnaires administered, only three hundred and fifty (350) copies of the questionnaire were fully completed and returned by the respondents.

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Responses on Inadequate Number of Vehicles for Patrols as a problem faced in management of crime by the police in Kabong.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	120	34.30%

Strongly Agree	202	57.70%
Disagree	22	6.30%
Strongly Disagree	6	1.70%
Total	350	100.00%

Source: Field Survey, July 2023.

Table 1 reveals that more than half (57.7%) of respondents strongly agree that inadequate number of patrol vehicles is a problem faced by the police in management of crime in Kabong. This shows that Inadequate Vehicles for patrols is a problem faced by the police force in the management and control of crime in Kabong. This finding is in line with the findings of (Mammus 2010) which stressed that a major challenge of effective policing is the lack of serviceable vehicles for patrols. This factor among others have been blamed as constituting a stumbling block to the effective fight against crime and efficient maintenance of law and order in Nigeria.

Excerpts from one of the respondents:

Yes, another challenge is the lack of good vehicles for patrols as well as advanced equipment to enable us go into the community and quickly intervene to complaints **(KII with Superintendent of Police, office-in-charge Outstation Kabong on major challenges faced by the police, 17th July 2023, Jos).**

In similar vein, another respondent also stated:

Yes, the first challenge I will mention is mobility. The police are not mobile. That is to say the vehicle that will convey them where they need to report to is a problem. They do not have enough vehicles. **(KII with Mai Angwan, Gadabiyu Kabong on major challenges faced by the police force 17th July 2023 Jos).**

From his insightful explanation on the challenges faced by the Nigerian Police, he also stated that as the community head, there are times he called- for a police team to respond to an issue, but as a result of inadequate vehicles it has slowed down the police response to emergencies. He lamented that sometimes he witnesses policemen responding to emergency calls on a motorbike. It is even worse that sometimes it is two policemen on a single bike.

From the data, all the respondents agree that the inadequacy of vehicles is a problem faced by the police force; and this is hindering them from effective management of crime.

Table 2: Opinions of Respondents on Bribery and Corruption Engaged by the Police Force as a major challenge to effective crime management in Kabong

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	92	26.30%
Strongly Agree	128	36.60%
Disagree	77	22.00%
Strongly Disagree	53	15.10%
Total	350	100.00%

Source: Field Survey, July 2023.

Table 2 shows that more than half 26.3% and 36.6% (62.9%) of the respondents agree and strongly agree that bribery and corruption engaged in by police officers is a major challenge to effective crime management in Kabong. The result implies that Bribery and Corruption engaged by the police force is a major challenge faced by the police in effective crime management in Kabong. This finding is in line with the finding of Adebayo (2013) who noted that countless ordinary Nigerians are accosted by armed police officers to demand bribes and commit human rights abuses against them, as a means of extorting money. It also aligns with the findings of Ikuteyijo and Rotimi (2016) who opined that the police routinely extort money from victims of crimes to initiate investigations and demand bribes from suspects to drop investigations. This challenge which has become endemic, has eroded the public trust and confidence the people have in the police, greatly soiling the image of the police. Another study further stressed that police corruption is a serious problem because they are expected to exhibit a higher level of morality as law enforcement agents.

From the interview one of the respondents responded explicitly that.

Yes, as a result of the poor welfare of police personnel, there have been corrupt practices in the side of the police such as bribery to improve their welfare. I want to see a police force where a policeman can logically remove money and settle the needs of people and not demanding money from them as the case has always been. Also, a police officer should be able to go the extra mile to see that a problem is solved without necessarily envisaging the financial gain he or she is going to get; thereby reducing corruption to the barest minimum. **(KII with Superintendent of Police O. C Outstation Kabong on challenge of the police 17th July 2023, Jos).**

Another respondent not far from the response of the first respondent explained that the issue of corruption has become a major challenge in the Nigerian Police Force. He explained that the average policeman is corrupt and attributes this largely to the poor welfare of its personnel. He further recommended that the government should work towards improving their welfare.

Table 3: Reactions of Respondents on Favoritism in the Recruitment of Personnel as a problem in the management of crime by the police in Kabong.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	77	22.00%
Strongly Agree	200	57.10%
Disagree	50	14.30%
Strongly Disagree	23	6.60%
Total	350	100.00%

Source: Field Survey, July 2023.

Table 3 shows that more than half (57.1%) of respondents strongly agree that favoritism in the recruitment of personnel into the police force, is a problem faced by the police in the management of crime in Kabong. The result implies that favoritism in the recruitment of personnel is a major challenge faced by the police force. This finding is in line with the findings of Ogunyemi (2020) who noted that although policemen are taught the principles of the rule of law, in reality, this is not put into practice. Ogunyemi (2020) further stressed that in the new democratic dispensation, policemen should be selected on the basis of merit and competence, and not on the basis of social ties and tribal connection.

A respondent from the in – depth interview stated that.

Yes, there is the problem of favoritism when staff are being recruited. As the officer in charge here, I have seen

cases where people bring their people for me to consider and put in a good word for them, not minding whether they are qualified or not. Some of these patrol men are ill-trained, incompetent or unprofessional in the discharge of their duties **(KII with Superintendent of Police O.C Outstation, Kabong on challenges faced by the police force on 17th July 2023, Jos).**

Both respondents agree that selection of police officer are done based on connections, social ties and ‘godfatherism’ which has bred lots of incompetence on the part of the police force in their role of crime prevention and management in Kabong.

Table 4: Opinions of Respondents on the Poor Welfare of Police Officers as a challenge faced by the police force in Kabong.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	96	27.40%
Strongly Agree	174	49.70%
Disagree	50	14.30%
Strongly Disagree	30	8.60%
Total	350	100.00%

Source: Field Survey, July 2023

Table 4 reveals that more than half (77.1%) of respondents agree and strongly agree that poor welfare of police officers is a challenge faced by the police force as it will lead to low output by the police force in the management of crime in Kabong. This shows that poor welfare of police officers is a major challenge faced by police officers in effective crime management and control in Kabong. This is in consonance with the findings of Usigbe(2019), who noted that under normal circumstance, as "guardians" of society, the police force is supposed to be paid well so they do not lack. However, most of these police officers are under paid. Usigbe (2019) further noted that they thus indulge in collecting bribes because of their meager take home pay. They are not adequately funded and this is evidenced in their poorly furnished offices and poor residential accommodation.

A respondent responded to this question by saying;

Yes, the past administration has successfully ensured that the police is empowered like other security agencies but apart from that allowance, the police are not paid promptly, and even when police officers work overtime, they are not paid well. This has dampened the morale of the personnel and thus resulting in officers engaging in corrupt practices in order to improve their welfare. The police are not adequately taken care of. **(KII with Superintendent of Police O.C(Officer-in-Charge) outstation, Kabong on challenges faced by the police force 17th July 2023, Jos).**

Another respondent backed the notion by saying;

I think their welfare have to be looked into. A police officer seen on the road is supposed to be known that truly this is a police man that is being taken good care of. However, in a situation where a policeman- dresses shabbily as a result of poor welfare, it is not good. I will like the government to intervene and solve this problem **(KII with Mai Angwa Gadabiu Kabong Community on challenges faced by the police force on 17th July 2023, Jos).**

From the data, all respondents strongly agree that the poor welfare of the police force is a major challenge that has hindered their effectiveness in crime control and management.

Table 5: Responses of Respondents on the Shortage of Skilled Manpower as a major challenge in effective crime management by the police in Kabong.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	102	29.10%
Strongly Agree	182	52.00%
Disagree	38	8.00%
Strongly Disagree	28	10.90%
Total	350	100.00%
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Source: Field Survey, July 2023.

Table 5 reveals that more than half (52.0%) of respondents strongly agree that shortage of skilled manpower is a major challenge in effective crime management by the police force in Kabong. The result implies that the shortage of skilled manpower is a major challenge faced by the police force in crime control and management in Kabong. This finding is in line with the findings of Nwidag and Okwendi (2015) who noted that most states are under-policed and under-staffed of police personnel. It also aligns with the findings Dufka (2010) of who opined that these management inadequacies are critical in the aspects of manpower both in quantity (strength) and quality (expertise). The quality of the police personnel refers to some of whom cannot write or speak well. This affects the performance of the force. Shortage of skilled manpower is a major challenge facing the police force, and this continues to impede their effectiveness in crime control.

A respondent responded to the question by saying;

You know, based on the United Nation standard, it is supposed to be one (1) policeman to a hundred persons. However, in the whole of this community, there are only six (6) policemen; and the six (6) of us in the outstation are covering more than one thousand persons. So, definitely, you can't expect efficiency **(KII with Superintendent of Police O.C outstation Kabong on challenges of the police force, 17th July 2023, Jos).**

Another respondent also supported this fact;

Yes, the first challenge I will mention is shortage of manpower, as a community head of this community, sometimes if I request for a team of policemen, they will just send one or two policemen to my home to help me in handling reported cases **(KII with Mai Angwan, Gadabiyu Kabong community on challenges of the police force, 17th July 2023, Jos).**

From the In-depth interviews conducted and data gathered, it was discovered that the police force are lacking in manpower. This however leads to so much work concentrated in the hands of very few persons which could wear them out and hence lead to inefficiency. Respondents as seen from the data, strongly agree that the police are in need of more staff. This can only be made possible when there is a reform so as to attract applications from skilled and competent people.

From the data gathered, we can therefore confidently align with the fact that lack of trained personnel in the police force, bribery and corruption engaged by police officers, nepotism and favoritism in recruitment of personnel, poor welfare of police officers and the shortage of manpower are the major challenges militating against effective crime control and management by the police force in Kabong.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

After a careful and systematic study of the sampled population using questionnaire and interviews as instruments for data collection, as well as simple percentage (SPSS version 20) and analysis done with the help of data collected and presented, the study reveals that results obtained from the analysis establishes the major challenges of effective crime control and management by the police in Kabong. The results show that most of the respondents agree and strongly agree that the inadequacy of good vehicles for patrols, bribery and corruption engaged by police officers, nepotism and favoritism, poor welfare of police officers and shortage of skilled manpower are the major challenges of effective crime control and management by the police in Kabong.

This finding is in line with the findings of Adebayo (2013), who noted that the Nigerian Police Force is confronted with a lot of challenges, ranging from: corruption and political influence, shortage of manpower, poor welfare packages, and lack of modern or sophisticated crime control facilities or equipment. All these continue to serve as bottle-neck in the police force's efforts to effectively controlling crime. The Nigerian Police Force have been making laudable efforts in controlling crime and also re-building the lost trust and confidence in the public. However, these numerous challenges enumerated above, continue to render their efforts invalid and have made them not to perform as expected.

From the result of the study, recommendations will be made to help Kabong community adjust their perception of the police and begin to have trust and confidence in the police force will be proposed. Also, certain strategies that can be deployed to help solve the challenges faced by the police force to eradicate the dent on their image by the public. Consequently, enabling an appreciation of their efforts in crime control and management.

CONCLUSION

From the era of colonial rule to the present day's Nigeria, policing has always been necessary in the preservation of law and order. In essence, the constitutional duties or functions of the police force has always remained the same, although, the structure and organization have undergone several changes and restructuring for the purposes of improved service delivery or efficiency in the performance of its duties or obligations to the state and its citizens. In Nigeria, the powers of the Nigerian Police Force, is spelt out clearly under the Sections of The Federal Republic of Nigeria Constitution (1999) as amended, which repeal the Police Act Cap.P19 Laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004.

The centralization of the authority and commands of the Nigerian Police Force has always been associated with the challenges or problems of the force. There are also the problems of bribery and corruption in the force, cum lack of manpower, and lack of scientific and technological equipment for detection of crimes. Again, there are the problems of inadequate transport and communication facilities, lack of sophisticated arms and ammunition to fight criminals, poor enumeration and so on. The Nigerian Police Force has also cultivated certain unaccepted behaviors while dealing with the civilian population which in turn has affected police-public relations in the country.

This study wishes to conclude that, evaluating and addressing the challenges faced by the Nigeria Police Force that hinder their effectiveness in the control and management of crime in Kabong will require a comprehensive approach. By implementing the recommendations provided in this study, it is possible that some of these challenges may be addressed. This will result in building a stronger relationship between the police and the public, thereby leading to improved crime control and management, and ultimately, a safer and more secure Kabong community in Jos Plateau State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

After careful observation from the data collected and analyzed based on the objectives of the study, the study wishes to recommend the following:

1. The Nigerian Police Force should promote and strengthen community engagement. The police should encourage regularly interact with community members through community policing initiatives, town hall

meetings, and public awareness campaigns. Building positive relationships and trust with the community can lead to improved cooperation, confidence and support of the members of the community in crime control and management in Kabong. This will lead to an established mechanisms to ensure accountability and transparency within the police force. This can involve implementing a system for reporting and investigating complaints against officers, conducting regular internal audits and promoting ethical conduct. Transparent practices and fair treatment involving the community can enhance public trust and confidence in the police, which will make the community to begin to see the police in a positive light.

2. Officers of the Nigeria Police Force should shun certain acts that are capable of denting the image of the Force locally and international, such as: bribery and corruption, extortion of money from road users including transporters, extrajudicial killings of innocent citizens, among others. When this is achieved the public image of the force may change for good and the public may also change their perceptions of the officers of the force which may also make the officer perform their duties effectively without rancor and distrust from the public.
3. The Nigerian government should fund the force adequately, increase the wages or salaries of the personnel, package efficient and secured pension scheme, safety and risk benefits for officers of the Nigeria Police Force. Apart from these necessities, the government should also provide the men and women of the police force with modern and advanced technological driven equipment that will enable them fight crimes and discharge their other sundry constitutional functions or duties to the states and citizens effectively. When this is achieved, threats to internal or national security will be a history because a number of the root causes and sources of finances of some of the organized criminal gangs in the country will be unraveled; and culprits charged, arraigned and prosecuted accordingly.
4. There should be an establishment of a system for continuous evaluation and improvement. This can involve conducting regular assessments of crime trends, analyzing the effectiveness of implemented strategies, and seeking feedback from the public. By monitoring and evaluating their performance, the police can identify areas that require improvement and make necessary adjustments to their approaches. This ongoing evaluation process will help ensure that the police remain responsive to the evolving nature of crime in Kabong and maintain a high standard of crime control and management in Kabong.

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