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## Perception of the Nigerian Society on the Nigerian Police and Corruption

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### **Abstract:**

*The Nigerian Police was established with the purpose of enforcement of law and order in the society. This purpose is being threatened because of high level of corrupt practises which has bedevilled the rank and file of the Police. An average Nigerian does not regard the Police as an institution saddled with the responsibility of enforcement of law and order again but a corrupt institution. It is unfortunate to know that the enforcer of law is now the breaker of law. Corruption came to a climax in the Police when two former Inspector Generals of the Police were dismissed on the allegation of embezzlement of millions of naira. The public has alleged the Nigerian Police of massive corruption and insensitive to the plight of the people they are statutorily assigned to police and this has not allowed smooth relationship between the Police and the public. The Police are corrupt, unfriendly and always in perpetual collision with the members of the public. There are even some insinuations that Police do collude with criminals to perpetrate crime. The main objective of this study is to know how the public see the Nigerian Police in respect of corrupt and sharp practices in the Police. Questionnaires were used as the research instrument. To get a wide view of the respondents, three hundred questionnaires were distributed and answered. The result of survey showed that the public perceived the Nigerian Police as corrupt, lazy, inefficient, authoritarian and trigger-happy. The result of the survey also revealed a high level of corruption between the rank and file of the force. The research proffers recommendations on how to curb corruption in the Nigerian Police.*

**Keywords:** Police, corruption, perception, public, modernisation

### **1. Introduction**

It is often said that a government is assessed through the performance of its Police. This is because the Police is the nearest agent of government to the citizens, hence it is adjudged that any blemish to the force will affect the image of the government. It can be said that the Police not only reflect the political and economic character of society but represents what those in power are willing or able to tolerate or condone or perhaps even demand of the Police. The Police are special carriers of state's bedrock of power and are agents with the authority for legitimate use of force for maintaining public and private goods and services (Reiner, 1993). In this case, the Police is seen as providing the defence for the government and at the same time providing security for the entire society, and when this provision of security is lacking either for the government or the society, it is sure that such society will be exposed to the insecurity and other social vices. In Nigeria, like many other nations, the Police have been the major organization charged with the responsibility of maintaining and preservation of public peace. Effective Police is therefore necessary in every society for maintaining peace, as effective Police will make sure that members of the community are safeguard in their persons and properties so that their energies are not exhausted by the business of self-protection (Onovo,2009). The Police have been the chief law enforcer in the society and has been vested with the responsibility of even arresting and prosecuting corrupt elements in the society, but when this is lost through sharp practises in the force, and then citizens will no longer put their trust in the Police force. Police corruption is a betrayal of public trust (Ogundiya, 2009). The involvement of the Police force in criminal activities especially corrupt practises has undermine the ability of the force in curbing crime and subsequently affected its image.

Skolnick (1996) submitted that the Police in a democratic society are required to maintain order and to do so under the rule of law, as functionaries charged with the maintaining of order, they are part of the bureaucracy, emphasises the rights of the citizens and constraints upon initiatives of the Legal Officers. The tension between the operational consequences of order, efficiency and initiatives on the one hand and legality on the other constituted the principal problem of the Police as a democratic legal organisation. The Police view their job as one of technical proficiency of basic concepts of due process as fundamental to the work of both the Police and the Court. A major problem with the Police throughout the world is how to establish and institute a clement atmosphere between them and the public.

In Nigeria, the public has been maligned, battered and dismembered. An average citizen now sees the Police as inefficient, ineffective, corrupt and trigger-happy. The criticism of the Nigerian Police by the citizens is in respect of the quality of its personnel, the level of ineffectiveness in the force and general inefficiency in the performance of its rank and file in preventing and controlling crime in the society. The Police has been seen as always short of required personnel to

prevent and combat crime, poor attitude to the investigation and crime fighting. Tekena Tamuno (1993) observed that the strained Police public relation is traceable to the failure to keep the morale of the Police high, making its men and women to become negligent, corrupt, and non-sensitive to the plight of Nigerians, thus destroying the image of the Police in the society. From the above, Tekena Tamuno was of the opinion that the inability of the successive government to boost the morale of the Police has increased tendencies of corrupt practices in the Nigerian Police. He further said that the increased corruption in the Nigeria Police has made the Police-public image to be dented.

Delivering a paper titled "Police and Social Justice" the former Inspector General of Police, Alhaji Ibrahim Coomasie affirmed that the twin evil of corruption and indiscipline have polluted all basis institutions in Nigeria nation, affecting the formal organs of law and order and contaminating even the administration of justice. He believed that the increasing level of crime and corruption have made the responsibilities of Police more complex and it is therefore most unfortunate that the public associated the Police institution with the problem of social injustice and irregularities. The Police has become a whipping horse for all and sundry, the public and the government alike.

Bellerly Umeru (1994) in his sociological research on the Nigerian Police and the public, sought to explain that a majority of his study population expressed dissatisfaction with the Police organisation. The reason being the perceived inability of the Police to deal with criminals either by reacting promptly or inefficiently. Other reason the people cited for their dissatisfaction with the Police was converting of the road blocks in the country to cash centres where money is raked from the innocent motorists. Nigerians have held the Nigerian Police in low regard and therefore do not enjoy the supposed cooperation of the public because they have seen the Police as an instrument and the face of the government which is capable to and always ready to unleash terror on the citizenry at the slightest provocation. The public perception of the Police is not shaped by the kind of job they are called to do but the attitude of the personnel, their roles in many cases denigrate the law, endangering the citizens and blotting the institutional reputation of the Police that they represent (Ajayi, 2014). The Police no doubt know that they are not liked by the public, despite the fact that they risk their lives to protect them, at the very slightest opportunity; they are booed and geared at the public calling them derogatory and disgusting names. (Ajayi, 2014).

### *1.1. Statement of Problem*

Crime prevention and control in any society is a major role of any government in the world, Nigeria not an exception. The Nigerian Police which was statutorily established for the maintenance of law and order in the Nigerian society has been embroiled in social vices and anti-public attitude ranging from ineffectiveness, inefficient, trigger-happy to corrupt. Notwithstanding the Nigerian Police is still the closest institution of the federal government to the public. The Nigerian Police is one of the most visible arms of government and the level of efficiency of the Police is a direct reflection of the whole society. The poor attitude of Police in Nigeria has been blamed on a number of factors which include under payment, stressful working condition, poor equipment and inadequate accommodation among others. The issue of corruption and other social vices which have pervaded the Nigerian Police has affected the force's public image and the perception of the public towards the Police. The dishonest behaviour in professional engagement depicts policing to fraud, bribery, abuse of office and other immoral practises, therefore, the Nigerian Police image problem cannot just vanish by some exorcisms, but could be remedied through careful police trainings and management (Umah & Eboh, 2013, Olusoga, 1981). The statement of the problem in this study is that despite the fact that the Police is doing all at its disposal to ensure that the society is peaceful, the public still do not trust the Police, they see Police in the other way round.

### *1.2. Objectives of the Study*

This study will try to know the reason for the poor and negative public perception of the Nigerian Police. This study will equally proffer recommendation on how the public perception of Nigerian Police can be enhanced, so that the force can regain its lost public trust.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

This study will be based on the Modernization theory of Policing. Modernization theory is used to explain the process of modernization within the societies. Modernization refers to a model of a progressive transition from "pre-modern" or "traditional" to a "modern" society. Modernization theory originated from the idea of German sociologist, Max Weber, which provided the basis for the modernization paradigm developed by Harvard sociologist, Talcott Parson. The theory looks at the internal factor of a country while assuming that with assistance, "tradition" countries can be brought to development in the same manner more developed countries have been. Modernization theory stresses not only the process of change but also the responses to that change. It looks at the internal dynamics while referring to social and cultural structures and the adaptable of new technologies. Modernization theory maintains that traditional societies will develop as they adopt more modern practises. Modernization in the Nigerian Police will enhance the performance of the force; this is because modernization will enable the Police authority to spend more money to acquire modern equipment, technologies and the training of its personnel on modern crime prevention and control. To improve the professional skill of the Police personnel, a number of professional training programmes are supposed to be organised, equipment has to meet up with the modern standard in crime fighting. For their efficient functioning, the Police force need modern equipment and infrastructure, the Police is an institution of government, it is the responsibility of the government to take care of the requirements of the force. Modernization will strengthen the Police force, make it more efficient, and make the service people friendly with the overall aim of protecting the lives and property of the Nigerian citizens and other people living in Nigeria.

### 2.1. Hypothesis

Here, there is the use of hypothesis, which is assumed to serve as a tentative generalisation whose ability is to test in the basis of compatibility of its implication with empirical evidence. However, only one hypothesis will be tested in this study; there is no significant relationship between attitude of rank and file of the Nigerian Police and the public perception of the force.

### 2.2. Research Design

This is a descriptive research. It describes the perception of Nigerians toward the Nigerian Police force. To this end, some state capitals were selected from the south-west Nigerian, the cities are Lagos, Ibadan, Oshogbo, Akure, Abeokuta and Ado Ekiti. Also, being a quantitative research, a total number of three hundred questionnaires were used with the respondents cutting across the states capital. Multi-stage random sampling was used for the study. A stratified random technique was used. Statically Package for Social Science was used for the data analysis. Data collected from the field were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

### 2.3. Problems Encountered

Based on the method of data collection, some problems were encountered during the process of data collection. Some of these respondents returned their questionnaires late thereby creating problems for the researcher during the analysis. Some even said that since the researcher takes little or much of their time, they need to be compensated but after persuasion, they agreed to answer the questionnaires.

S/N	ITEMS	Strongly Agreed		Agreed		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		No Response		Total	
		Fq	%	Fq	%	Fq	%	Fq	%	Fq	%	Fq	%
a.	Crime rate in Ekiti is reducing	65	21.7	92	30.7	129	43.0	12	4.0	-	-	300	100
b.	Incidence of robbery is not rampant in Ekiti	144	48.0	144	48.0	-	-	12	4.0	-	-	300	100
c.	Police on patrol are very effective	19	6.3	19	6.3	124	41.3	143	47.7	-	-	300	100
d.	Bail is free in recent times	5	1.7	50	16.7	43	14.3	202	67.3	-	-	300	100
e.	Accused are treated as suspect rather than as offenders	5	1.7	51.	17.0	153	51.0	86	28.7	5	1.7	300	100
f.	Police do organise orientation programmes on service delivery	178	59.3	68	22.7	-	-	54	18.0	-	-	300	100
g.	Police at check point are thorough at checking necessary documents of motorists	13	4.3	9	3.0	50	16.7	228	76.0	-	-	300	100
h.	Police are not biased in their conducts	1	0.3	18	6.0	20	6.7	261	87.0	-	-	300	100

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage Distribution Showing Police Level of Performance

The above table showed that 65 respondents (21.7%) strongly agreed that crime rate in South West is reducing. 92 respondents (30.7%) agreed that crime rate in South West is reducing. 129 respondents (43.0%) disagreed that crime rate in South West is reducing. 12 respondents (4.0%) strongly disagreed that crime rate in South West is reducing. 144 respondents (48.0%) both agreed and strongly agreed that incidence of robbery is not rampant in South West while 12 respondents (4.0%) expressed strong disagreement on this.

19 respondents (6.3%) strongly agreed that police on patrol are very effective. 124 respondents (41.3%) disagreed that Police on patrol are effective. 143 respondents (47.7%) strongly disagreed that Police on patrol are very effective. The table further showed that 5 respondents (1.7%) strongly agreed that bail is free in recent times. 50 respondents (16.7%) agreed that bail is free. 43 respondents (14.3%) strongly disagreed that bail is free. 202 respondents (67.3%) strongly disagreed that bail is free.

5 respondents (1.7%) strongly agreed that accused are treated as suspects rather than as offenders. 51 respondents (17.0%) agreed that accused are treated as suspects rather than as offenders. 153 respondents (51.0%) disagreed that accused are treated as suspects rather than as offenders. 86 respondents (28.7%) strongly disagreed that accused are treated as suspects rather than as offenders. 5 respondents did not respond to the question. 178 respondents (59.3%) strongly agreed that Police do organise orientation programme on service delivery. 68 respondents (22.7%) agreed that Police do organise orientation programme on service delivery. 54 respondents (18.0%) strongly disagreed on this view.

13 respondents (4.3%) strongly agreed that Police at the checkpoints are thorough in checking the documents of motorists. 9 respondents (16.7%) disagreed that Police at the checkpoints are thorough in checking necessary documents of the motorists. 228 respondents (76.0%) strongly disagreed on this view.

In another development, 1 respondent (0.3%) strongly agreed that Police are not biased in their conducts. 261 respondents (87.0%) strongly disagreed that Police are not biased in their conducts. 18 respondents (6.0%) agreed that Police are not biased in their conducts. 20 respondents (6.7%) disagreed that police are not biased in their conducts. From the above table, 167 respondents (55.7%) agreed that criminals do seek solace in Police for their freedom by bribing their way through. In the light of this, people believed that Police do assist criminals in carrying out their evil acts. This is evident in the jungle justice which public embark on at times because they know that any accused criminal in Police custody can bribe his/her way out to freedom.

The table also indicated that 129 respondents (43%) disagreed that crime rate in Ekiti is reducing while 143 respondents (47.7%) strongly disagreed that Police on patrol are very effective. From these findings, it can be deduced that Police are not very effective on their patrol and this has made the level of crime to rise in the state. Even people believed that Police on patrol often collect bribes and this affects their image in the long run.

### 3. Summary of Pearson Correlation Showing the Relationship between Perceived Corrupt Practices and Public Image of Police

Variable	N	Mean	SD	r	Df	P
Public Image	300	13.46	4.66	-.13	298	<.05
Corruption	300	16.41	1.53	-	-	-

Table 2

The above table showed that there is a significant relationship between perceived poor attitude in the Nigerian Police and public image of the force [ $r(298) = -.13; p < .05$ ]. This negative relationship implies that the higher the level of perceived poor attitude in the Police, the poorer its public image. Thus, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant relationship between attitude in the Police and public perception of the Police is rejected.

### 4. Conclusion

The result of the research showed that corruption and poor attitude of personnel has eaten deep into the rank and file of the Nigerian Police. The high level of corrupt practises and other social vices in the Police have earned the force a poor public perception. The poor public perception is even hampering the discharge of its duties because lack of adequate cooperation from the public. The information which the Police ought to receive from the public is not forthcoming due to lack of trust from the public, and one of one effective tool of policing is community relation. It is noted that effective policing is obstructed when the police-community relation is at the lowest ebb. This will subsequently make the Nigerian Police being ineffective in meeting the demands of the general public, eventually, effective policing is weakened and Police will appear as anti-public. The public perception of the Police has created mystical impression that all the Police want is bribe; the general public has become so naive that they lost civility and senses to quest for their civil rights as Police continue to harass them by demanding for money.

### 5. Way Out

Corruption and other social vices have eaten deep into the fabric of Nigerian society and seem intractable, but the situation can be remedied given disciplined and forthright leadership and a citizenry that is united in its resentment to corruption to corruption and other social vices. Consequently, the following ways have been suggested for the enhancement of the public perception of the Nigerian Police.

Community Policing: One of the ways out of the poor public perception of the Nigerian Police is through the active participation of members of the public in the policing of their communities and by assisting the Police by giving useful information which can enhance a peaceful community. Community policing entails community partnership in creating a safe and secure environment for all (Ikuteyijo, 2009). In this case, the inhabitants of various communities take the issue of security as priority and not see the Police as only body to maintain law and order and in the control and prevention of

crime. Community Policing has been a veritable way of combatting the crime rate in the society, this is because no Police officer can know the nook and crannies of any community like the people residing in such community, no wonder the Police in western countries are embracing this noble idea. Community policing as a philosophy and practises is a veritable for Police reforms ( Okiro, 2007). Community policing is a paradigm shift that seeks to focus on constructive engagement with people who are the end users of the Police service and re-negotiate the contract between the people and the Police thereby making the community co-producers of justice and a quality Police service (Okeshola & Mudiare, 2013). The public relation department in the force should highlight educational programmes within communities that touch on the negative effects of Police corruption. Communities must realise that even the most basic form of corruption only acts as a catalyst to more sinister forms of misdeed.

Funding: Another factor which has greatly inhibited the effective performance of the Nigerian Police is poor funding and utilization of funds, no organization can achieve its objectives without the provision of adequate funds to meet its requirements, it is noted that the Nigerian Police is grossly under-funded. A cursory look at the various reports of reforms of the Nigerian Police Force revealed that Police low performance has been blamed on lack of funds for training of personnel and the provision of the required logistics for virtually all aspects of Policing functions including investigations, arms and ammunition, office and residential accommodation, communication as well as transportation (Osayande, 2008). Inadequate budget allocation is a serious factor militating against effective Policing in this part of the world. Even the funds that were release to the force were not judiciously utilised. Two former Inspector Generals of Police were alleged to have embezzled funds meant for the Police force in the past, while some of the high ranked officers were equally accused of trading with the salary of the force. In view of this, government should ensure that force is adequately funded to boost the morale of rank and file in the force. The Nigerian Police being the agent of the government created for the maintenance of public order through prevention and control crime, investigation and detection of crime and criminals and the prosecution of offenders should be properly and adequately funded to guarantee optimum performance. If funds are adequately released to the Police, it is believed that the force will be able to:

- Procure arms and ammunition for the force.
- purchase other equipment such as vehicles, helicopters, boats, surveillance cameras, etc needed in fighting crime. ©build new barracks and quarters and renovate the dilapidated ones.
- Pay the salaries and other fringe benefits of the rank and file.

Personnel: The Police should ensure that people of unquestionable character are recruited into the force. If this is done, it will boost the image of the force and the force will regain its lost confidence from the public. The perception of the force will be enhanced if people of impeccable character are recruited into the force. People of impeccable character will never compromise the standard and principle of the force; hence, this enhance the public perception of the force. Equally, a Code of Conduct should be developed for the consumption of all ranks and file to ensure that officers are committed to ethical practices in the discharge of their duties, a breach of the code of conduct should attract stringent disciplinary action. The Code of Conduct should cover the following areas:

- Corporate governance and the mission statement
- Rules on the acceptance of advantages ©Rules on the acceptance of entertainment.
- Use of organisational resources.

Nevertheless, in training institutions ethical behaviour and decision should be rewarded, promoted and applauded because failing to make officers aware of the consequences of corruption only serves to encourage it. Police management should encourage regular anti-graft educational talks and seminar in which its rank and file participate. These talks should be integrated in training programmes for all the cadres from the Training schools to the Academy through to the Staff College.

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