



**WORK PERFORMANCE AND PUBLIC PERCEPTION: AN EMPIRICAL
INVESTIGATION OF RESPONDENTS' VIEWS ON POLICING IN GWAGWALADA
AREA COUNCIL OF THE FCT, ABUJA, NIGERIA**

Emmanuel Umaru Musa
(emmanet64@gmail.com)
+2348034708762

Department of Sociology, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University Lapai – Nigeria

Abstract

The study is an investigation of respondents' views on work performance and public perception of the Nigeria police in the Gwagwalada Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria, Abuja. The sample of respondents was drawn from two police stations in Gwagwalada town and one from Zuba township police station. Questionnaire was used as the instrument of collecting primary data from the respondents while secondary data was sourced from published journals, textbooks, official reports, papers presented at conferences and workshops and online documents. The Performance theory was adopted in explaining policing, work performance and public perception in Gwagwalada. Findings suggest that public perception of the police is very negative; the public sees them as very wicked people who lack public trust. Consequently, the much-needed cooperation from the public about criminality is not freely given to them. This has affected their work performance and has hitherto given them negative perception by the public. The study recommends amongst others that all police training academy's curriculum of studies be reviewed to include the study of sociology and human relations as courses in the training curriculum.

Keywords: Work Performance, Public Perception.

1. Introduction

Society for its defence, according to Lord Denning (1963), needs a well-led, well-trained and disciplined police which it can trust. Unfortunately, there is a huge trust deficit between the Nigerian people and the police. Consequently, it is the feeling of this researcher that Police performance in Nigeria should strictly be tied to discipline, training and motivation of its members in the various departments of policing. This when done, will improve the quality of policing functions and the impression and trust by the public would be enhanced. Policing, the world over is seen as an organ of government made up of people of high integrity. Odekunle (2004) maintained that the policemen's honesty, integrity and observance of procedural laws is indicative of its sense of responsibility towards protecting the citizenry of any nation. The above developments prompted the researcher to conduct a study into policing in Gwagwalada Area Council of the FCT with the following research questions: (i) What are the factors affecting work performance of police officers in Gwagwalada Area Council? (ii) What is the average perception of the police officer in Gwagwalada Area Council?

The present-day Nigerian Police which is a product of colonialism emerged over a century ago, following the annexation of Lagos in 1861. The British administrators who were in charge of



the affairs of the Lagos colony put together a group of about 30 Hausa-speaking ex-slaves from Sierra Leone known as Consular Guard, for the purpose of protecting the interest of the colonial masters and their cronies through subjugation and repressive laws and ordinances (Tamuno, 1970). Unfortunately, the high handedness of the Nigerian Police has continued unabated. Consequently, Otu and Aro (2014) supported the above assertion when they implied that unconstitutional dictatorial governments in Nigeria use the same old policing system to harass and intimidate their Nigerian citizens. Sindall and Sturgis (2013) were of the view that the job of policing became increasingly more complex with new responsibilities of fighting crime and criminals. Therefore, the police needed the cooperation of the community to effectively deal with crime, disorder, and other forms of emergencies. The fear of intimidation and lack of confidence by Nigerians on the Police has affected the level of cooperation and hence, their refusal to release vital information to the Police for effective crime prevention and control.

Throughout the world, particularly democratic societies, police organisations are becoming more modern, particularly in the adoption of the use of sophisticated gadgets to detect crime as well as becoming more receptive to the people to elicit information on crimes from citizens. However, while the rest of the democratic societies are moving towards enhancing professionalism, legitimacy, and trust in the police, there is weak evidence to support the same in Nigeria. Ojo (2014) maintained that even after almost two decades of uninterrupted democracy in Nigeria, the Nigerian police still perform their functions with a colonial mentality, by mere fiat, brutality, and poor relationship with their communities. Igbo (2017) submitted that the assumption is that the end justifies means during investigations. In other words, it does not matter how the police receive statements from their witnesses and suspects, even if it means making them undergo undue punishments and inhumane conditions.

Ladapo (2011) was of the view that "the average Nigerian citizen views the police with awe ... there is the ever-present fear of being accused of perpetrating the offence one reports to the police, reprisal attacks from the person the report is made against". It is also a common feature for the police to require the person reporting a crime to fund the investigation and make endless return visits to the police station for one reason or the other, leading to an enormous loss of man-hours. Based on the above statement of the research problem, and having all security agencies and policy planners as main beneficiaries of the study in mind and in fulfilling the main purposes of the research which is to investigate factors affecting work performance and public perception of police officers in Gwagwalada, the researcher went to the field for proper investigation.

2. Literature Review

Empirical Review

Section 214 (1) of the 1999 constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Police Act and Regulations (Cap 359) part II subsection 3 provided that there shall be established for Nigeria a police force to be known as the Nigeria Police Force (hereafter in the Act referred to as "the Force"). Akinlabi, Ordu and Nnam (2017) were of the view that going by the above provisions of the 1999 constitution, no other police force can/should be found in any part of the country. This has generated a lot of criticism from State governors, intellectuals, and technocrats' who saw no correlation between the Federal Constitution and the Unitary Police Force imposed on



the country. It also means that the Commissioners of Police in all the States of the Federation are responsible to the Inspector General and not to the State Governors unless clearance is sort first from the headquarters, the governor of a state cannot give orders to the Police Commissioner.

They were of the view that all the above have caused devastating consequences to security challenges in the country. Subsection 4 of the Police Act (1990), states that the police shall be employed for the prevention and detection of crime, the apprehension of offenders, the preservation of law and order, the protection of life and property and due enforcement of all laws and regulations with which they are directly charged, and shall perform such military duties within or without Nigeria as may be required of them by, or under the authority of this or any other Act. The wide discretionary latitude is given to the police to enforce the law without corresponding strong checks on the powers granted them has led to series of abuses in Nigeria, a country where the police are still expected to befriend to the public (Adesina, 2018) submitted.

Adesina (2018) was also of the view that there is a negative relationship between trust in the Nigerian Police and difficulty in obtaining assistance from the same police; the more the difficulty in obtaining assistance from the police, the less confidence the public has on the police. The assistance does not solely mean those in response to crime alone but also include other forms of assistance.

In swift support to Adesina (2018), Onyeozili (2005) promptly asserts that in the course of performing its statutory duties to the larger society, Nigeria police have often times been indicted in various ways for brutality, violation of fundamental human rights and extra-judicial killings, as well as aiding and abetting criminal activities like engaging in bribery and corruption. This the researcher subscribes fully to this assertion and thinks that the renewed trends of assassinations and other violent crimes like cultism, kidnapping, banditry and other large volumes of robbery incidents have all added to dampen public confidence in the Nigeria Police. Chukwuma (2000) contributed to the above discussion when he stated thus:

Police work embodies ironies, it has also become an instrument of oppression and exploitation in a totalitarian and unjust social system. Thus when the social order is oppressive, exploitative and unjust, the police become repressive institution used by the leaders to define demands for democratic rights enshrined in the constitution by citizens.

Discussing the ironies of Police work further, Aremu (1999) asserts that policing in Nigeria does not have any positive public perception, they are daily confronted with series of problems ranging from negative perception by the public to dehumanising condition under which they work and Ojo (2014) in his contribution maintained that though the society needs the police to run and function smoothly, the police too needs the society (public support) to successfully perform their core duty of fighting crime and criminals. But Onyeozili (2005) says because of Police brutality and violation of fundamental human rights amongst many others, the situation is not so in Nigeria.



Performance Theory

Public trust in the police is based on the performance of the police. Performance theory posits that trust and distrust in governments or its institutions like the police are tightly linked to how good or bad such government or institution is doing, in other words, trust is an indicator of good performance (Boateng, 2017) submitted.

Put differently, Adesina (2018) maintained that the quality of services rendered by the police. The theory states that the variation in trust of various governments or their institutions, (like the police) is a result of differences in the way the citizens view social phenomena in Nigeria. Craen and Skogan (2014) opined that what constitutes good performance of the police includes (but not limited to) safety, peace and observance of the rule of law, etc., while crime, insecurity and other rights violations constitute a bad performance. Relating performance theory to policing, therefore, the theory states that, the citizen will have a high level of trust in their police if they render services that meet their expectations, i.e., good performance of the Police and citizen's safety, crime and security will have the trust of the community they serve (Boateng, 2017) concluded.

Since the citizens expect a crime-free environment, police performance could, therefore, be measured by the maintenance of high ethical standards. The Police must, therefore, be respectful in their dealings with citizens i.e police-citizen interaction; therefore, the ability of the police to interact with people who request their services, freely and render services devoid of unfairness can give them credibility before the people because when trust is enhanced Police performance will be highly rated positively.

In summary, performance theory of policing suggests that trust in the police is based on the degree to which citizens are bothered by crime, disorder, feelings of insecurity, corruption, incivility, unethical behaviours of the police, and the unjudicious use of authority by the same police. Public perception, therefore, is positive when the public have the utmost trust in their police and can rate their performance positively.

3. Methodology

The research design for this study is a descriptive survey research method used in determining factors influencing work performance and public perception in Gwagwalada Area Council. Open and close-ended questionnaires were used as instruments for collecting primary data from respondents while secondary data was sourced from journals, textbooks and online peer-reviewed work with a sample size of fifty (50) Police officers and fifty (50) residents of Gwagwalada and Zuba who had engagements with the police at various levels. The questionnaires were directly administered on respondents by the researcher, while the SPSS package was used to analysed collated data.

4. Result

Descriptive Results

Table 1 above indicates that the fear of being called as a witness and the fear that the information may not be treated with confidentiality accounts for 38.1 per cent respectively.



Table 1: Reasons for Negative Public Perception of the Police in Gwagwalada Area Council

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
Fear of molestation	5	10.0	11.9	11.9
Fear of being called as a witness	16	32.0	38.1	50.0
Fear of being suspected	5	10.0	11.9	61.9
Fear of the information not being treated with confidentiality	16	32.0	38.1	100.0
Total	42	84.0	100.0	
Missing				
System	8	16.0		
Total	50	100.0		

Source: Field Survey, 2020.

Table 2: Frequency of co-operation received by the Police from the public in Gwagwalada Area Council

Responses	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
Frequently	9	18.0	18.0	18.0
Not frequently	35	70.0	70.0	88.0
Not at all	6	12.0	12.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2020.

Table 2 above shows that 70 per cent of the respondents affirmed that the public do not frequently give the Police the required cooperation.

Table 3: Respondents view on public perception of the Police in Gwagwalada Area Council.

View	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
A very friendly officer	14	28.0	29.2	29.2
A very cooperative officer	8	16.0	16.7	45.8
A very wicked officer	19	38.0	39.6	85.4
A very corrupt officer	7	14.0	14.6	100.0
Total	48	96.0	100.0	
Missing				
System	2	4.0		
Total	50	100.0		

Source: Field Survey, 2020.

In terms of public perception of an average police officer in Gwagwalada Area Council, Table 3 indicates that 39.6 per cent of the respondents see police officers as very wicked.

Result from Table 4 shows that the general work performance of the police in Gwagwalada is not appreciated by the public. Consequently, 62 per cent affirmed that their performance is not satisfactory.



Table 4: Respondents' view on the general satisfaction with Police work performance in Gwagwalada Area Council

Views		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very satisfactory	9	18.0	18.0	18.0
	Satisfactory	10	20.0	20.0	38.0
	Not satisfactory	31	62.0	62.0	100.0
Total		50	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2020.

Discussion on Findings

From the data presented above, policing in Gwagwalada Area Council has been generally adjudged to be unsatisfactory by the public. 39.6 per cent of the police were perceived as very wicked officers as indicated in table 3 above, two reasons were adduced for the negative perception as represented in table 1, the fear of being called as witnesses in cases and fear of information not being treated with confidentiality. This implies that the issue of trust is completely lacking between the public and the police. This discovery is disturbing and worrisome as it may account for reasons why the level of cooperation between the police and the public is negatively put at 70 per cent as reflected in table 2. This in effect has all the tendency of affecting their work performance and successes in crime control in Gwagwalada.

Table 4 specifically shows that the public is not satisfied with police work performance as indicated in the table with 62.0 affirmation. The above discovery on lack of satisfaction by the public for police work performance is an indication that public perception will be negative. They are seen as wicked people who cannot be trusted since they are capable of releasing confidential information given to them on criminal matters. This finding has successfully answered objective one of this study, which seeks to ascertain factors affecting work performance of the police. This finding has been supported by Ladapo (2011) who stated that Nigerian citizens view the police with awe...., there is the ever-present fear of being accused of perpetrating an offence when one reports to the police.

As to the second objective of this study, which seeks to investigate the public perception of the police in Gwagwalada Area Council, the finding from this study showed that the general perception of the police is very negative. This finding has been supported by Oto and Aro (2014) where they stated that even after independence, The Nigerian Police continued to play the role of protecting the Nigerian hegemonies, subjugating and repressing the masses and the situation got worse during the military regimes where the Police were accused of human rights violation, abuse of power and corruption, criminal misconduct and use of excessive force.

The above findings have finally been found to be in tandem with the performance theory adopted for this study. The theory seeks to equate public trust of the police based on their performance. Hence, easy accessibility to the police by the people before, during or after crime could impact positively on the public trust in the police. Consequently, where cooperation and dissemination of information are not freely offered on criminal activities by the public to the police, this researcher believes, can hurt police work performance and public perception.



5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Interestingly, the respondents of this study were made up of people who have had direct contacts with the police at the three police stations in Gwagwalada Area Council, either as victims of crime who have come to report incidences of crime against them or as witnesses to commission of a crime or as accused persons. In any case, all respondents in the study have made submissions of the negative perception of the police owing to their lack of cooperation with the police, they see the police as wicked people who lack the credibility and trust. These have, therefore, affected their work performance negatively since the public has maintained that they are generally not satisfied with their work performance as seen in the findings of the study.

It is therefore recommended that there is need for further public enlightenment about the workings of the Police to create better understanding and establish new perceptions. This, the Police can do by drawing out new world accepted best practices and approaches in the area of arrests, criminal investigations and conflict resolution mechanisms. The various Nigerian Police training academy's curriculum of studies needs to be reviewed to include studies in sociology and human relation practices, particularly in the sociology of crime and delinquency. This will enable the Police to have basic knowledge of causal factors to crime while policing training and retraining should be enhanced, especially on inappropriate use of modern technology and equipment. The Police Act needs to be amended to grant protection and privacy to individual community informants who may have vital security information for the police from time to time. This will also add to the development of trust between the citizens and the police. Finally, the Police public relations committees of Gwagwalada Area Councils of the FCT need to be extended to the Ward and Poling Unit levels. This will better enhance cordial relationships and mutual trusts by the people at the grassroots.

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