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Contents **Pages**

Understanding The Spatiotemporal Pattern Of Urban Crime In Yenagoa Local Government Area Of Bayelsa State, Nigeria

Bitrus Eniyekenimi DAUKERE | Effiong EKPO

Isaac A. GBIRI **1-14**

Work Stress And Employee Performance: A Study Of Selected Deposit Money Banks In Lagos And Ogun States, Nigeria

ODUNLAMI, Samuel Abimbola

OLUDIPE, Emmanuel Oladimeji **15-41**

Social Conception And Perceived Effects Of Community Policing In South-western Nigeria

Bashirat A. Ibrahim | David E. Okurame **42-61**

Nigeria Police And Contemporary Law Enforcement: Issues And Challenges

Obasanjo S. Balogun | Olufemi A. Fawole | Sadiq E. Amali **62-79**

The New Asian Scramble For Africa: A Study Of Sino-nigeria Trade And Investment Relations, 2007-2019

AJA, Akpuru-Aja Uchenna | BAKARE, Adebola Rafiu **80-100**

Youth Violence And Socio-economic Development In Baboko Community Of Ilorin, Kwara State Nigeria

Abdullahi Kayode Ibrahim **101-115**

Effects Of Bio-safety Measures And Disposal Of Medical Waste On Primary Health Care System In Karu, Abuja Municipal Area Council

AGBEBAKU, Henry Usiobaifo **116-136**

Criminal Victimisation: Conceptual And Theoretical Perspectives

Obasanjo Solomon Balogun | Tomisin Adedunmola Akangbe

Habeeb Abdulrauf Salihu **137-151**

Contents **Pages**

The Intricate Of Globalization And Development Administration In Nigeria

Kayode Asaju | Sunday Asepo **152-172**

Perceived Knowledge And Attitudes Of Social Workers Towards The Elderly In Ilorin, Kwarastate, Nigeria

Kelani, Karamat A. | Adekola Oluwafunmilayo T. | Yusuf, Mohammed S. Abdulhameed, A. | Mohammed, A. H. **173-186**

Book Review

O to ge – How Kwara People took their Destiny in their Hands

Emmanuel O. Ojo **187-191**

NIGERIA POLICE AND CONTEMPORARY LAW ENFORCEMENT: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

The police is regarded as the gatekeeper of the criminal justice process and the biggest and most visible subsystem of the criminal justice system entrusted with the constitutional duty to protect the citizens. In Nigeria, however, the police suffer from negative public image, and have come under intense criticisms over the way they carry out their law enforcement duties. Therefore, this work presents a review of major issues and challenges facing the Nigeria police force regarding its capacity to effectively discharge its constitutional duties. The work employed secondary sources of data such as text books, journal articles, newspapers and internet-based materials among others. The result shows that, some of the major factors hampering police effectiveness include corruption, poor personnel welfare, shortage of manpower, police brutality and abuse of power, colonial legacy, political interference, nepotism, among others. It is recommended among others that the police force should make the welfare of their officers a top concern, and the issue of police corruption should be thoroughly dealt with using reward-punishment approach. In addition, nepotism and favoritism in recruitment and promotion of officers should be discouraged.

Keywords: Nigeria police, policing, law enforcement, police corruption, police brutality

Introduction

There is a common view in the literature that police occupy a central, and in fact, a most controversial position in contemporary society (Alemika 2009, Dambazau 2011, Hess 2009, Odekunle 2004, Wrobleski & Hess 2006). They are gatekeepers of the criminal justice process and the biggest, most visible and important subsystem of the criminal justice system (Dambazau, 2011, Siegel 2011), entrusted with the constitutional right to protect the citizens, even when protection requires application of force (Reid, 1999).

The police generally serve as the primary point of contact between a society's population and the criminal justice system. Thus, the strategic position of police officers, their visibility, and contact with the public, their use of weapon as well as their discretionary power to arrest have often kept them in the forefront of public discourse and thought (Siegel & Worrall, 2012).

The police have the responsibility of maintaining public order by enforcing the law, promoting public safety, preventing, detecting, and prosecuting violators of criminal laws. According to Alemika (2010), the police are the most visible governmental agents through which the character of a government and political system may be assessed. This is because the police are seen as the custodian of the status quo; and largely the actions and behaviours of the police reflect the political and economic character of society as well as what the power elite are willing or able to tolerate or allow (Alemika, 2010).

However, it is important to mention that every society needs social order to thrive, as no society can witness any tangible progress amidst high rate of criminality, insecurity and break down of law and order. Hence, the role of the police in the maintenance of social order cannot be over-emphasised. According to Hess (2009), police represent the capacity to deter citizens from committing acts that threaten the order they are believed to symbolize. They are expected to deter crime, deter immorality, deter evil thoughts, or conspiracies to commit a crime (Hess, 2009). Similarly, Alemika (2009) points out that the institution of police is indispensable in the contemporary society because it provides direct contact with the public and represents the entry point into the criminal justice system.

Thus, considering the indispensability of the police in the maintenance of law and order in society, it has been observed that effective policing is a mirage in Nigeria, due to certain factors undermining the performance of the police in discharging their duties. Therefore, it is based on the above backdrop that this work reviews the role of the Nigeria police, as well as the issues and challenges facing them regarding their capacity to effectively discharge their constitutional duties. The study also makes recommendations towards effective policing in Nigeria. The work relied on secondary sources of data such as text books, journal articles, newspapers and internet-based materials among others.

Conceptualizing Policing

Policing is a form of social control. Kasumu (2017) defines it as measures and actions taken by a variety of institutions and groups (both formal and non-formal) in the society to regulate social relations and practice in order to secure the safety of members of the society as well as compel them to conform to the norms and values the society expects of them.

Manning as cited in Hess, 2009, p.116) conceives policing to mean "controlling, monitoring (in terms of correcting misguided behaviour), tracking and altering, if required, public conduct. It also refers to the tasks that people expect the police individually and in the aggregate to perform for them."

According to Odekunle (2004, p. 25), the central objective of policing is to provide security, or at least a social and psychological feeling of security, for a majority of citizens, in a majority of places, and for most of the time. Odekunle (2004, p. 26) identifies, in a social-scientific context, four criteria for measuring successful policing:

1. Effectiveness (e.g. fewer or reduced criminal victimization; higher proportion of crimes known to the police cleared by arrest; increased recovery of stolen property; higher rates of arrests which result in conviction; lower traffic accident rates; faster response time to reports/complaints).
2. Responsiveness (e.g. higher citizen perception of safety from crime; higher citizen ratings of police performance in general; higher citizen ratings of specific police activities; higher citizen ratings of specific aspects of police conduct such as honesty, integrity, courtesy and fairness).
3. Equity (i.e. with reference to egalitarian distribution of "protection" to all sections of the population).
4. Efficiency (i.e. with reference to cost-and-benefit analysis of "protection" output relative to monetary, human and material input).

For Odekunle (2004), when these criteria are translated into their ordinary meaning, the value and worth of a police force can be determined by the amount and quality of protection it offers the citizens as a whole; and by the degree of confidence and cooperation, it enjoys from the average citizen (Odekunle 2004, p. 26).

A Brief History of the Nigeria Police Force

The Nigeria police is an establishment of federal government with general duties of preventing and detecting crime, apprehending offenders, preserving law and order, protecting life and property, and due enforcement of all laws and regulations with which they are directly charged including military duties within and outside Nigeria (Police Act 2020).

The Nigeria Police Force came into existence in 1930, following the amalgamation of the then Southern and Northern police forces. The history of Nigeria police cannot be told without making reference to the inauguration by the British in 1861 of the 30-man Consular Guard in the Lagos colony. The Guard, which went through series of transformations including Hausa Constabulary in 1897, became a precursor to other police forces that were established in the British-Nigeria.

By 1896, the Lagos Police Force was established. Prior to Lagos Police Force, the Niger Coast Constabulary (NCC) had been set up in Calabar in 1894. In addition, there was Royal Niger Constabulary formed by the Royal Niger Company in 1888 in Lokoja to represent the northern region. After the amalgamation of the Northern and Southern Protectorates, the Royal Niger Constabulary (in the North) and Niger Coast Constabulary (in the South) became Northern Nigeria Police and Southern Nigeria Police Force respectively. Following this first phase of merger, however, the two forces were later fused together to form what would now become the Nigeria Police Force in 1930, with its headquarters in Lagos. By 1943, the British colonial government enacted the first Nigeria Police Act. However, 'Police Act Cap. P19, Laws of the Federation, 2004 (popularly referred to as 'Police Act 2004') repealed the 1943 Act. The newly enacted Nigeria Police Act 2020 has also repealed the Police Act of 2004 itself.

It is, however, worthy to mention that the new Act (2020) followed the public outcry for police reform in Nigeria. Consequently, the Act was conceived (its general objective) “to provide for a more efficient and effective police service that is based on the principles of accountability and transparency; protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms; and partnership with other security agencies” (Nigeria Police Act, 2020).

Aside the above nicely crafted objective, the Nigeria Police Act 2020 clearly spells out the primary functions of the Nigeria Police Force. Section 4 of the Act provides that the Police Force shall:

a) prevent and detect crimes, and protect the rights and freedom of every person in Nigeria as provided in the Constitution, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and any other law;

b) maintain public safety, law and order;

c) protect the lives and property of all persons in Nigeria;

d) enforce all laws and regulations without any prejudice to the enabling Acts of other security agencies;

e) discharge such duties within and outside Nigeria as may be required of it under this Act or any other law;

f) collaborate with other agencies to take any necessary action and

provide the required assistance or support to persons in distress, including victims of road accidents, fire disasters, earthquakes and floods;

g) facilitate the free passage and movement on highways, roads and streets open to the public;

h) adopt community partnership in the discharge of its responsibilities under this Act or under any other law; and

i) vet and approve the registration of private detective schools and private investigative outfits.

Furthermore, the duties of the Nigeria Police Force to enforce certain constitutional provisions among others have been spelt out in the Nigeria Police Act 2020. According to the Act:

1) The Police Force is responsible for promoting and protecting the fundamental rights of persons in police custody as guaranteed by the Constitution.

2) For the purpose of subsection (1), the Police Force shall collaborate with and maintain close working relationships with any government agency or relevant private initiatives in the establishment of schemes or mechanisms offering legal services to accused persons, detainees or accused persons in police custody in need of legal services to ensure that they have full access to justice as laid down under the relevant provisions of Chapter IV of the Constitution.

3) In addition to the provisions of subsections (1) and (2), the Police Force is also charged with the responsibility for promoting and protecting the fundamental rights of all persons as guaranteed under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Ratification and Enforcement) Act and other international legal instruments on human rights to which Nigeria is a signatory.

Issues and Challenges of Effective Policing in Nigeria

The police represent the authority of the state in a modern society. They have the role to demand conformity to societal laws and expectations. That is, the police have the capacity to enforce the law, even if that requires the use of coercive force. Bittner (cited in Wrobleski & Hess, 2006) submits that "the role of the police is to address all sorts of human problems when and insofar as their solutions do or may possibly require the use of force at the point of their occurrence…"

Furthermore, based on the principles of policing espoused by Robert Peel in 1829, police are the public and the public are the police. Therefore, the authority of the police comes from the people via their laws and institutions. Wrobleski and Hess (2006) note

that the goals and priorities of a police agency are based on the need or the desire of the community. They further submit that priorities are often more influenced by the desires of the people (the policed) than by any consideration; because, according to Wrobleski and Hess, the success of policing depends heavily on public support, and as such, the citizens' wishes must be listened to and considered.

However, police institutions, particularly the Nigeria Police Force, have come under intense criticisms over the years for their ineffectiveness, inefficiency, incivility and antidemocratic conducts. In Nigeria, in particular, a number of factors have been observed to be responsible for this. The challenges and problems facing law enforcement (police, in particular) in Nigeria include, but not limited to godfatherism, ethnicity, inadequate funding, brutality and abuse of authority, misuse and misapplication of available resources. Others include lack of accountability, corruption, insufficient education and training, inadequate equipment, poor condition of service, lack of motivation, poor leadership; corruption, nepotism, general neglect of the police by state political leadership, colonial legacy, among others (Amusan & Saka 2018; Dambazau 2011; Kasumu 2017; Onyeozili 2005; Osayande 2008).

In the view of Amusan & Saka (2018), all of these factors mentioned above constrain the police and reduce their capability to stem the tide of crimes in Africa, and Nigeria in particular. These factors have made the people to perceive the police as an ineffective institution that has failed to discharge the responsibilities for which it had been created to the fullest (Amusan & Saka 2018). Dambazau (2011) notes that lack of professionalism engendered by poor recruitment policy, coupled with endemic issue of corruption within the system have remained some of the challenges of effective law enforcement in Nigeria.

Similarly, Osayande (2008) submits that Nigeria police suffer from external and internal factors that impede their functions and cause them not to perform optimally. Osayande notes that the age-long major external factors inhibiting effective policing include but not limited to incessant military intervention in government, poor funding and mismanagement of available funds, under budgeting, as well as creation of parallel security organisations.

Internal factors impeding the performance of the Nigeria Police Force, according to Osayande (2008), include inappropriate deployment of police personnel for protective security, non-observance of the rule of law and fundamental rights by the police. Others include factors inherent in the Nigeria Police such as organized corruption, in-fighting among senior officers for promotion and posting, unlawful exercise of authority and non-compliance with some laid down regulations, procedures, manuals and traditions at all levels of police operations. Other factors include unacceptable and decayed state of discipline, inadequate basic and continuous training of police personnel, among others (Osayande 2008).

Furthermore, some of the major issues and challenges related to policing in Nigeria are highlighted as follows:

The Impact of Colonial Legacy on the Nigerian Police

It has been observed that colonial legacy has had a major impact on contemporary policing and law enforcement in Nigeria. It has been argued that the Nigeria police was originally meant to serve the British colonial masters, which depicted a master-servant kind of relationship. In the opinion of Osayande (2008), the Nigeria Police Force was built on a wrong foundation right from the inception, through the predatory police administration established by the British, to promote and sustain the socio-politico-economic empire of the British in Nigeria.

During the colonial era, colonial police were ordered to crush any form of 'restiveness' or protest by the natives against the colonial government. These colonial police attitude and structure, as pointed out by Osayande (2008), was transferred to Nigerians at the independence –without functional reforms. As a result, the Nigerian leadership 'recolonised' the Nigeria police after the independence, and used them as tools for oppression and intimidation of perceived enemies and political opponents.

Osayande contends that the police became the ruling party police and was consequently perceived as corruption personified and agent of oppression, more so, in a country where, hitherto, there was total absence and non-observance of the rule of law and fundamental rights (Osayande 2008). Thus, how the police discharge its duties is a reflection of the political values and the dictate of the power elite. Observing the effect of colonialism on the contemporary police formation, Dambazau (2011) argues that the Nigeria Police was not constituted to provide services to the community in a manner consistent with human rights and democracy, rather the main concern of the colonial government was to brutally suppress popular resistance against colonialism through poorly educated and poorly trained police personnel.

Similarly, Alemika (1993) argues that the police forces established in Nigeria since British colonial rule have been characterised by repression, corruption and inefficiency. Alemika observes that the British colonial rulers bequeathed to Nigeria the police forces that are para-military in organisation, that operate as apparatus of violence used by the political rulers to suppress opposition to social injustices and anti-democratic rule. For Alemika, the inherited and sustained colonial legacy of repressive policing can partly explain the apparent alienation of the police from the people and the perennial crisis of performance faced by the Nigeria police.

Odekunle (2004) observes the impact of colonial legacy on the 'ownership mentality' of the government of the day over the police institution. According to Odekunle (2004), “Political interference and the feeling of accountability by the Force to the

"government of the day" rather than to the rule of law and the people (i.e. a carryover from the colonial period and the succeeding military regimes)" (p. 28) are some of the obstacles to effective and efficient policing in Nigeria.

Abuse of Authority, Police Brutality and Human Rights Abuse Issues

The power of the police is derived from the constitution of the nation, and as such, the constitutional provisions must guide their conduct. The police agencies are expected to respect the constitutional rights of all to liberty, equity and justice in a democracy. According to Wrobleski & Hess (2006), the authority, goals and methods of the police must promote individual liberty, public safety and social justice. Protecting civil rights and civil liberties is perceived by some as the single most important goal of policing (Wrobleski & Hess, 2006).

One major challenge of effective policing is the police's ability to follow due process. This is a big challenge for contemporary law enforcement. On this, however, Wrobleski & Hess (2006) suggest that concern for crime control must be balanced by concern for due process.

The nature of police work sometimes required the use of force to subdue suspects. However, where excessive force is used more than is required, it has crossed the line from justifiable force to police brutality. According to Wrobleski & Hess (2006), the crime-related aspect of a police officer's job is what frequently draws public attention. Wrobleski & Hess argue that when police officers have to physically subdue a suspect, people notice but when they render services like helping people get into their locked cars, only few notice it. The police, at times, believe that violence is needed to obtain respect from individuals who seem to respect nothing but force and power (Wrobleski & Hess, 2006).

Authority is a prerequisite for effective law enforcement. A law enforcement officer needs authority and respect to be able to make the citizens to obey the law. In the opinion of the French philosopher, Pascal (cited in Wrobleski & Hess, 2006, p. 136), "justice without force is powerless; force without justice is tyrannical". Therefore, the physical appearance of the police officer adds to this authoritarian image. Their uniform, gun, baton and handcuffs project an image to which many people respond with disquiet or even fear. However, this image project the right of the police to exercise the lawful force of the state in serving and protecting as well as in enforcing laws. Nonetheless, the difficulty arises when the power that comes with the position is transferred to "personal power" (Wrobleski & Hess, 2006).

Amusan and Saka (2018) note that power abuse within national police, especially in developing states remain a challenge. Osayande (2008) observes that unlawful exercise of authority is a factor that has seriously impacted negatively on the

performance of the Nigeria Police. Abuse of authority is one of the aspects of policing that has attracted public condemnation.

In most cases, the police officers are used illegally by private citizens to intimidate perceived enemies, debtors among others. In fact, some property owners, such as landlords, engage the police to harass and illegally eject the owing tenants from their property. As observed by Osayande (2008), some officers perform illegal activities such as conducting illegal search on persons and houses, indiscriminate arrest and detention, extra-judicial killings, escort of contra banned and stolen goods by policemen and unlawful use of policemen in disputed land matters which are purely civil in nature.

In Nigeria, cases of human rights violation and police brutality have been reported. It is not uncommon to see police-public violence making news on the pages of newspapers and social media. Police brutality is a serious concern to scholars and law enforcement observers. In fact, the recent #EndSARS mass protests that engulfed the country in the last quarter of the year 2020 were seen as anti-police brutality and pro-police reform movement. Nigerian youths staged the protest first on the social media before they embarked on the physical protests on the streets of major cities across the country. #EndSARS, as they tagged it, connotes many things, but mostly, it was a mass protest against Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) unit of the Nigeria Police Force that was accused of brutality, violence against youths, extra-judicial killings, bribery and corruption, harassment, abuse of power among other vices. The protest led to the disbandment of SARS but welcome a new unit called SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics), which was announced by the Police authority. However, the creation of SWAT did not stop the protest because the protesters believed that SWAT is nothing but SARS in disguise. Therefore, they demanded a total disbandment of SARS and not just a change of name from SARS to SWAT.

More than any other issue, the use of force by the police has caused a lot of controversy in Nigeria. Johnson (2013) contends that excessive use of force by the police officers have made the public to lose confidence in the police.

Police Corruption

Corruption is rife within and outside the police institution and covers a wide range of behaviour. Although not a new menace to the Nigeria police, it has remained a concern to the public. According to Adler, Mueller & Laufer (2000), a distinction is made between 'meat eaters' and 'grass eaters'. The 'meat eaters' are those officers who solicit bribes or cooperate with criminals for personal gain, while the 'grass eaters' accept payoffs for rendering police services or for looking the other way when action is called for (Adler et al, 2000).

Muhammed (2009) describes police corruption in the Nigeria's fourth republic as alarming. He observes that police corruption manifests itself in roadblocks and jargons like 'wetin you carry', 'park there' 'wey your papers' among other jargons. In the opinion of Dambazau (2011), corruption in the Nigeria police is pervasive and inimical to the constitutional responsibilities of the police towards the public.

Stressing the effect of corruption on the performance of the police, Dambazau (2011) contends that police corruption impacts directly on the ability of the police to prevent and control crime, including criminal investigation. Police corruption facilitates the commission of crime encourages “jungle justice”, and creates bad image for the police (Dambazau, 2011, p. 256-257).

In a similar view, Osayande (2008) observes that corruption has gradually assumed greater dimension in recent times. Some forms of corrupt practices commonly perpetrated by officers as identified by Osayande include aiding the suspect to escape from lawful custody; obtaining money from suspects for closure of case files; escorts of contra-banned and stolen goods. Others include stealing from suspects and accident victims; receiving bribes in order not to effect arrest of crime suspects; receiving bribes from a person in order to arrest an innocent citizen who is not in good terms with the bribe giver; supply of police arms and uniforms to armed robbers for a fee, etc. Other forms of corrupt practices found among officers include divulging information about complainants to criminals for a fee; stealing from crime scene; receiving bribes and failing to enforce the law against motorists who contravene the law, or failing to search vehicles that may be carrying prohibited items; and demanding money from suspects as a condition for granting bail, which is supposed to be free (Osayande 2008).

Corruption is found across the ranks and files of the police. An example of high-ranking corruption case was that of the former Inspector General of Police (IGP), Tafa Balogun. Balogun was indicted of corruption as the then sitting IGP, and was subsequently prosecuted by the anticorruption agency, Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). The anticorruption agency secured his conviction in 2005 after he was found guilty by the court.

The effect of police corruption on policing is enormous. The corrupt police officer will devote time and energy pursuing grafts and other personal gains at the expense of fulfilling his constitutional responsibilities to the community or society, thereby aggravating insecurity. Police corruption can encourage people to take laws into their own hands, which manifest in self-protection, mob or “jungle justice”, revenge, greater reliance on private security organisations and vigilantes, and building of high fences that replicate that of the prisons, which more or less make the residents, live like prisoners. Corruption jeopardises administration of justice, affects the image of the police negatively, which makes the public to lose confidence in them. In fact, most Nigerians see police as the most corrupt institution in Nigeria.

Problems of Manpower, Infrastructure, Police Personnel Welfare

There has been concern about the shortage of police manpower and personnel. “Police personnel”, as defined by the 10th United Nations Crime Trend Survey (UN-CTS) Questionnaire, are “personnel in public agencies whose principal functions are the prevention, detection and investigation of crime and the apprehension of alleged offenders…” (Harrendorf & Smit, 2010, p. 114).

Report has revealed that police personnel are inadequate for the growing population of Nigeria, which is estimated to be about two hundred millions. The International Statistics on Crime and Justice, edited by Harrendorf, Heiskanen & Malby (2010) shows that African region has police officers (median around 200) below the overall median of 300 police officers per 100,000 population. Even, with this low manpower, the major bulk of the police personnel are deployed for private use, as orderlies for the rich, politicians, celebrities and those who can afford their “protection services”.

On the other hand, it is crucial to emphasise that police welfare is paramount to effective policing. It is so unfortunate that Nigerian police personnel are not being adequately motivated (i.e. they are poorly paid) towards discharging their policing duty effectively. Inadequate training facilities also impact negatively on policing. On this, Odekunle (2004, p. 27) observed that colonial origin and heritage of the Force have continued to influence the selection, training and orientation of a majority of police officers in Nigeria. He also observes insufficient length of training-period and attention in training recruits for the "rank and file", lopsided emphasis (in training curricula) towards "drill", para-military work, and "mechanistic" teaching of law and police-work, among others.

Policing and Democracy in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

The Fourth Republic connotes the return of Nigeria to civil rule in 1999 through democratically elected representatives. However, it is pertinent to state that the role of police in a democracy cannot be overemphasised. Police play a prominent role in the maintenance of law and order. According to Dambazau (2011), the police remain the major actor that drives the effectiveness of criminal justice in a democratic society.

The police are expected to ensure a smooth electoral process, by providing security for all the actors in the process, including the electoral officials, parties, electorates, etc., without fear of favour. The police are also to ensure the safety of all the citizens before, during and after the elections. They are also expected to maintain public order and create favourable environment for the smooth conduct of the elections.

However, since the return of Nigeria to democratic rule in 1999, elections – the process of changing government through ballots – have been characterised by violence, in

desperate struggles for political power among individual candidates and political parties. At times, most of these violent struggles give rise to ethno-religious tension in the country. Electoral violence in Nigeria occur before, during and after the elections. It takes the forms of physical, psychological or emotional attacks between the competing parties and individuals involved.

Since the beginning of the fourth republic, series of political assassinations and violence have been made and documented. Among the victims of unresolved political killings and assassinations in Nigeria were the former attorney general and minister of justice, Chief Bola Ige, who was killed in his Ibadan home in December 2001; Chief Marshal Harry, the vice chairman of All Nigerian Peoples Party (ANPP) who was killed in March 2003; Chief Aminosoari Dikibo, a chieftain of Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) was killed in 2003; Chief Funsho Williams, a Lagos PDP chieftain was killed at his residence in Lagos in 2006.

In 2011, Nigeria witnessed post-election violence in some parts of the north, where people were killed and among those feared killed were members of the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) serving in the region.

In addition, more recently, the gruesome murder of PDP woman leader in Kogi east senatorial district, Mrs. Achefu Abuh, has added to the list of unresolved political killings in the Nigerian polity. The woman was brutally murdered on November 18, 2019, just a day after the announcement of the winner of the 2019 gubernatorial election in Kogi State. It was reported that some political thugs set the building she was in ablaze, and she died inside the inferno after being prevented from escaping by her assailants (see https://punchng.com/kogi-pdp-women-leader-burnt-alive-at-home/).

One thing common to these killings is that they have remained unresolved. They are unresolved in the sense that the police have not been able to bring the culprits to face justice. Also, there have been reported cases of election violence and killings of voters as well as snatching of ballot boxes.

Furthermore, there have been reports in the mainstream media and the new media of the police complicity in electoral malpractices. Political observers have argued that police are sometimes used to compromise electoral processes by aiding and abetting in rigging elections, mostly for the party in power, who often see themselves as the owner of the police. For instance, in a study by CLEEN Foundation (2010), it was found that police not only have they been unable to provide effective security for elections, but they have themselves been involved in electoral malpractices and crime. According to CLEEN Foundation, the cause of this was attributed to “the institutional neglect of the police leading to its weak operational capacity, endemic corruption, political control of the police and low level of morale in the organisation...” (2010, p. viii).

In his review of the November 16, 2019 gubernatorial election in Kogi State, Adedayo (2019) writes:

> There have always been electoral violence, corruption and political gangsterism in virtually all Nigerian elections…violence has become almost a paterfamilias of our electoral contests… but Kogi election was in a class of its own… There were rumours of a political party securing the services of a top police officer who sat in a helicopter which threw tear gas canisters at polling booths where the opposing party held sway…

Furthermore, abuse of power by the police remains one of the banes of democracy in Nigeria. As the government of the people, by the people and for the people, democracy provides the opportunities and platforms for the citizens to press home their displeasure against any governments that misrepresent them, in terms of bad governance. In a constitutional democracy, the rights of the citizens are guaranteed. The citizens have the rights to hold peaceful protest, freedom of speech and expression among others. However, there have been cases of police disallowing the people to hold their views through peaceful protests. A peaceful assembly or protest constitutes no threat to lives and property, but police would always defend their action with the need to be proactive to forestall the rallies being hijacked by hoodlums.

Disobedience to court orders, unlawful arrests and detention of the perceived "enemies" of the state, hounding of the opposition leaders, are seen as the negative role being played by police, which is detrimental to deepening the democratic governance.

As noted by Alemika (1993), the police more than any other agencies of criminal justice administration and crime control in Nigeria, have been persistently eroding the liberty, freedom, security, human rights, and welfare of the citizens. They have also been criticised for non-observance of the rule of law and for poor performance in their tasks of preventing, investigating, detecting and prosecuting crimes. However, they are accused of quickly suppressing human rights activism and struggles for socioeconomic and political justice and democratisation. Moreover, Nigerian police have been accused of brutality, corruption, political repression and partisanship, and failure to protect life and property and to curb public disorder without inflicting unnecessary injury, causing avoidable killing of citizens, and without escalating protests to riots (Alemika 1993).

Conclusion

Police remain one of the most important institutions in contemporary society. They are the most visible government agency, and as such, they are continually under public scrutiny and often criticised in the course of discharging their duties. They may be seen to be too harsh or too soft, too brutal or too passive. The Nigeria police is faced with

series of problems that inhibit their effective performance. Such problems include but not limited to corruption, poor funding, inadequate training, facilities and law enforcement equipment, abuse of power which results to violation of human rights, nepotism in promotion, poor salary and motivation, godfatherism, political interference among others. To be effective, the police must be in close proximity to the citizens they serve through community policing approach. For there to be a strong police institution in line with the sustainable development goal, government must reposition the force to meet the challenge of growing insecurity in Nigeria. Efforts must be made to eradicate police corruption and personnel should be well and adequately motivated (i.e. adequate and prompt salary payment, health insurance scheme, and timely promotion, among others).

Recommendations towards Effective Policing in Nigeria

First and foremost, effective policing should be seen as a goal in itself – as something to be valued. Therefore, public-police cooperation must be a central point in attaining the goal of effective and efficient policing. So, community policing should be fully implemented to boost the police image positively and also encourage community cooperation with the police. As Adler et al (2000) observe, community policing is a strategy that relies on public confidence and citizen cooperation to help prevent crime and make the residents of a community feels more secure. According to them, community involves programmes and policies based on a commitment to a partnership between the police and the community they serve (Adler et al, 2000).

In addition, intelligence-led policing should be encouraged within the force. In other words, police officers should be more proactive in preventing crimes before they occur rather than merely reacting to crime after they have occurred.

Both the force (police organisation) and the government should make the issue of police personnel welfare a top priority. It is a fact that officers will likely give their best to the job when their adequate welfare is guaranteed. Also, the issue of bribery among them will be reduced if their salaries and allowances are adequate and paid as and when due.

The issue of corruption should be thoroughly deemphasized among the rank-and-file of the police force. One strategic way to stem the tide of corrupt practices in the police is to adopt reward-punishment approach. This can work when the police force celebrate and honour officers who are diligent and have records of good conducts. This will not only motivate the officers in question, but also encourage other officers to aim high. On the other hand, they should “in-housely” and publicly punish officers that bring disrepute to the profession, through such conducts as bribery and corruption, extra-judicial killings, human rights abuse, among others.

Furthermore, greater emphasis should be laid on background checks on any potential officers the force intends to recruit into the police. Information should be collected about their intellectual, psycho-social, spiritual, mental, health, and behavioural dispositions. Such information can be gotten from their former schools, family members, hospitals, pastor/imam, and more importantly from their social media pages, etc. This will prevent recruitment of criminals, 'immoral', antisocial personality and “bad eggs” into the law enforcement profession.

Similarly, training and retraining of officers should lay more emphasis on the intellectual and psycho-social aspects more than the physical drills. They should be exposed to courses like law, human rights, alternative dispute resolutions techniques, sociology, psychology and other relevant courses. According to the Executive Director of CLEEN Foundation, Dr. Benson Olugbuo:

> The Police as gatekeepers to the criminal justice system require continued training and retraining to effectively deliver on their constitutional mandate to maintain law and order and protect lives and property in a professional manner and within the confines of the laws (CLEEN Foundation, 2019, p. 6).

Furthermore, Nigeria Police should be adequately equipped to meet up with the growing challenge of crime and criminalities in Nigeria. It is so disheartening to still see old rickety cars that police officers use for patrols. One can imagine if such cars can be used to respond to distress calls from the citizens. Police force should be adequately funded, and funds should be transparently and accountably utilised.

The issue of nepotism and favoritism in promotion of officers should be discouraged while meritocracy should be entrenched. Finally, police should guard against succumbing to the whims and caprices of the politicians and “government of the day”. The police should be seen as an impartial and a non-partisan institution. Also, police service should not be for the highest bidders but for every citizen. Professionalism should always be the watchword.

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