
THE PROSPECTS OF GRADUATES' CHOICE OF POLICE AS A CAREER: A SURVEY

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ABSTRACT

The paper was designed to evaluate the perception of prospective graduates on the likelihood of their selection of the police profession as a lifelong career. The survey method used the questionnaire as a tool of gathering information from the participants. One hundred undergraduates were randomly selected among the students of the Crawford University of the Apostolic Faith Mission were selected for the study. The data collated were subjected to univariate analyses using simple percentage. The results show that most of the undergraduates are less likely to become police officers. The study found that the core reasons for the resentment of the police career are: Corruption, extra –judicial killings, brutality, poor relationships with the public, poor salary and welfare packages and the job related risks of harm.

Keywords: Police, Corruption, Career, Nigeria

1. INTRODUCTION

The police play important roles without which the sustenance of order, legality, development and democracy may be difficult. Therefore, any pro-poor change initiative must take account of the roles of the police in society. The primary function of the police is policing – which means securing compliance with existing laws and conformity with precepts of social order (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2003). Policing has always been necessary in all societies for the preservation of order, safety and social relations. This necessity of policing becomes even more evident in modern societies characterized by diversities and contradictions arising from population heterogeneity, urbanization, industrialization, conflicting ideologies of appropriate social –political and economic form of organization (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2003). According to Amadi (2004) policing in Nigeria, like what obtains in other countries of the world, is an arduous and risky task. It is a truism to say that rain or shine, the police are perennially at work and often at odd times and in places of danger. Apparently, theirs is not an enviable employment, but a vocation for selfless people who derive fulfillment in doing their work of protecting life and property against offenders, thereby maintain public order. The image of an unnamed police officer as a public servant in uniform as opposed to a quasi-military police officer is supposed to give the impression of a friendly, and sympathetic, understanding and impeccably behaved individual (Egharevba and Hannikainen, 2005).

Police work involves a variety of tasks and responsibilities. Officers are expected to prevent crime, protect life and property, enforce the laws, maintain peace and public order and provide a wide range of services to citizens. (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2003). Such services include patrolling the highways, regulating traffic, and have primary responsibility for the enforcement of state laws. The services also include criminal identification, police training programs and keeping of records and statistics (Tischler, 2002). According to Alemika and Chukwuma (2004) a fundamental element of accessible justice is that all people are able to reach and use justice sector institution without fear or bias or corruption on the part of justice system officials. However, in the year 2001, 95 percent of Nigerians held the view that some members of the Nigeria police are involved in corruption out of this figure, 66 percent saw all police personnel as involved in corruption 58 percent expressed no trust at all for the police.

It is a function of the police service commission in Nigeria to collaborate with Nigeria police in recruitment and training of the officers of the Nigeria police. However, as a result of the many challenges that the Nigeria Police is facing in the areas of corruption, brutality, scarcity of fund, poor welfare package, poor equipment, poor police- public relations etc, the profession seems unattractive to young promising Nigerian people. Hence, many incompetent people, therefore, are being recruited and trained as police officers. Many cases of criminals are known, where they were recruited and trained only to turn into criminals in official police uniforms. The end results of this are: corrupt, indiscriminate killing of innocent citizens, brutality and various other vices. In light of this, this study examined the interests of undergraduate students in Nigeria, in choosing police as their job career, in the face of the prevailing challenges in the Nigeria police.

Most of the researches on Nigeria police focused on the challenges that the institution is having on delivery of its functions and responsibilities to the Nigeria nation. Most of the researchers examined the areas of corruption, indiscriminate killing, brutality and police relation to the public. However, many researches failed to take into cognizance, the challenge in the area of recruitment. This research work was conducted, therefore, to fill the vacuum. The study investigated how attractive the police profession is to the Nigerian universities undergraduate students. The main objective of this study is to investigate how attractive the Nigeria police are to the Nigerian undergraduate students. However, the followings were the sub-objectives of the study are to investigate the interests of the undergraduate students in police and, to discover the reasons why the undergraduate students may not have an interest in police jobs. The research work was limited to only one private university in Nigeria (Crawford University of the Apostolic Faith Mission, Igbesa, Ogun State, Nigeria). The university has the culture of training young Nigerians academically and spiritually. Therefore, products from this university are expected to be good products for the revitalization of the sanity in Nigeria police, if recruited.

According to the World Police Encyclopedia (2004) the history of the Nigeria police began with a thirty member consular guard formed in the Lagos colony in 1861. In 1879, 1,200 member armed paramilitary Hausa constabulary was formed. In 1896 the Lagos police was established. A similar force, the Niger constabulary was formed in Calabar in 1894 under the newly proclaimed Niger coast protectorate. In the north, the Royal Niger Company set up the Royal Niger Company constabulary in 1888 with headquarters at Lokoja. When the protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria were proclaimed in 1914, part of the Royal Niger Company Constabulary became the Northern Nigeria police, and part of the Niger Coast Constabulary became the Southern Nigeria Police. Although, Northern and Southern Nigeria were amalgamated in 1914, but their police forces were not merged until 1930, forming the Nigeria police Force, headquartered in Lagos. During the colonial period, most police were associated with local governments (native authorities). In the 1960s, under the first Republic, these forces were first regionalized and then nationalized.

1.1 THE FUNCTIONS OF THE POLICE

Nigeria police performed conventional police functions and was responsible for internal security generally, for supporting the prison, immigration, and custom services; and for performing military duties within or outside Nigeria as directed (World Police Encyclopaedia, 2004). The police are agents of the state established for the maintenance of order and enforcement of law. Although, police roles vary across societies, with different political and economic organizations however, the main function of the police has been to protect the property and well being of those in the society (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2003). Police Act and Regulations CAP 359 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 1990 in section 4 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 the due enforcement of all laws and regulations with which they are directly charged and shall perform such military duties’ (Akpan, 2008). The police is one of the institutions established by the Federal government for the protection of rights, enforcement of laws and regulations in the country and ever since it was established, the police have been carrying out its duties to the best of their knowledge despite the daunting challenges that confront them daily in the course of the work (World Police Encyclopedia, 2004).

1.2 POLICE BRUTALITY

Alemika and Chukwuma (2003) argued that in Nigeria, police are described more in negative terms by major segments of the population and therefore a great obstacle in the ways their functions are performed. The police are the specialist carriers of the state’s bedrock power: the monopoly of the legitimate use of force. Therefore the danger of abuse, on behalf of particular partisan interest or the police themselves are clear and daunting. It has been argued that the roles of police include the repression of the poor and powerless in order to protect the interests of the rulers. Police brutality, therefore is one of the major obstacles to the prospects of the Nigeria police. Brutality exists in the Nigeria Police in the areas of abduction, unwarranted searches and violations of privacy and private family life, extra-judicial killings, bodily injury, intimidation, harassment and loss of personal liberties in the hands of the police (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2003; World Police Encyclopedia, 2004). Modern police were often seen as instruments of alien oppression. In spite of political independence, the police are still seen as brutal, ruthless and prone to using violence on the population (Okunola, 2002). The allegations leveled against the institution of police in Nigeria, therefore, include arbitrariness in exercising its power, perversion of justice, and delays in administration of justice (Onyeozili, 2005). As part of police brutality on citizens, some corrupt members of the police often supply the arms to the armed robbers who are fond of terrorizing the innocent citizens (Elechi et al, 2007)

1.3 CORRUPTION AND EXTORTION

Police corruption is another major hindrance in making police a loveable and promising institution to the Nigerians. Corruption and extortion are widespread among the members of the Nigeria Police and have soiled their image. While corruption is endemic in all segments of the Nigerian society, it is particularly objectionable among the police because it is their occupational responsibility to prevent and work at its elimination. The most significant source of negative police-community relations is corruption. Corrupt motive is also a source of police brutality (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2003; World Police Encyclopedia, 2004, Alemika and Chukwuma, 2004).

Very related to the problem of corruption and extortion is the incidence of collusion of some police officer with criminals, resulting in increased insecurity and police inefficiency in tackling crime. The twin phenomena of police brutality and corruption constitute the main barrier between the police and public in Nigeria. This has consequently led to the problem of poor police-community relationship (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2003). There is a fundamental link between law enforcement and good behaviour when the styles and systems of law enforcement are positive. In a context where law enforcement and legal systems are inept, corrupt, and unwilling to sustain consistent programs until visible changes manifest, social behaviour often spirals into disarray because there is no positive, sustained, and continued social control mechanisms (Elechi et al, 2007).

As Onyeozili (2005) rightly noted, police corruption has eaten deep into the fabrics of the law enforcement apparatus in Nigeria as in other parts of the continent. Allegations of police corruption erupt on a daily basis. These come in various forms: extortion from motorists at illegally mounted road blocks, collection of monetary gratification (bribery) in order to alter justice in favour of the highest bidder. This cankerworm had deeply affected the social image of the Nigeria police perceived as a corrupt law enforcement agency. The public opinion regarding the integrity of the police officer is that of “dirty Harry”.

In his own submission, Ladapo (2012) argued that Nigeria police is not immune from the corruption pervading the governance machinery of Nigeria. In fact, police corruption is one of the most visible manifestations of corruption in Nigeria. The average Nigerian is used to witnessing police officers collect “toll” at checkpoints; it affects criminal investigations as well. So many crimes go un-investigated by the police where influential persons, including persons in government are fingered as suspects or where the suspects bribed the police investigators. Hence, police have allowed corruption to undermine the ethics of their profession (Kasali, 2012).

1.4 RESOURCES AND MANAGEMENT INADEQUACIES

Resources and Management inadequacies are other sets back for making a police job an attractive and promising one. These have impacted negatively on police efficiency and conduct. The first problem in this area is inadequate quantity but more especially of quality police officers. The size of police personnel is highly insufficient to meet the security needs of the people. This situation has led to the privatization of public security agents especially the police. The commoditization of police services in the country has further complicated the problem of inefficiency of the police in the discharge of its duties. This situation reinforces the disconnection between public safety and police. The interest and security of the elite and a few wealthy individuals and organizations have remained basic preoccupations of the Nigeria police (Kasali, 2012).

Inadequate funding is another problem. As noted by Ladapo (2012), crime detection and investigation are capital intensive. Money is required to employ and train adequate numbers of crime investigators, equip and mobilize them. In Nigeria when a crime is reported at a police station, the practice is for the complaint desk officer to request for money to purchase stationary to incident the compliant and open a file. This under-funding, according to Ladapo (2012), can be attributed to the general underfunding of the Nigeria police as a whole and corruption within the Nigeria police. Insufficient initial and on the job training is another problem, Ladapo (2012) protested that the majority of criminal investigations carried out by the Nigeria police are conducted by the officer below the rank of sergeant. Most of these investigators have only gone through the basic three-month entry training at the police college, where the most significant part of their training is centered on physical drills with lesser attention on the art of policing. The knowledge and skills of practical crime investigation are

left for the officer to discover and learn on the job, and while still neophyte, he is detailed to handle complex investigations. Whereas, the new police recruits tend to be socialized by more experienced officers by making them aware of many things in the job (Egharevba and Hanikainen, 2005).

The other problems confronting the management of Nigeria police are: poor crime and operational information management; poor resource management; inadequate logistics and arms and ammunition, uniform and accoutrements; telecommunication and transportation facilities (both in terms of quantities and qualities); insufficient office and residential accommodation and poor remuneration and general condition of service (Alemika and Chukwuma 2003; World Police Encyclopedia, 2003). Inhuman condition of police cells, un-hygienic working environment, low commitment, indiscipline and involvement in crime or collusion with criminals, lack of integrity, perversion of the course of justice, limited contacts or relationship with the citizens outside law enforcement and poor knowledge of law and disregard for human right are considered by the experts in police studies being the problems affecting Nigeria Police (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2003; World Police Encyclopaedia, 2003). The improvement in the contact or relationships with the citizens and due regard for human rights will create strong ties to the communities which may increase acceptance and respect for the police. This could in turn, lower violence against the police, thereby encouraging recruitment and morale (William R. Pruitt, 2010).

1.5 DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IN RECRUITMENT

As regards equality and justice, available information show that the police have not fared well. Women officers suffer statutory discrimination in the area of marriage and posting. Unmarried women must seek and obtain approval to marry men of their choice. The justification for the discrimination is that male criminals may marry female police officers and thereby undermine police crime control efforts (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2003). In a similar argument, Ebeniro (2011) argued that in Nigeria, the number of practitioners in the criminal justice shows that there are more male than female in the service, from the police to the courts to the prison.

The open challenges that the Nigeria Police is facing have made it an object of ridicule and hatred among Nigerians and there are justifiable reasons for this as explained in this review. Such challenges are seen as factors which may possibly hinder the Nigerian University's undergraduates from making police as their job career after graduating from universities. This research was conducted, therefore, to seek their opinions on this matter.

2. METHOD AND MATERIALS

Research is a study conducted to collect information for description of aspects of human knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. Research method is a set of orderly procedures specifying what information is to be obtained and from whom and how (Avwokeni, 2010). This study employed survey design. Research is called a survey because it is a study of people (Avwokeni, 2010). A survey is a research method in which a population, or a portion of it, therefore, is questioned in order to reveal specific facts about it. Surveys are used to discover the distribution and interrelationship of certain variables among a large number of people (Tischler, 2002). The combination of non-probability and probability sampling were used in this study. Under non-probability sampling, convenience sampling was used in the selection of Crawford University of the Apostolic Faith Mission. A convenience sample is a group of elements that are readily accessible to, and therefore convenient for the researcher (Adler and Clark, 1999; Neumann, 2003) However, simple random sampling under probability sampling type was used

in the selection of the students who participated in the research. In simple random sampling, a sample is selected in such a way that every item in the population has an equal chance of being included (Loto et al, 2008). One hundred (100) students participated in this research study: the students cut across disciplines being offered at the University of our Study.

A questionnaire was the only research data gathering tool used in this study. The questionnaire involved both the open ended questions and close ended question (Ogundipe, et al 2006) Questionnaire contained questions that were weaved together so they flow smoothly (Neumann, 2003). The questionnaires were administered, using the technique of individually administered questionnaire, which was implemented by hand delivering and picking it up after completion. This method yielded high results (Adler and Clark, 1999). In data analysis, we used univariate analyses. Adler and Clark (1999) opine that a lot of interesting analysis can be accomplished by studying one variable at a time. Percentage form was used in the presentation of the data. The computation of percentages is straightforward. It consists merely of dividing the number in each category by the total number (Ogunbameru, 2003).

We observed the issue of ethics in research, in the process of conducting this research study. The consents of the respondents were sought before the commencement of the research, although some of them demonstrated enthusiasms to participate. The anonymity provided for each of the respondents. No names, signatures or numbers that can identify the respondent appeared on the questionnaire. Furthermore, since confidentiality is the most often the primary focuses of ethical concern in survey research (Schutt, 2004) the information supplied by the respondents were kept confidential and were only presented in aggregate without any link to any of the respondents.

3. DISCUSSIONS

The analyses of our data revealed that 78 percent of our respondents were male students of the university, while 22 percent were female. 28 per cent of them were within age bracket 15-28, 56 per cent between 21-25, 14 per cent between 26-30 and 2 per cent was 30 years and above. For the analyses of the programmes of their studies, 26 percent of the students are undergoing a business oriented courses like: Accounting, Business Administration, Banking and Finance, Marketing and Industrial and Personnel Management. 40 per cent of the students who participated in the research were from social sciences like: Sociology, Political and International Relations and Economics. For the courses in Natural and Applied Sciences (Biochemistry, Chemistry, Industrial Chemistry, Biological Science, Computer Science and Information Technology, Physics and Electronics and Geology), 34 per cent of the students participated. These analyses portrayed that our respondents cut across many disciplines and the information from them represented opinions from different students with different career orientations. However, Police in Nigeria is a large institution which accommodates knowledge from every discipline mentioned above. There are many departments and functioning where all the above mentioned disciplines can fit in.

In the consideration of their familiarity with the police and police primary function. 98 percent of our respondents affirmed that police is truly an indispensable institution in every country of the world. 96 percent agreed that their primary function is to prevent and control crime. All the students (100 per cent) agreed that they are to protect life and property of the citizens and the government as part of their function. About 66 percent of the students signified interest to be a police officer in United State of America, United Kingdom or any developed country of the world if given an opportunity. However, 90 per cent of them declined in taking up the same police work in the Nigerian context. These analyses showed that not that the students were against the police work but they were against it only within the Nigerian context because of the challenges facing the Institution in Nigeria. Corruption is the first challenge

facing police Institution in Nigeria. 78 percent of the students confirmed that they cannot join the Nigeria police because of the corruption. Nigeria Police has become a symbol in Nigeria on unfettered corruption (Ukairo, 2010). Indiscriminate killings of some wild police officers were another reason signified by these students why they cannot enlist in Nigeria Police. Nearly 58 per cent confirmed that extra judicial killings of the Nigeria police were a reason why they hated the professional job. According to Alemika and Chukwuma (2003), the Nigeria Police has embraced the culture of impunity and as a result, extra – judicial killing has been condoned by the successive government. Hence, the public does not see police as friends of the citizens.

When asked; Is police really the people's friend? 70 percent confessed that Nigeria police is not the people's friend but an enemy and predator. Therefore, Nigerians described more in negative terms the institution of Police (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2003) 70 percent of our respondents, therefore, see the poor relationship between the police in Nigeria and the Nigerians as a reason why they cannot enlist to spend their careers in Nigeria Police. 82 per cent of the students were aware of the brutality of the Nigeria Police. They confirmed that Nigeria Police are brutal and very wild on the citizens of Nigeria. 80 per cent of the students, therefore, considered the brutality of the Nigeria police as an impediment towards spending their job careers in this institution. Hence, one of the major obstacles to the prospect of the Nigeria police is police brutality (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2003).

Dressing connotes many things in African Society. Dressing tells about you and your personality. Dressing can attract people positively and it can make one object of ridicule and irresponsibility. 72 per cent of our research participants reported that Nigeria police are very rough, unclean, untidy and not corporate. However, 62 per cent said that it was not because of the poor dressing manners of some Nigeria police officers that would put them off. They saw dressing and comportment in a uniform job as individual and personal matter. Notwithstanding, 38 per cent signified that the untidiness of some Nigeria Police officers makes them hate the police profession, therefore, cannot be police officers. Sometimes you see a policeman with tattered uniform, and this of course, presented them in negative images (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2004). In terms of salary and welfare packages, 84 per cent of our respondents were aware that police salary is very poor compared with the other countries of the world. 56 percent considered that the poor salary and welfare packages for the police actually put them off from making it a choice of their careers. Alemika and Chukwuma (2004) argue that government must improve their welfare in terms of salaries, accommodation and equipment. The government needs to boost their morale for effective performances. In Nigeria context, police job is one of the most risked jobs (Amadi, 2004) Therefore, it might be a significant reason why many young Nigerians are running away from the profession. 86 percent of our respondents consented to the fact that police job is very risky. However, only 50 percent of them confessed that, that was the reason they were scared away from the profession.

In career jobs that these students might prefer to police, 44 per cent of our respondents preferred to work in companies and business environment as accountants, entrepreneurs, business tycoons, project manager, marketers, economists and managers. 6 per cent of them would like to be journalists and work in media houses. 6 per cent also signified to be successful lawyers (both as advocates and solicitors) 6 per cent is proposing of spending their careers in a computer environment as data analysts. 2 percent want to end up becoming medical doctors, 2 percent as successful engineers. As military and paramilitary officers, 6 percent of them have decided to enlist. 10 percent of them is eyeing career as politicians. 1 percent wants to be musician and 1 percent wants to be university lecturers. Finally, 16 percent of them confessed that for now, they have not decided where they want to spend their careers.

Finally, we asked our participants to comment on what can be done to improve the institution of the police in Nigeria so as to make it lucratively attractive to the Nigerian university undergraduates. The respondents suggested that institutionalized corruption among

the Nigeria police must be eradicated. Good and attractive salaries and other good welfare packages for the police officers must be done. It was equally suggested that police officers must be under life assurance scheme. There must be adequate training before and during the service years. Seminars, workshops, and other training programmes must be conducted for the Nigeria Police officers both at home and abroad. Continuous orientation and re-orientation on their relationships with the citizens, handling of weapons and how to go about doing their work generally, must be always embarked on. Employment of qualified graduates from Nigerian Universities would assist to improve the qualities of the officers as against the employment of semi-illiterates officers. Promotion should not be delayed. It must be based on merit and handwork as against favourism, tribalism and the nepotism mode of promotion.

The student participants suggested that office and living accommodation of the police must be renovated and new ones built. This would improve their work and living environment. The dressing of the officers, according to the students, must be taken into cognizance. Neatness must be strictly followed. Kits must be changed from time to time. Officers must dress neatly, properly and responsibly. According to the students questioned, latest weapons and protective guards (bullet proofs) must be procured to protect the officers. Modern day equipments and gadgets must be bought to assist the police in carrying out their duties, and their tasks should be properly assigned and ensured that they stick to their objectives to avoid overlap of duties with other security or law enforcement agencies. Finally, the participant students suggested that Nigeria Police need to be neutral and impartial in their dealings. They should not allow politicians to use them as threatening dogs against political opponents. According to them, Nigeria police should stop harassing the innocent citizens. Police community relationships must be improved and the disciplinary measures must be taken against erred officers.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The police can play positive and significant roles in the promotion of the image of this Institution. But for the Nigeria police to do so the various obstacles highlighted in this study would have to be removed. If these are executed, police will be better positioned to meet the expectations of the citizens and thereby earned the cooperation of the public which they require to implement their mandate. The federal government should launch an independent commission of inquiry with subpoena power to conduct a transparent, comprehensive, and impartial investigation into systematic corruption within the Nigeria police. This is because corruption has given the Nigeria Police a poor image in the society. Nigeria Police' corruption is a reflection of the social malaise that bestrides the Nigerian society. There must be prosecution without delay and according to international fair trial standards, any police officer implicated in corruption. The institution of police must be sanitized. There must be eradication of the political manipulation of the police. The police must not be used as agent of discrimination, oppression and terrorism. Unjustified arrests must not be made (Stark, 1994). Furthermore, the police should be shielded from political appointments. Political appointments corrupt the officers, destroy the *esprit de corp*, skew their sense of neutrality and impartiality, and infuse a sense of allegiance to appointing authority (Onyeozili, 2005).

We recommend an upward revision of the Nigerian police pay scale as a first step toward discipline. A decent pay is a worthwhile investment that will encourage restraint to acceptance of bribes to augment the meager income they recently receive. Therefore, the government must improve the financial oversight of the Nigeria police to take care of their salaries, welfare packages, their working and living conditions, purchasing of weapons and work equipment and their running costs.

The recommendation is equally made for the subjection of the Nigeria Police to greater legislative oversight by requiring the police to submit quarterly, expenditure reports, activity

reports and the status and outcome of the investigations into incidences of police corruption and abuses of power. There must be public hearings into the conduct of the police. The police must streamline and prioritize internal control mechanisms by establishing a public complaint unit at each police station. Furthermore, police should be professionalized. Full professionalism would be achieved through further training and re-education such as targeted special college equivalent classes in the social sciences, and criminal law and procedure; this would improve the police officers human relations capacity. We recommend that meritorious recruitment and depoliticization should be adopted therefore, police officers should be recruited based on established minimum criteria and educational standard. People who do not qualify should not have a place in the national police. Adequate screening and re-screening must be done for the enlisted corps, especially in the area of past criminal offences. The capacity of the police must be increased to curb crime and reduce brutality against the poor. We recommend at least 1:20 between the Police and the Nigerian civil society. This is to ensure effectiveness and efficiency in the prevention and control of crime, in the detection apprehension and prosecution of offenders. The police are expected to follow the scrupulous observance of the rule of law in doing these.

Finally, the police must recognize and protect the dignities and rights of the citizens. They must be accountable to the citizens. There must be civil and incorruptibility. They must have concern for the general welfare of the citizens for the improvement of community relationship with the police; there is a need for periodic and predictable community interaction with the police. This will assist in an area of community policing, which in recent years has become an agenda for global attention (Ejiogu, 2010).

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