

**INFLUENCE OF PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE NIGERIA POLICE
FORCE AND CRIME CONTROL IN MAKURDI METROPOLIS,
BENUE STATE**

by

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Abstract

The study investigated the influence of public attitude towards the Nigeria police force and crime control in Makurdi metropolis, the Benue State Capital. There had been the problem of attitude between the Nigeria police and the general public on issues of human right, brutality, detention without trial, hostility of the police, accidental discharge and other unlawful behaviours on the part of the police, and this has alienated the police from the public instead of cooperation. The specific objectives of the study were to investigate the influence of public attitude towards the police and crime control, examine gender difference in public attitude towards the police and finally to determine the influence of age on public attitude towards the police in Makurdi metropolis. The study adopted a cross-sectional design and purposive sampling technique in collecting data for the study. A total of 200 police personnel and civilians drawn from Makurdi Metropolis were randomly selected for the study. Data was collected using the public attitude towards the police scale to measure public attitude towards the police force. Also used was the crime control Questionnaire. Three hypotheses were formulated and tested. The result for hypothesis one which states that, there will be a significant influence of public attitude towards the police and crime control was confirmed. The second hypothesis which states that, there will be significant gender difference in public attitude towards the police was not confirmed. Lastly, the hypothesis which states that, there will be significant age influence in public attitude towards the police was not confirmed. Finally, the study recommends measures that will address issues bothering on public attitudes towards the Nigerian police, which have direct influence on crime control and safety of the society.

Keywords: Influence, Public, Attitude, Nigeria Police force, Crime Control

INTRODUCTION

All over the world, the importance and relevance of the public institution as the Nation's number one law enforcement have been acknowledged (Aver, 2014). The acknowledgment is predicted on the need to secure society's interests in terms of rights, duties and obligations which are the different ways of the contractual nature of human society.

The society of any nation is a beacon of hope and pride at any point in time, they owe the duty to protect the citizenry in all ramifications in the society, different interests arise in the process of attaining political, economic social and cultural goals. Also, challenges do arise in the course of achieving these aims. The African culture generally puts premium value on the existence of law and order, the absence of which tends to threaten the stability of the society.

In a society in which citizens see crime as an immediate threat to the wellbeing of the people. The police play the most viable and strategic role in the control of crime and preservation of peace in a fashion that the constitutional rights of the individuals are not undermined (Adesina, 2003).

In contemporary Nigeria, the police constitute an enviable institution in the minds of the people in terms of management of social problems such as rising crime rate, civil disturbance, riots,

students' demonstrations terrorism and insurgency among others (Black, 2011). The unenviable trend is the way and manner members of the public relate with the police as such denying them information that would aid in crime control and prevention in contemporary society.

The state of the police force continued to be a reflection of the social consciousness of Nigerians unfortunately, the police, public relations has been neglected, what obtains is mutual distrust, suspicion and conflict, rather than cooperation.

The police cannot succeed in law enforcement without having good relationships with the community in which they dwell (Ekpimah, 2013) which explains the call for community policing across the nation. The police is established for the detection, prevention and apprehension of criminals, (Kuwe, 2014). They protect lives and properties of citizens in the course of their duties. They also maintain and enforce law and order, rules and regulations. They also go to the extent of performing military duties like peace-keeping operations around the world, if so requested by the Head of State and Commander in-Chief of the Armed Forces in times of war (Ogundipe & Ibobor, 2003).

In performing these duties there exist a huge gap between the police and the public on how the public wants to be policed and how the police want to police the public

(Alemika, 2000).

This often results to conflicts that adversely affect the freedom of a large proportion of population. The hostility between the public and the police often occurs at check points and police stations where they demand and receive bribes from members of the public with resultant public outcry and condemnations of the police in the country (Alemika, 2000).

Wide spread extortion, incivility intimidation and harassment could be found at several quotas, corruption and brutality have eroded the public cooperation that would have enhanced police efficiency and performance (Aver, 2014). There is no mutual relationship between the police and members of the public as such denying the police sensitive information that would lead to crime reduction and control (Alemika, 2000). It is against this backdrop that this work will avail police public relationship as antidote to crime control in contemporary society.

Brief History of the Nigeria Police Force

The Nigeria police force began with thirty-member consular guard formed in Lagos colony in 1861. In 1879, a 1,200 member armed paramilitary Hausa constabulary was formed in Calabar under the newly proclaimed Niger Coast protectorates. In the North, the Royal 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 the early 1900, part of the Royal Niger Company Constabulary became the Northern Nigeria Police and part of the Royal Niger Coast Constabulary became the Southern Nigeria, but their police forces were not merged, until 1930, forming the Nigeria Police Force with headquarters in Lagos.

During the colonial periods, most police were associated with local governments (Native authority). In the 1960s, under the first Republic, these forces were regionalized and then nationalized. The Nigerian police force performed conventional police functions and was responsible for internal security generally; for supporting the prison, immigration and custom services and for performing military duties both within and outside Nigeria as was directed by the president. Plans were announced in mid-1980 to expand the force to 200,000 members. By 1983, according to the Federal budget, the strength of the Nigeria police force was almost 152,000 but other sources estimated to be between 20,000 and 80,000 reportedly there were more than 1,300 police stations nationwide. Police officers were not usually armed but were issued weapons when required for specific missions or circumstances. They were often deployed throughout the country, but in 1989, Gen. Babangida announced that, the larger number of officers would be posted to their native

areas to facilitate police-community relations.

The Nigeria police force is designated by section 194 of the 1979 constitution as the national police of Nigeria with exclusive jurisdiction throughout the country. Constitutional provisions also exist however, for the establishment of separate Nigeria police forces of the Federation or for their protection of harbours, waterways, railways and airfields. One such branch the port security police was reported by different sources to have a strength in 1990 of between 1,500 and 12,000.

Moreover, the Nigeria police force maintains a three-tier administrative structure of department, zonal and state commands. The Nigeria police force was under the general operational and administrative control of an inspector General (IGP) appointed by the president and responsible for the maintenance of law and order. He was supported at headquarters in Lagos by a Deputy Inspector-General (DIG) and in each state by police commissioners.

The 1979 constitution provided for a police service commission that was responsible for Nigeria police force; policy, organization, administration and finance. In February 1980 Babangida abolished the police service commission and established the Nigeria police Council instead, under direct presidential control. The new council

was chaired by the president, the Chief of General Staff, the Minister of Internal Affairs and the Police Inspector General were members. As part of the government reorganization in September 1990, Alhaji Ismaila Gwarzo, former SSS Director-General was named to head the new post of minister of state police affairs. In late 1986, the Nigeria police force was reorganized nationwide into seven area commands which superseded a command structure corresponding to each of the states of Nigeria. Each command was under a commissioner of police and was further divided into police divisions. Nigeria police force headquarters which was also an area command supervised and coordinated the other area commands. Later, these commands were, grouped under zonal commands as follows:

- (a) Zone 1 Headquarters, Kano with Katsina and Jigawa Commands.
- (b) Zone 2 Headquarters Lagos with Lagos and Ogun Command.
- (c) Zone 3, Headquarters Yola with Adamawa, and Gombe Commands.

In mid-1989, the Nigeria police force was reorganized after the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC)'s acceptance of a report by Rear Admiral Murtala Nyako. In 1989, the Nigeria police force also created a quick intervention force in each state, separate from the mobile police units, specifically to monitor political event and to quell unrest during the transition to civil rule. Each state unit command of between 160 and 400

police personnel were commanded by an assistant superintendent of police, equipped with vehicles, communications gear, weapons and crowd control equipment, including cane shields, batons and tear gas.

The directorate of operations was subdivided into four units under a deputy director operations, training, communications and the mobile police. The directorate of administration was composed of an administration unit headed by an Assistant Inspector General of Police (A.G) and of budget and personnel units are under the commissioners.

The directorate of logistics had four units: procurement, workshop, transport supply and work/maintenance was under the Inspector General of Police.

The zonal arrangements were retained, however, AIGs were authorized to transfer officers up to the rank of chief superintendent, to set up provost units to deploy mobile units and to promote officers between the ranks of sergeant and inspector. The above three directorates were renamed Departments. The Department of Criminal investigation (DCI) is the highest criminal investigation arm of the Nigeria police force. The Department is headed by a DIG. The primary functions of the unit include investigation and prosecution of serious and complex cases within and outside the country. The Department also coordinates crime investigation throughout Nigeria.

Scope of the Study

The research covers the broad operational outlook of the Nigeria police force and challenges facing them. It specifically looks at the operational setting of the police officers and men in police command, in the area of crime control. The study assesses the police force in the performance of its duties as stipulated in the constitution and other enabling laws.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The word "public" in English and in Latin refers to "Populous" or "populaces" in general denotes some mass population ("The people") in association with some matters of common interest. So in political science and history, a public is a population of individuals in association with civil affairs or state. In social psychology, marketing and public relations, a public has a more situational definition. Dewey (1927) looks at public as a group of people who in facing a similar problem, recognize and organize themselves to address it. Public is hence a group of individual people, and the entire population according to psychologist, is an expression of favour or disfavor towards a person, place, thing or events. The manner, disposition, feeling, position and so on with regard to person or thing (Wikipedia, 2012).

The Nigerian police is a constituted body of persons charged with the responsibility of controlling civil disorder among other dates, within a defined legal or territorial

area of responsibility Adebayo and Udegbe (2004). The police as an organ of government that is charged with public safety. According to the police act cap 359 and section 4, laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, charge the police with the responsibility of ensuring civil security. The nature of social reality is so complex that every social phenomena is subjected to various analysis and interpretation depending on which of the theoretical realm, it falls.

Attitude

Attitude refers to a predisposition or a tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain idea, object, person or situation, (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2001). Attitude influences an individual's choice of action and responses to challenges, incentives and rewards together called stimuli, (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2001).

Four major components of attitudes are (1) Affective; emotional or feelings (2) Cognitive; belief or opinions held consciously (3) Conative; Inclination for action (4) Evaluative; positive or negative response to stimuli.

Groups who feel less favourable towards the police or local law enforcement are less certain, they would report crime to the police. The attitude of the public according to Odinkalu (2004), has significant effect towards crime control and public order by

the police. This is because the public sees the police as institution and face of the government in power that is always ready to unleash terror at the slightest opportunity.

Hence they are held in low regard and do not enjoy the habitual cooperation of the public. To Alemika (2003), the public perception of the police is not shaped by the kind of job they are called to do but by the attitude of the personnel. Their roles in many cases denigrated the law, endangering the citizens and blotting the institutional reputation of the police that they represent.

The police no doubt know that they are not liked by the public, despite the fact that they risk their lives to protect them. At the slightest opportunity, they are booed and geared at by the public, calling them derogatory and disgusting names. This dislike or resentment of the police apparently has created serious problems for the police/public relations and public perception of the police on crime prevention and control Odinkalu, (2004).

Benjamin (2001) pointed out that the police have not been useful nor helpful in promoting its image before the general public as there are many cases of murder, assassination and robbery which take place in the society that have lasted for two or more years without the police identifying the culprits, talk less of arresting and prosecuting such groups or gangs. This failure of the police according to Benjamin

(2001) to either apprehend killers of robbery victims and assassins all over the country has apparently reinforced the belief of critics who describe the police as dubious, corrupt, inept and brutal.

The matter is more paradoxical as there have been instances whereby either robbers or assassins kill some police officers, yet it has failed to unfold the factors behind such scenes. Thus, such actions provide fresh evidence to cynics who have argued that if police cannot provide justice, even it posthumously, for one of its own then it has got no business posturing as credible guarantor of public security and well-being of the people (Benjamin, 2001).

Similarly, in 2003, the United States Department of States on Human Rights Practice (2002) indicted the Nigerian police over cases of poor relationship with citizens ranging from forceful arrest, illegal detention, torture to extra-judicial killing of law abiding civilians.

Groups who feel less favourable towards local law enforcement are less certain they would report a crime they witnessed, (Tom et al; 2008). For instance black and Hispanic Americans are more than 20 points less likely than white Americans to say they definitely would report a crime. Research finds that, when the police have legitimacy, the law has legitimacy, which encourages compliance and cooperation, (Tom et al; 2008).

Although some groups have less positive view of the police, survey findings weaken the assertion that these groups are anti-police, (Andrew et al; 2009). For instance few individuals have unfavourable views of law enforcement.

Crime Control

Crime control refers to the method taken to reduce or eradicate crime in the society, (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2003). This include the use of criminal penalties as means of deterring people from committing crimes and temporary or permanently incapacitating those who have already committed crimes from re-offending. Crime prevention is also widely implemented in some countries around the world.

There are many theories in line with this study, however, social conflict theory, General strain theory and rational choice theory are the ones considered for review.

Social Conflict Theory

Social conflict theory is a Marxist based social theory which argues that, individuals and groups (social class) within society have different amount of material resources and non-material resources (such as the wealthy vs the poor) and that the more powerful groups use their power in order to exploit groups with less power. Social conflict theory states that, groups within a capitalist society tend to interact in a destructive way that allows no mutual

benefits and little cooperation. The solution Marxism proposes to this problem is that of workers revolution against the capitalist class with the aim of reorganizing society along the lines of collective ownership and mass democratic control.

Therefore, consider paying rent towards housing, the conflict theories argue that this relationship is unequal and favours the owners. Renters may pay rent for 50 years and still gain absolutely no right or economic interest with the property. It is this type of relationship which the conflict theorist will use to show that social relationships are about power and exploitation. Pudgett (2013) continues "Marxist argued that though a dialectical process, social evolution was directed by the result of class conflict. Marxist argue that human history is all about this conflict, a result of the strong-rich exploiting the poor-weak-from such a perspective, money is made through the exploitation of the worker. It is argued thus, that in order for a factory owner to make money, he must pay his workers less than they deserve social conflict theory produces a discourse that the poor and the weak who are exploited in the society engage themselves in one crime or the other and the police in trying to control crime, favour the rich because of their wealth and power.

Rational Choice Theory

In criminology, the rational choice theory adopts utilitarian beliefs that man is a

reasoning actor who weights means and ends, cost and benefits and makes a rational choice. This approach was designed by Corrish and Clarke (2015) to assist in thinking about situational crime prevention. It is assumed that crime is purposive behaviour designed to meet the offender's common place needs for such things as money, status, sex and excitement, and that meeting these needs involves the making of sometimes rudimentary decisions and choices constrained as these are by limits, ability and the availability of relevant information.

Rational choice is based on numerous assumptions, one of which is individualism. The offender sees himself as an individual. The second is that goals and the third is that individuals are self-interested. Offenders are thinking about themselves and how to advance their personal goals. Central points of the theory are described as follows;

The human being is a rational actor. Rationality involves ends/means calculations, People, freely choose behaviour both conforming and deviant, based on their rational calculations.

The central element of calculation involves a cost benefit analysis, pleasure versus pain or hedonistic calculus. Choice with all other conditions, all things being equal, will be directed towards the maximization of individual pleasure.

Choice can be controlled through the perception and understanding of the potential pain or punishment that will follow an act judged to be in violation of the social good, the social contract. The state is responsible for maintaining order and preserving the common good through a system of laws.

The swiftness, severity and certainty of punishment are key elements in understanding a law's ability to control human behaviour. Rational choice theory postulates that people freely choose criminal behaviour. Choice can be controlled through the perception and understanding of the potential pain or punishment that will follow an act.

The police play a crucial role of controlling crime by punishing the offenders. The attitude of the public according to Odekunle (2004) has significant effect towards crime control and public order by the police. This is so because the public sees the police as an instrument and face of the government in power that is always ready to unleash terror at the slightest opportunity. Hence they are held in low regard and do not enjoy the habitual cooperation of the public.

To Alemika (2003), the public perception of the police is not shaped by the kind of job they are called to do, but by the attitude of the personnel. Their roles in many cases denigrate the law, endangering the citizens and blotting the institutional reputation of

the police that they represent. The police no doubt know that, they are not linked by the public, despite the fact that, they risk their lives to protect them, at the very slightest opportunity they are booed and jeered at by the public calling them derogatory and disgusting name. This dislike or resentment the police apparently have created serious problems for the police/public relations and public perception of the police on crime prevention and control, (Odinkalu, 2004).

Benjamin (2001) pointed out that the police have not been useful nor helpful in promoting its image before the general public as there are many cases of murder, assassination and robbery which take place in the society that have lasted for two or more years without the police identifying the culprits, talk less of arresting and prosecuting such groups. The failure of the police according to Benjamin, (2003) to either apprehend killers of robbery victims and assassins all over the country has apparently reinforced the belief of critics who describe the police as dubious corrupt, inept and brutal. The matter is more paradoxical as there have been instances whereby either robbers or assassins kill some police officers, yet it has failed to unfold the factors behind such scenes. Thus such actions provide fresh evidence to cynics who have argued that if police cannot provide justice even if posthumously for one of its own then it has got no business posturing as credible guarantor of public security and well-being,

(Benjamin, 2001).

Also, in 2003, the U.S Department of States on Human Rights Practice (2002) indicated the Nigeria police over cases of poor relationship with citizens, ranging from forceful arrests, illegal detentions, torture to extra-judicial killings of law-abiding civilians. In addition, the report also revealed that Nigeria police and other security forces allegedly use excessive force to apprehend suspects and quell several incident of ethno-religious violence. The punch (13, November, 2007) reported that the police disrupted anti Obasanjo rally in Kaduna. The paper further stated that, the organizer of the rally, Abiodun Aremu was arrested and quizzed by the police.

Also, the former governor of Kaduna State, Alhaji Balarabe Musa who was chairman of the occasion was prevented from addressing the gathering. This is a glaring evidence of what the US. Department of States rightly stated. Akinkputu (2013), reported that, a police man killed a teenager and others during Christmas party. He further reported that on December 14, 2013, 18 year old Ikenna Onyeizu and 21 year old Moses Aiyenuro who attended a Christmas party at Dele Hotel, Ijora Badia area of Lagos State where they were shot and killed by the police in the course of the party.

Epimah (2013) reported that four people were killed as police, and the community clashed over celebration on Wednesday

December 25, 2013. The report further confirmed that four people from Okoh in Eket Local Government Area, Akwa-Ibom State were killed during the town's annual celebration.

The people blocked the Eket Uyo Road, an attempt by the state security outfit, "Operation Thunder" to disperse the crowd led to the tragedy. The police opened fire into the crowd which four Okon people were stricken by the police bullet and two died instantly while the remaining two were taken to the hospital and died on the way, other people who sustained various degree of injuries resulting from police bullets were receiving treatment in a hospital (Ekpimah, 2013). Although the police public relations officer, Akwa-Ibom police command Mr. Etim Dickson denied the allegations and revealed that none of the victims died from police bullets. He further maintained that two people who died instantly were killed by Okon people who inflicted marched cuts on them. This situation aggravated the youths who marched to Eket police state to burn it down, but their attempt was quashed as the police from the division joined hands to protect the station.

The punch (February, 24, 2005) reported the shooting to death of Suleyol Henkyae in Makurdi by the police. The police alleged that Suleyol and her boy-friend were making love in a moving vehicle. The daily sun (December 20, 2007) also reported that

the police short 15 year old secondary school students in Orile area of Lagos. Moreso, it reported that the police short and the incident attracted a violent mass protest in Mina, Niger State in the course of protest, the angry mob attacked and wounded men of the police force (NTA news Extra, Jan 18, 2008). Situations as these affect police public relations in Nigeria. The problem with the Nigeria police is that, their investigations are always ongoing without ever coming to an end, in this way the public finds it difficult to cooperate with the police. One of the problems of Nigeria police force is that, they are always on top of crime situations without getting down whenever they get to the top of the situation.

The Nigeria police force swears an oath of allegiance to the Federal Republic of Nigeria, to perform the functions of crime detection, prevention and apprehension of criminals to generally create tranquil environment for sustenance of Nigerian society. Unlike many other police forces in the world, the Nigeria police force was intended to be servant of the state, but of the communities they serve. Their powers are personal, used at their own discretion and derived from the crown. This essential feature of Nigerian police force policing by consent is now in jeopardy.

It is evident that no security formation can strive without a good relationship with members of the public. Good police public relations help Nigeria police to overcome

complex of crime problem in the pluralist, society to reach its desired goals and functions of crime detection, prevention and apprehension of criminals. Good police public relations serves to bring police and the public into harmony thereby enabling the public to volunteer information of criminals to the police for proactive policing. The police need to understand the attitudes and values of the public, they serve, in order to achieve their objectives of crime detection, prevention and apprehension of criminals. These processes of crime detection, prevention and apprehension of criminals cannot be complete without the role of information from the key informant. It is these informants that volunteer information to the police on the where about of criminals. The police need to understand the attitudes and values of the community which they relate to in order to illicit information from them (Aver, et al, 2014).

A good rapport and goodwill between the police and the public enable the police to serve the public better and the public also feels better. Black (2011) maintains that under modern conditions, no government organization of any kind can operate successfully without the cooperation of its public. These public may be both at home and overseas, but mutual understanding will be a potential factor for success in every case. The police require knowledge on how the community operates in order to take full advantage of the facilities and

services provided by the police. There is clearly the need for good police public relations to help citizens understand the responsibilities of the Nigerian police in the society.

Good police public relations enables the police to have a better understanding of the public's concerns especially crime related issues and citizens are more inclined to report crime that occur to the police, provide tips and intelligence to the police willingly to service as witness and happily participate in criminal justice system. Incidentally the police also become more proactive, thereby preventing crimes before they occur or minimizing their impact, instead of simply reacting to calls for service from members of the public. Good police public relations prevent the possibility that the public thinking that police are simply a mechanism for intelligence gathering as such denying them vital information that would aid in crime detection, prevention and apprehension of criminals.

Poor police-public relations enables the police to typically lack a basic understanding of public problems, goals, desires and in turn, the public also are denied access to the police especially those in need of the police services, (Odekunle, 2003) they perceive the police as an out of touch force that does more harm than good to the public. In these situations the police rarely assume a reactive mode of response

to public problems. It is evident that the Nigeria Police is highly and visibly subservient to the rich and powerful, even in the rendering of services and as such spoiled their relationship with the public. (Odekunle, 2003).

The Nigeria police have engaged themselves in much brutality on the poor masses (Kunle, 2014). These are hindering the desired public cooperation for instance Kunle (2014) reported that 55 year old Evangelist Bose Basulaye, was dragged on the floor by the special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) men after asking them about her arrested son and the dragging resulted to the women's paralysis by stroke. The report further added that four months ago, the woman's son was arrested and taken to the Ojodu Police Division, Lagos on the allegation that he stole a tricycle and sold it. 33 year old Joseph indeed stole the tricycle, though he confessed to have stolen the tricycle. The report confirmed that two officers Idoko and Babo Ngama who were aware of the case threatened the woman and asked some police men to drag her on the floor out of the premises after which it resulted to the woman becoming paralyzed by stroke (Kunle, 2014). The situation appears to have significantly deteriorated relationship between the police and the public today. According to Adejo (2002), the level of operational efficiency of any law enforcement agency depends largely on the adequacy of the logistic support provided for it. This is however, not there in

the police force. The former IGP, Mr. Sunday Adewusi; had lamented that, there has always been a beggar waiting for the crumbs.

He suggested that a standard requirements of a police division are: 4 lorries, 6 landovers, 2 salours cars, 4 motor-cycles, wireless set, accommodation, generator, stationary, register, books and forms. In line with this, Agaba (2003) opined that it is not enough to have good police men, they must be sufficient in number. He further maintained that, if our police force were well equipped as it ought to be, its minimum numerical strength should be about 1,000,000, given all other factors which undermine their effectiveness such as ignorance on the part of those who ought to cooperate with the police (Agaba, 2002). Towards the same direction, Danbazau (1989) argues that, the problem of inefficiency of the police is as a result of both corruption and poor condition of service.

The opinion of the scholars stated above is without doubt, the manifesting obstacles in the efficiency of performance of the police in Nigeria today. It is however, worthy of note that in recent time, the number of men and women recruited into the police has increased remarkably due to the monthly recruitment exercise embarked upon by the police. The problems of vehicle and communication gadgets, to some extent have been addressed. Nevertheless it is

apparently true that the police suffer from the hurdles of poor conditions of service and inadequate manpower. (Ekpimah, 2013).

However, in as much as their efficiency and effective performance, where as the public have expressed their dissatisfaction with the role of the police, the various ways through which effectiveness of the police can be enhanced have been stated.

Law enforcement outreach programs; education of citizens about police activities and increase community support for law enforcement and crime prevention. Community-resident are, often uninformed about the services provided by law enforcement agency and about success of apprehension and prevention programmes in the community. This lack of information can lead to apathy or even hostility among residents and law enforcement. Law enforcement agents can bring important information to the public through large community meetings, citizens, academics, small seminars, public classes on police service, printed information and local television or radio talk show.

Ejembi (2015) reported that a nine man kidnap syndicate whose stock in trade was to buy and sell babies of unsuspected young ladies are now cooling their heels in the net of the Benue State Police Command. Among the arrested was a lady who sold her two month old baby for a pitted sum of

N14,000 and the parading of the suspected women whose children had been kidnapped at different locations in Benue State in the last two months.

Gender, Age and Public Attitude towards the Police

Gender here refers to the biological and classification attribute of an individual (usually male or female), (Kunle, 2014) while age has to do with one of the stages of life. Gender and age have been viewed by Adebayo and Udegbe (2004) as issues in public perception of the police. According to the researchers, the relationship of gender, age and public perceptions of the police is well documented particularly in Nigeria with studies showing conflicting results. Some studies have found significant differences in gender and age on public perceptions of the police. For instance, Obioha (2004) reported that females consistently exhibit stranger attitudes than their male counterparts. In another survey of gender and age differences of public perception of the police by Jike (2003), it was found that females displayed higher judgment than their male counterparts. In contrast, Onyeozili (2005) in his study found that gender differences are similar.

From the above foregoing facts, the study concluded that the gap between the public and the police has to be bridged. One can run to the police in time of trouble and the police is expected to ensure the peace and security of the public.

METHOD

Design

The study adopted the cross-sectional research design to assess the influence of public attitudes towards the Nigeria Police Force, and crime control in Makurdi metropolis. The study was conducted at two different locations in Makurdi Local Government Area of Benue State. Firstly in the Nigerian Police headquarters and the generality of Makurdi Metropolis.

Participants

A total of two hundred (200) respondents drawn from Makurdi Metropolis took part in the study. Their ages ranged from 18-50 years. This was made up of 105 males while 95 were females.

Instruments

To collect the data for this study, the researcher utilized standardized and validated questionnaire developed by Hiemika, (2001). The questionnaire measure public attitude and crime control. The participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses in the questionnaire and that, the exercise was purely for research purpose only.

Hypotheses

1. There will be a significant influence of public attitudes towards Nigerian Police on crime control among the people in Makurdi Metropolis.
2. There will be a significant gender

- difference in public attitude towards the Nigerian Police.
3. There will be a significant influence of age on public attitude towards the Nigerian Police.
- the simple linear regression. This statistical tool was chosen because the researcher wanted to determine the influence of public attitude towards the police and crime control among the people in Makurdi metropolis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The statistical tool used for the analysis was \

Table 1: Distribution of Participant by Age

Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
18-24	30	15%
25-34	60	30.0%
35-49	70	35.0%
50 and above	40	20.5%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: Field Research 2015.

Data presented in table 1 above shows that, out of the 200 participants, 29 (14.5%) were between 18-24 years, 60 (30.0%) were aged 25-34, 70 (35.0%) were aged between 35-49, while 40 (20.5%) were aged between the ages of 50 and above.

Table 2: Distribution of Participant by Sex

Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Male	105	52.5 %
Female	95	47.5 %
Total	200	100.0%

Source: Field Research 2015.

The data in the table 2 above shows that, out of the 200 participants, 105 (52.5%) were males, while 95(47.090) were females.

Table 3: Distribution of Participant by Religion

Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Christianity	161	80.5 %
Islam	34	17.0 %
Traditional Religion	5	2.5 %
Total	200	100.0%

Source: Field Research 2015.

The data in the table 3 above shows that 161 (80.5%) of the participants were Christians, 34 (17.0%) were Muslims and 5(2.5%) were traditionalists.

Table 4: Distribution of Participant by Education

Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Educated	105	52.5 %
Uneducated	95	47.5 %
Total	200	100.0%

Source: Field Research 2015.

Table 4 above shows the educational distribution of participants. 105 (52.5%) participants were educated, 95 (47.5%) were uneducated.

Table 5: Categories of participants

Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Civilians	100	50.0 %
Police	100	50.0 %
Total	200	100.0%

Source: Field Research 2015.

The Table 5 above shows the categories of participants. 100 (50.0%) were civilians and 100 (50.0%) were police officers.

Table 6: Distribution of Participant by Rank

Variables	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Constable	31	15.5%
Corporal/Sergeant	51	25.5%
Inspector	61	30.5%
ASP/DSP	57	28.5%
Total	200	100.0%

Source: Field Research 2015.

The data in the table 6 above shows the ranks of the police officers who participated in the study. 31 (15.5%) were constables, 51(25.5%) of the participants were on the rank of corporal/sergeant, 61(30.5%) were of the rank of inspector and 57 (28.5%) were ASP/DSP.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: This hypothesis states that, there will be a significant influence of public attitude towards the police on crime control among the people in Makurdi Metropolis. This hypothesis was tested and the result tabulated below;

Table 7: Summary of scores from regression analysis for the significant influence of public attitude towards police on crime control among the people in Makurdi metropolis.

Variables	R	R²	?	F	T	P
Constant	.278	.077		16.555	10.395	.000
Public attitude			.278		4.069	.000

Source: Field Research 2015.

The table 7 above is the result of the hypothesis, which stated that, there will be a significant influence of public attitude towards the police on crime control among the public in Makurdi Metropolis. Result shows; R= .278 and R² = .077, F (1,198) = 16.555 P<0.05 with this result, the hypothesis was confirmed, meaning that

public attitude towards the police affect their crime control effort positively or otherwise.

Hypothesis 2: This hypothesis states that, there will be a significant gender difference in public attitude towards the police in Makurdi Metropolis.

Table 8: Summary of result of t-test analysis of gender difference in attitude towards the police among members of the public in Makurdi Metropolis.

Variables	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig
Male	105	36.56195	5.42594	.782	198	.435
Female	95	35.9789	5.11772			

Source: Field Research 2015.

Table 8 above shows that, there is no significant gender difference in public attitude towards the police. t = (198.782 p >0.05). With this result, the hypothesis was not confirmed.

Hypothesis 3: Summary of result of simple linear regression analysis showing the influence of age on public attitude towards the police.

Table 9: Summary of Linear Regression Showing Influence of Age on Public Attitudes towards Nigeria Police

Variables	R	R ²	?	t	F	Sig
Constant	.074	.005		32.789	1.077	.000
Age			.074	1.038		.301

Source: Field Research 2015.

Table 9 above shows that, there is no statistically significant influence of age on public attitudes towards the Nigeria police force ($R = .074$ and $R^2 = .005$, $F = (1,198)$ 1.077 $P > 0.05$). With this result, the hypothesis was not confirmed.

DISCUSSION

The study was aimed at investigating the influence of public attitude towards the Nigeria Police force and crime control, in Makurdi metropolis. Three hypotheses were formulated and the result analyzed and presented.

Hypothesis one states that, there will be a significant influence of public attitudes towards the police and crime control. The result revealed that, public attitude towards the police, significantly influence crime control. This findings collaborates that of Odinkalu (2004) who maintained that, dislike or resentment of the police apparently has created serious problems for the police/public relations and public perception of the police on crime prevention and control. The result also concurs with Odekunle (2004), who found out that public attitude towards the police has significant effect towards crime control and public order by the police.

Hypothesis two, states that, there will be a

significant gender difference in public attitude towards the police in Makurdi Metropolis. The result revealed that there is no statistically significant gender difference in public attitude towards the police in Makurdi Metropolis. This findings is consistent with Jike (2003) , who founded that females displayed higher judgment attitude towards the police than their male counterparts. The result also concurred with Onyeozili (2005) who found that, gender differences are similar.

Finally, the third hypothesis examined the influence of age on public attitude towards the police in Makurdi Metropolis. It was discovered that there is no statistically significant influence of gender on public attitude towards the police in Makurdi metropolis.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The influence of public attitude towards the police and crime control has been conducted, using field data analysis. It was generally discovered that, there is significant influence of public attitudes towards the police and crime control. Also the gender difference in public attitude towards the police was explored; the result revealed no significant influence of gender in public attitudes towards the police and

lastly, it was hypothesized that, there will be a significant influence of age on public attitudes towards the police. The result revealed that, there is no significant influence of age on public attitudes towards the police.

In order to address public attitude towards the Nigerian police, which has a direct influence on crime control, the authority should carry out an awareness campaign about police public relations as an antidote to crime control in contemporary Nigerian society. The enlightenment campaign should enable the general public to see the police as friends indeed that could succeed in the discharge of their duties with public support.

Lastly, in respect to the issue of police shady practice, such as brutality and corruption. They should be made to obey the rules guiding ethical conduct.

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