

Police-Public Relations as a Potent Tool for Combating Crime, Insecurity, and Social Disorder in Nigeria

SP. Zems, Mathias, PhD.

The University of America

ABSTRACT: *For quite long now, some commentators have oftentimes been lured into confusing the concept and practice of police-public relations with that of police-community relations, community policing, police-media relations or local vigilantism. Against this backdrop, therefore, this paper examined the state of police-public relations in Nigeria with special focus on how it could be deployed as a potent tool for fighting crime and preventing social disorder in the country. The paper adopted a research methodology of review of extant related literature on the fields of security, public, and policing backed by judgmental content analysis technique. The paper made a number of interesting findings. Prominent among this findings included the fact that Police authorities in Nigeria since 1930, the force was established had made efforts to forge a strong relationship with the public it serves including establishment of such structures and mechanisms like Police Public Complaints Bureau, Police Community Relations Committees and various organs of community-policing projects scattered all over the country. In spite of these efforts, police-public relations in the country had remained sordidly sour, conflictual, and unredeeming. Again, the paper also identified a number of structural, institutional, and attitudinal factors that are responsible for the deteriorating gap in the relationship between the police in Nigeria and members of the public they are hired to serve. These factors include systemic corruption, the very nature of policing in a once colonized state like Nigeria, inappropriate use of lethal force, extrajudicial killings, and intimidation. Others are extortion, illegal arrest and detention, poor funding and lack of adequate training or education, among other ills. Finally, the study made a number of recommendations, as a way forward which included greater emphasis on awareness campaigns to sanitize the police force to be appreciated by members of the public, that NPPRD should be made autonomous and public relations professionals recruited into its fold; rigorous background check of recruits in order to weed out persons of questionable character at the point of entry; and design of curriculum that would inculcate modern policing ideals and democratic values in police rank and file, among others*

Keywords: *Police-Public Relations, Nigeria Police Force, Members of the Public, NPPRD, Policing, Corruption, Extra-Judicial Killings.*

I. INTRODUCTION

All over the world, the importance and relevance of the police institution have been acknowledged. The acknowledgement is predicated on the need to secure society's interest in terms of rights, duties, and obligations which are the different facts of the contractual nature of the human society (Smah, 2012; Zems, 2013) The security of any nation is a beacon of hope and pride at any point in time. They owe the duty to protect the territorial integrity of the nation, maintain peaceful co-existence, and protect the citizens in all ramifications. In the course of development of the society, different interest are aroused in the process of attaining political, economic, social, and cultural goals, and challenges, that 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 such tends to threaten the stability of the society. In a society in which citizens see crime as an immediate threat to the wellbeing, the police play the most visible and strategic role in justifying the system. Their central mission is to control crime and preserve peace in a fashion that the constitutional rights of the individual are not violated (Adesina, 2013).

In contemporary Nigeria, 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. The public perception of the police is not shaped by the kind of job they are called upon 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 liked 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 who call them derogatory and disgusting names. This dislike or resentment of the police apparently has some bearing on Nigeria Police colonial history.

The police are conceived, not as a service organization for native, because of the use to which the colonial masters put the police that were harassing and arresting tax defaulters, brutalizing trade unionists and

other nationalists, and torturing persons accused of criminal offences, nobody wanted to have anything to do with the police. It will be seen, therefore, that from the beginning, a serious communication gap was built between the police and the public and this mutual distrust rather than disappear has continued to grow wider. The situation is so bad that it became fashionable for parents to threaten their unwary and troublesome children with police presence (Odu cited by Asemota, 2012). The unfortunate mundane picture of the police painted here by the public has created serious problems for the police/public relations and public perception for the police in crime prevention.

In contemporary Nigeria, the police are an enviable institution in the minds of social problems such as rising crime rate, civil disturbance and riots, student demonstration among others. 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 continues to be a reflection of the social consciousness of Nigerians. Unfortunately, the police-public relations has been neglected. Aver (2011) maintains that the police cannot succeed in their role of crime control, prevention and enforcement of law without having a good relationship with the community in which they dwell. Police are employed for the detection, prevention and apprehension of criminals. They protect lives and property of citizens in the course of their duties. They also maintain and enforce laws, rules and regulations. They even go to the extent of performing military duties if so requested by the Head of State (or the country's President) in time of war (Ogundipe and Ibobor, 2014).

Put in another way, in performing these duties there exists a huge gap between the police and the public on how the public want to be policed and how the police want to police the public. This often results in conflicts that adversely affect the freedom of a large proportion of population. This results in hostility between the police and the public and this often occurs at check-points and stations where the former demand and receive bribes from members of the public. This also leads to public condemnations of the police in the country. In fact, the widespread of extortion, corruption, brutality and incivility found at several quotas have eroded the public cooperation that would have enhanced police efficiency. There is no mutual relationship between the police and public as such denying the police sensitive information that would lead to crime prevention and reduction.

It is against the backdrop of foregoing that this paper seeks to examine the police-public relations in Nigeria as the role it is expected to play in the concerted efforts at fighting crime, insecurity, and social disorder in Nigeria. To do justice to the foregoing, the paper is structured into seven slices. In addition to this introductory section, the structure includes conceptual clarifications, theoretical framework, overview of the history of the Nigeria Police, expose on police-police relations in Nigeria, conclusion and recommendations.

II. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Definition of Police as a Concept

Anderson (2013) defines police as a civil force entrusted with the task of monitoring public order and law enforcement for the prevention and punishment of their breaches. Adedipe (2005) defined police as an organ of government that is charged with public safety. They are responsible for the civil society security. Police Act Cap 359 and section 4 laws of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1960 define police clearly in terms of prevention and detection of crime, preservation of law and order, protection of lives and property, and enforcement of law and order. To crown it all, the Constitution of Nigeria (1999:83), defined the term police as an agent of the state which is embedded under criminal justice system whose official function is to maintain law and order and enforcement of same (- Police Force shall be the only police force and subject to the provision of the section, no other police force shall be established for the Federation or any part thereof. Section 215 (3) and (4) of 1999 Constitution and the Police Act empowered police to carry out the following functions:

“ The police shall be employed for the prevention and detection of crime, apprehension of offenders, the preservation of law and order, the protection of life and property, and due enforcement of all laws and regulations with which they are directly charged and perform such military duties within or without Nigeria as maybe required of them by, or under the authority of this or any other Act ”.

The Nigeria Police Force also have statutory powers to investigate crimes, apprehend offenders, interrogate suspects, prosecute suspect, grant bail to suspects pending completion of investigation or prior to court arraignment, to serve summons, to regulate or disperse unlawful processions and assemblies. The police are also empowered to search and seize property suspected to be stolen or associated with crime, and to take and record for purposes of identification, the measurement, photographs and fingerprint impressions of all persons in custody. The police perform these functions through proactive and reactive policing. It is the police that mediate between law and other institutions of social control in the society. They also construct crime data in a

given society. Police as regard this work is defined as public agents concerned with the enforcement of law, maintenance of peace and order and prosecution of breaches of the laws.

III. THE MEANING OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public Relations refers to a management function of a continuing and planned character, through which public or private organization and institution seek to win and retain the understanding, sympathy, and support of those with whom they are or may be concerned by evaluating public opinion about themselves, in order to correlate as far as possible, their own policies and procedures to achieve by planned and widespread information, more cooperation and more efficient fulfillment of their common interests (IPRA at the Hague 1960 in Keghku, 2005). Public relations entail the management function which evaluates public attitudes, identifies the policies and procedures of an individual or an organization with the public interest, and executes a programme of action to earn public understanding and acceptance (Grisworld, 1977 in Keghku, 2005). Black (2011) defines public relations as a practice and the art of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organization's leadership, and implementing planned programmes of action which will serve both the origination and the public interest.

IV. POLICE-PUBLIC RELATIONS

Arising from the meaning of public relations as discussed above, police-public relations, therefore, refers to a management function of a planned and continuing character whereby the police as a public institution seek ways to win and retain the understanding, sympathy, support, and co-operation of members of the public both as individuals and a collectivity towards effective discharge of their statutory responsibilities as a crime prevention and fighting outfit in society (Chukwuma, 2005). As a corollary to the foregoing, in the police-public relations endeavour, it is not only the police that make the move but also the public who are also expected to embrace every move by the police towards establishing cordial relations between the two parties in the efforts at crime fighting and prevention of social disorder. The foregoing -shows that any meaningful police-public relations is expected to be a two-partite move towards cooperation and support for crime fighting and social disorder prevention. That is to say, like in the case of corporate image management in business administration, police-public relations as an endeavour should not be "monologic" (coming from one party) but "dialogical" in nature (Massey, 2013:15).

Worthy of note here again is the relationship between the two concepts of police-public relations and community policing. All too often since the mid 1980s it made its debut into the Nigerian soil as an attempt to strengthen the obvious decline in the capability of the conventional police to stem the rising wave of criminality across Nigeria, the concept and practice of community policing has been widely confused with that police-public relations. The point is that while police-public relations is an integral part of the larger practical project known as community policing, the two mean different things. For instance, while police-public relations is an intangible attitudinal construct, community policing is a practice that entails police-community partnership and community problem solving (BJA, 2008)

V. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper is anchored on the extant theory of structural functionalism. Functionalism draws its inspiration from the ideas of August Comte (1798-1857), Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), Talott Parson (1920-1979), Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) and Robert Merton (1910-2003). Functionalism is a theory that sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability (Macionis, 2010). This perspective looks at society through a macro-level orientation, which is a broad focus on the social structures that shape society as a whole, and believes that society has evolved like organisms (DeRosso, 2003). The theory is of the view that both social structure and social functions are performing in the society. Functionalism addresses society as a whole in terms of the function of its constituent elements, namely, norms, customs, traditions, and institutions. A common analogy, popularized by Herbert Spencer, presents these parts of society as "organs" that work toward the proper functioning of the "body" as a whole (Vrry, 2000). For example, each of the social institutions contributes important functions for society: Family provides a context for reproducing, nurturing, and socializing children; education offers a way to transmit a society's skills; knowledge, and culture to its youth, politics provides a means of governing members of society; economics provides for the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services; and religion provides moral guidance and an outlet for worship of a higher power; while police provides for security of lives and property.

The functionalist perspective emphasizes the interconnectedness of society by focusing on how each part influences and is influenced by other parts. For example, the increase in poor police-public relations will increase the level of crime the society and vice versa. Functionalists use the terms *functional* and *dysfunctional* to describe the effects of social elements on society. Elements of society are functional if they contribute to social stability and dysfunctional if they disrupt social stability. Some aspects of society can be both functional

and dysfunctional. For example, crime is dysfunctional in that it is associated with physical violence, loss of property, and fear. But according to Durkheim and other functionalists, crime is also for society because it leads to heightened awareness of shared moral bonds and increased social cohesion. So police-public relations play a crucial role in crime control. Police public relations allows people to volunteer information to the police about criminal hideouts as such enabling the police to carry out their functions of crime detection, prevention and apprehension of criminal, thereby effectively maintaining a functioning society.

The view of the functionalist theoretical perspective on society and its institutions is that the primary units of analysis, institutions are significant only in terms of their places within social systems. Functionalists are of the opinion that the function each part plays in the functioning of the society is very significant to the development of the entire system (Hughes and Kroehler, 2008). They point out that, unlike human beings, society does not have needs; society is only alive in the sense that it is made up of living institutions. By playing down on the role of institutions, functionalism is less likely to recognize how individual actions may alter social institutions. Critics have argued that functionalism is unable to explain social change because it focuses so intently on social order and equilibrium in society. Following functionalist logic, if a social institution exists, it must serve a function. Institutions, however, change over time; some disappear and others come into being. The focus of functionalism on elements of social life in relations to their present function, and not their past functions, makes it difficult to use functionalism to explain function of police public relations in the society might change in the face of crime detection, prevention and apprehension of criminals. In spite of its shortcomings, the functionalist theory has been accepted a theoretical guide for the study due to its relevance to the topic under discussion here.

VI. AN OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF THE NIGERIA POLICE AND POLICE-PUBLIC RELATIONS IN NIGERIA.

What is today known as the Nigeria police force is the brainchild of the British colonial government and it dates back to 1861, following the annexation of Lagos (Tamuno, 1970). Although various nationalities all had their local ways of policing before the advent of the British colonialists, but such arrangements were based on a part-time basis. Most of these police were not paid formal salary; they got their rewards from gifts and gratifications in an informal way and they were natives of the area they policed. Dambazau (2004) noted that the Nigeria police, from inception, was not put in place to protect the interest and as well as the wellbeing of the people. The Nigerian police was borne out of the desire by the British colonialists to protect themselves, their interest and their trade. The British consul charged with the administration of Lagos established a Consular Guard in Lagos by the Police Act of 1861 to maintain law and order. In 1861, the 30-member Consular Guard was renamed Hausa Guard. It was further regularized in 1879 by an ordinance creating a constabulary for the Colony of Lagos thus the Hausa Guard became known as Hausa Constabulary and its men mainly drawn from among the Hausa ethnic group. The constabulary was mainly military in character, though it performed some police duties (Tamuno, 1970).

In 1861, the Lagos Police Force was created and armed like the Hausa Constabulary. With the proclamation of Northern and Southern protectorates in 1914 until 1930, they were merged to form the present Nigeria Police Force with headquarters in Lagos (Tamuno, 1970). In 1943, the Northern and Western Regions of Nigeria established their own regional police forces. All the northern and southern protectorates police forces were merged with the Nigeria Police Force in 1968 and with the creation of Abuja as Federal Capital Territory in 1976, the headquarters of Nigeria police shifted from Lagos to Abuja (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2000). Currently, the Force Headquarters of the Nigeria Police is located at Shehu Shagari Way, Abuja Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Since 1976, the Police Force has been undergoing series of structural changes. Like promotion, establishment of departments more zonal and state commands, divisions and special branches to checkmate its public relations and consequently upsurge of crime in the country.

VII. AN OVERVIEW OF THE PRESENT COMMAND STRUCTURE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN THE NIGERIA POLICE FORCE.

According to Alemika and Chukwuma (2000.p.8), the Force is organized into 37 commands and the Force Headquarters. Each of the 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory is served by a command of the Force. The Force Headquarters is the office of the Inspector General of Police. The tasks of the Force are carried out through six Departments: Administration and Finance, Operations, Works and Logistics, Criminal Intelligence, Investigation Department (CIID), Training, Research and Planning. Each of the Departments is under the leadership of Deputy Inspector-General of police. The 37 State Police Commands are further organized into twelve Zonal Commands. The Zonal Headquarters are under the command of Assistant Inspectors-General, while commissioners of police are in charge of State Commands. The entire force is under the command of the Inspector-General of Police. The Commandants of the Police Staff College and Police Academy are commanded by Assistant Inspector General of Police, the four Police Colleges are manned by

the Commissioner of Police, while Training Schools where recruits are trained are under the direction of Assistant Commissioner of police.

However, for effective national policing and operational command, the zonal command structure was created. The country is divided into the following twelve zones: Zone one is made up of Kano, Jigawa and Katshina States with headquarters in Kano. Zone Two has Lagos and Ogun State; its headquarters is in Lagos, Zone three has its headquaters in Markudi; is made up of Benue, Nasarrawa and Plateau States, Zone five comprises Edo, Delta and Bayelsa States; with its headquarters located in Benin. Zone six comprises Rivers, Cross River, Akwa-Ibom and Ebonyi States; Calabar is where its headquarters is situated. Zone seven has its headquarters in Abuja and is made up of Federal Capital Territory, Kaduna and Niger States. Zone Eight has Kogi, Ekiti and Kwara States; its headquarters is in Lokoja. Zone Nine's headquarters is in Umuahia and is made up of Imo, Abia Anambra and Enugu States. Zone Ten with headquarters in Sokoto; is made up of Sokoto, Kebbi and Zamfara States, Zone Eleven comprises Oyo, Osun, and Ondo States; Oshogbo is its headquarters. Zone Twelve has Bauchi, Borno and Yobe States; Bauchi is its headquarters. In the same vein, the State Commands are divided into a number of Police Areas Command and Divisions under the command of Assistant Commissioner of police who oversees police stations and police Posts within his Area or Division.

In the areas of recruitment and training, Alemika and Chukwuma (2000.p10) in their expose on "police-Community Violence in Nigeria" highlighted the Force's recruitment *and training requirements*: "There are three entry levels into the Nigeria Police Force. These are Constable, Cadet Inspector and Cadet Assistant Superintendent of police levels. The first is a beginning level, the second, an upper junior level, and the third, the lowest superior police officer rank. Constable are trained at either police training Centers located in many state Capitals or at the Police College located at Ikeja-agos, Kaduna, Enugu and Maiduguri. Similarly, Cadet Inspectors are trained at the Police Colleges (Ikeja, Kaduna, Enugu, and Maiduguri). Cadet Assistant Superintendents of police are trained at the Police Academy, Wudil Kano. The training period for Constable lasts from six to nine months. The Cadet Inspector's training lasts for twelve months. The duration for the training for Cadet Assistant Superintendents is also twelve months. The selection and screening process for recruitment into the police, especially at junior (Constable and Inspectorate) levels emphasize *physical stature and stamina*. Rigorous tests for psychological and emotional stability and social relations skill are not given adequate attention. The educational requirement for recruitment into Constable and Cadet Inspector positions is National Diploma/National Certificate of Education (ND/NCE) or must possess five credit passes, including English Language and Mathematics. The educational requirement for enlistment as Cadet Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) is a Bachelors Degree or Higher National Diploma (B.Sc./HND) in any subject.

VIII. AN INSIGHT INTO THE NATURE OF THE PUBLIC RELATIONS DEPARTMENT OF THE NIGERIA POLICE FORCE.

In order to project the social services dimension of the duties of the police, the late Kam Salem, former Inspector-General of Police (1966-1975) formally established the Force Public Relations Department as a statutory function of the Force and expanded its services to state Commands. The Nigeria Police Force has demonstrated how critical public relations is to its operations, hence, its replications in major police formations across the country. The Force headquarters public Relations Officer (FPRO) is the official mouthpiece for the entire Nigeria Police Force, and he is superior in rank (the position is occupied by at least an Assistant Commissioner of police) to Police Public Relations Officers (PPRO) who hold sway at the Zonal and State Commands, a responsibility that is traditionally entrusted to an officer of at least the ranks of Deputy Superintendent of police and Assistant Superintendent of Police respectively.

The Department performs communication tasks such as publishing the list of wanted persons, missing persons, stolen vehicles, dark spots, security tips and organizes press briefings to parade arrested criminal suspects. It also issues press releases and bulletins, writes lecture articles, publishes photographs and advertisements through the press and electronic media in order to keep the public constantly informed of police activities. It also organizes public lectures and produces informative materials such as posters, flyers and booklets in order to inform and educate the public about police activities. The Department is also responsible for producing police calendars, diary, greeting cards, magazines and newsletters.

It is noteworthy to state that Nigeria Police Public Relations Department (NPPRD) in all police formations throughout the federation is peopled by general duties police operatives and not public relations professionals. The Nigeria Police Force classifies public relations as a general duty function and it is subsumed under Administration Department, The implication of this kind of arrangement is that any police officer irrespective of his or her educational background or professional training can be posted to work in the Department.

IX. A BRIEF EXPOSE ON THE STATE OF POLICE–PUBLIC RELATIONS IN NIGERIA.

Crime management is the hallmark of every successful society. Many authors and commentators have written on the subject from various standpoints. Thus, the main thrust here is the unfolding views of various scholars on the subject matter of the study. Police cannot perform their duties without having a good relationship with the community wherein they serve. Similarly, the community will live in absolute anxiety and fear of attack without police. There is need to maintain and sustain a mutual relationship between the police and public in the society. Akpotu (2003) contends that the Nigeria police have a very poor relationship with people right from time. This is as a result of corruption, envy and brutality that they mete out to the people. In any rally or demonstration, they turn to fuel the event by shooting the public. Mbachie (2005) lamented that the practice of the police does not help matters in promotion of cordial relationship with the public.

The police cause many accidents that claimed lives through their checkpoints on the roads. Ehon (2003) also asserted that the culture of monetization and the tendency to get rich quick among members of the police force have affected their relationship with the public. He further expressed his feeling that police do not believe in hard work; they have thrown the values of the society into the dustbin. With the above stated problems, the public seem to perceive the police as enemies. This has made the police to come out with some programmes aimed at establishing a cordial and friendly relationship with the public. Yeche (2005) maintains that the police enforce law in a way that is essentially indiscretion. According to him, they seek to favour culprits who are highly influential in the society to the detriment of the common masses. They appear blind to justice and equity and consequently twist the law to suit their selfish interest. By implications, the police rather than effectively controlling crime are actually in the habit of violating the laws of criminal justice system in order to protect those in high positions and control of power and resources (Yeche, 2005). Adesina (2003) sums it up that police-citizen relationship in Nigeria has been a poor one. The police are disliked instead of liked, distrusted instead of trusted, hated instead of loved. They cause disharmony instead of harmony and this has resulted in total loss of confidence by the public in the Nigeria police. This has become evident of the poor police-public relations in Nigeria.

A good rapport and goodwill between police and the public enable police to serve the public better and the public also feel better. Black (2011) maintains that under modern conditions, no government organization of any kind can operate successfully without the cooperation of its publics. These publics may be both at home and overseas, but mutual understanding will be a potent 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 need for good police public relationship to help citizens understand the responsibilities of Nigeria Police Force 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 crimes that occur to the police, provide tips and intelligence to the police, willingly serve as witnesses, and happily participate in criminal justice system. Incidentally, 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 prevents the possibility that the public think that police are simply a mechanism for intelligence collection and as such denying them vital information that would aid in crime detection, prevention and apprehension of criminals.

Poor police public relations denies the police 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. They perceive police as an agent that occupies an out-of-touch force that does more harm than good to the public. In these situations, police rarely assume a reactive mode of response to public problems. It is evident that the Nigeria police are highly and visibly subservient to the rich and powerful, even in the rendering of services and as such spoiled their relationship with the public. The Nigeria police have engaged themselves in much brutality on the poor masses. In this way, they hinder the desired public cooperation. Finally, public participation involves members of the public taking an active role in trying to genuinely help the police to illicit information on the whereabouts of criminals in the society. Indeed, the failure of the police in Nigeria and other developing countries generally can be traced to ignorance, lack of trust by the public and the total uncooperative posture due to police insensitivity to the suffering of the people. The police should stop being snipers but learn to stop snipers in Nigeria.

Benjamin (2001) also points 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 took place in the society that have lasted for two or more years without the police's identification of the culprits, let alone arresting and prosecuting such groups or gangs. The failure of the police according to Benjamin to either apprehend killers of robbery victims and assassins all over the county has apparently reinforced the belief of critics who describe the police force 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 actors behind such scenes. Thus, such actions provide fresh evidence to cynics who have argued that if the

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, safety and well-being (Benjamin, 2000).

Crime generally gives rise to insecurity and fear, alienation and despair, suspicion and conflict, some cities like Lagos often witness armed hoodlums strike at will with insolent ease and gratuitous brutality, robbing, maiming and killing their victims; sometimes houses on an entire street are raided for several hours making one to wonder if indeed there is police at all in Nigeria (Obioha, 2004; Omisakin, 1998). In addition, the renewed assassination and other violent crimes in Lagos and Onitsha among other is a further major incident that has seriously dampened public confidence in the police force (Benjamin, 2000). In the course of performing its statutory duties to the larger society, the Nigeria police have oftentimes been indicted in various ways. As have been earlier enunciated, officers are accused of brutality, of violating fundamental human rights, or extra-judicial killings, of aiding and abetting criminal activities, and of engaging in bribery and corruption (Onyeozili, 2005; Ekpeyong, 1987).

Odinkalu (2004) and Odekunle (1981) stressed that the capacity of Nigeria police in monitoring and managing the social space in the nation is disappointingly sub-optimal and will continue to remain so unless a new relationship of honest and genuine interdependence is built between the government and the governed and between the police as an institution of government and the civil society as those from whom government derives its legitimacy. Most violent conflicts had occurred due to the ineptitude and inefficiency in the performance of police statutory duties. The civil society as a result of the incompetence of the police tends to find support of ethnic militias and other 'self-help' security outfits to provide the much-needed security for their lives and property.

X. HIGHLIGHTS OF THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE POLICE-PUBLIC RELATIONS FUNCTION.

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 a tranquil environment for sustenance of the Nigerian society. Unlike many other police forces in the world, the Nigeria Police Force was not intended to be servants of the state, but the communities they serve. Their powers are personal, used at their own discretion and derived from the crown. This essential feature of Nigeria Police Force (policing by consent) is now in jeopardy. It is evident that no security formation can thrive without a good relationship with members of the public. Good police public relationship helps Nigeria police to overcome complex of crime problem in the pluralistic society to reach its desired goals and function of crime detection, prevention and apprehension of criminals. Good police public relations serves to bring police and public into harmony thereby enabling the public to volunteer information about 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. The process of crime detection, prevention and apprehension of criminals cannot be complete without the role of information from key informants; it is these informants that volunteer information to the police on the whereabouts 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.

XI. FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE POOR STATE OF POLICE PUBLIC RELATIONS IN NIGERIA.

There is no doubt that the effectiveness and efficiency of the Nigeria police have been under stress and adversely affected by various problems such as inappropriate policing orientation and strategies with emphasis on reactive instead of proactive/preventive measures, brutality against citizens, including extrajudicial killing, corruption and extortion, poor performance in the areas of intelligence analysis and utilization as well as investigation and perversion of the course of justice etc (Jike, 2003; Ekpeyong, 1987; Alemika, 1993; Onoge, 1993). Onoge (1993) observed that the sloganeering "Police is your friend" in present-day Nigeria notwithstanding, the rival popular image of the police as corrupt "*kill and go*" squad has not abated. Onoge wondered that despite three decades after independence Nigeria still quests for a social order based not on brute force but on just and moral consensus. Violence, inter-communal and religious conflicts remain, corrupt looting of the national treasury continues to occur, all sorts of violent crime are committed with reckless abandon in the full glare of the police statutorily charged with public peace and order maintenance; all of these signal the lack of commitment to orderly development of the Nigeria socio-political space (Onoge, 1993).

Till date, it is somehow very disturbing that despite the constitutional powers granted the police to maintain public peace, safety and general security in Nigeria, the quality of security has nothing to be proud of and it has no doubt generated a great deal of controversies (Odekunle, 2004) Odekunle declared "Nigeria police force falls short of optimum performance". This is manifest in the widespread inefficiencies, corruption, unfairness in dealing with suspects, occasional over-use of legitimate force, bad temper, bullying, and other

abuses of citizen's rights with impunity. The Apo six killings in Abuja by the police in 2005 is an example (Brewier, Gueke, Hwne, Moxon-Browne and Wilford, 1996).

Ekpeyong (2007) argued that there were reports of some crimes committed with the connivance or participation of the police. This is also evident in 'how the police protect robbers: a victims account' in *Tell Magazine*, December 31, 2001. It was reported in this paper that some of the special Anti Robbery squad of the Nigeria police, Lagos command, struck a deadly partnership with armed robbers, helping them escape justice and threatening the lives of victims who make efforts to recover their stolen property. Ekpeyong also observed that there were cases of alleged destruction of crime evidence and reports by the police, arrested persons released, criminal charges and prosecutions dropped in exchange for bribes or other benefits. Ekpeyong also averred that false charges were reportedly made against innocent and ignorant citizens, criminal investigations suspended and other abuse of rights with impunity were rampant among the police. The poor educational attainment, the lack of the requisite professional qualification, the recruitment of low-skilled persons, and low-salary scale which had lagged behind the national minimum for several years but until now, is allegedly at the root of the misdeeds of the police and high attrition rates (Ekpeyong, 2007).

In line with the police inefficiency, Orobator (1993) observed that the problem of under-funding is not peculiar to the police, but said it will remain a recurring problem so long as the supply of national resources cannot meet the demand for social services. From this point, however, the under-funding of the Nigeria Police has reduced their state of preparedness and level of efficiency to a pitiful level. The acute shortage of accommodation for the policemen made the co-ordination of their activities difficult and this adversely affected their performance. Orobator maintained that the police cannot be said to be better off in terms of equipment, radio and other communication facilities that can hardly be relied upon, as their capacity for mobility is at best close to zero. He said, cases of an entire Police Division having only a vehicle, which is usually not always road-worthy, are abundant and indeed there are stations without vehicles at all.

The end result, according to Orobator (1993), is that the Nigeria Police Force is not adequately equipped for its job; the nonchalant attitude to work is an additional factor that has aided the inefficiency of the police in crime prevention and control in Nigeria. Alemika (2003) was of the opinion that agencies of crime management in Nigeria share in common certain problems such as authoritarian or repressive legacy and orientation, lack of consultation with and accountability to citizens; lack of policies that specifically harmonize their operations with democratic principles of criminal justice system; poor funding of activities; poor staffing and inadequate remuneration of staff; inadequate resources; insensibility/insensitivity and thereby non-utilization of, scientific research, knowledge and expertise in the various academic fields of criminology, forensic criminology, police science, Psychology, penology, sociology of law, criminal justice and law enforcement to improve training, planning, operations, monitoring and evaluation; corruption; lack of institutionalized mechanisms by which the agencies are answerable to the public for their activities and lack of coordination to achieve efficiency (Alemika, 2003).

XII. CONCLUSION

The police are granted enormous powers by law and the constitution to take preventive measures against the commission of all crimes in Nigeria. In this sense, the law allows them to use such reasonable force as may be necessary for the prevention of crimes. In the exercise of this authority, they have in various ways malevolently violated the rights of members of the public with impunity. This practice has earned the Nigeria police different derogatory names, hatred and constant collision with the members of the public to whom they have sworn an oath to protect. So far, it can be inferred from the data gathered in this study that the relationship between the police and the public in Nigeria is not cordial. The police are more accountable to the government rather than to the members of the public whose interest they were statutorily established to protect.

In Nigeria, the public perception of the police is warped based on the misuse of powers vested in them. This misuse of powers which creates negative police image and police-public relations is manifested in police corruption and brutality which had been their regular hallmark. This position can be changed if and only if the police are reoriented towards adequate care and respect for human dignity, citizen's fundamental rights and privileges. The police should work relentlessly towards redeeming their public image of underperforming, immodest, brutal, corrupt and predatory force.

Recommendations: The Way Forward

In spite of the alluring structures and programs of NPPRD, the image of the Force has largely not resonated with the kind of police force desired by the civil populace in Nigeria: a force that eschews inappropriate use of lethal force, illegal arrest and detention, extortion, intimidation, corruption, sexual violence and extra-judicial killings. However, The following recommendations would serve as guides in the bid to re-engineer the force, slough off its undesirable image and turn it into a humane law enforcement agency that is respected, trusted and befriended by the civil populace as the protector of lives and property:

Total and General Attitudinal Change to Policing

In order to enhance the relationship between the police and members of the public, there need to be a shift from the present day system of intimidation through “police force” to the modern system of policing through “police service”. While the entire Nigeria Police require total and complete attitudinal change for them to regain people’s confidence, the principles of the new world paradigm of policing - community policing – is supposed to be their guide for a better society.

Forging Stronger Harmonious Relationship between NPPRD and Other Key Departments of the Force.

The NPPRD efforts at endearing the police to the public are ineffectual because there is no synergy between it and the force’s two largest and most important Departments: Operation, and General Investigations and Intelligence. The core of police activities is performed by men and officers of these departments: they take measures to prevent the commission of crime; investigate the commission of crime; interrogate suspects; the search persons and premises in order to detect, prevent or investigate the commission of crime; among others. These are the police personnel who interface daily with the public, and whose unprofessional postures have largely tainted the image of the force, thereby causing the relationship between the police and the public to become increasingly sour.

NPPRD’s spirited efforts at repairing the damaged relationship between the force and the public in the forms of seminars, workshops, publications, radio and television programs and other strategies have failed to stem police abuses and coercive excesses because there is little or no working relationship between NPPRD and the Force’s key departments in its bid to anchor modern policing ideals and democratic values in the heart of police personnel. Understandably, men and officers of these departments are not keying into the laudable programmes of NPPRD because of their corrupt tendencies: many of them serve as conduits through which “illegal and criminal contributions find their way through the system as booties to all the hierarch” (Chukwuma, 2005:119).

Recruitment of Professionals into NPPRD and Granting it Autonomy.

At present, NPPRD is subsumed under the “A” Department (Administration), and this classification has adversely affected its operation. For NPPRD to realize its potentials and professionally discharge its functions, it must commence the recruitment of professionals into its fold to discharge its functions. Steps should be taken to professionalize the Department in its entirety and discard the retrogressive policy of posting “General Duty” officers who lack professional training in public relations (PR) to the Department.

Public relations is critical to the operations of the Force. NPPRD should be elevated to the status of a full-fledged department which must be manned by a police officer who is versed in PR practice, and must not be lower than the rank of a Deputy Inspector-General (DIG). He should be able to participate at the highest decision making organ of the Force. The present system whereby NPPRD is headed by an officer of the rank of a Deputy Commissioner who most times lacks professional competence in PR practice, who in turn report to the DIG in-charge of the Administration Department, does not augur well for the Department as this could stunt initiatives and hurt its operations.

Outsourcing of Critical Jobs in the NPPRD to Professional Consultants.

Dearth of PR professionals or experts in the NPPRD has severely hampered its ability to effectively tackle the image problem of the Force. In this respect, the Department should *outsource* some of its jobs that require expert execution. The consulting firms would serve as outside eyes, and because they are detached from the system, they can also bring civilian perspectives to bear on the job, by designing a PR framework that would transform the Nigeria police into operationally capable, public-friendly and accountable police force that will advance democratic governance in the country.

Oversight by Independent Teams from the Civil Society Community.

Over the years, police monitoring teams have failed to effectively tackle police unprofessional conducts and anti-people acts. The most promising kind of reform is one based on the concept of civilian oversight of the police. This should involve people of different strata of the society; students, teachers, lawyers, journalists, businessmen, former police officers and licensed private security practitioners. A monitoring team comprising mainly civilians of proven integrity and sound educational background should be constituted to investigate complaints of misconducts or disciplinary infractions against police operatives from time to time. Such team should also be saddled with the power to report or directly prosecute any police officer caught violating the profession’s laid-down rules and regulations before any competent law court in Nigeria.

Holistic Approach to Recruitment and Training

It is very sad that recruitment into the Force has become all-comers affair. All that is required of any prospective police officer are Secondary School Certificate with five credit passes, including English language and mathematics; good physical stature and stamina. As a consequence of the nation's poor recordkeeping culture, it is possible for a convicted criminal in a state in the Southwest, for instance, to emerge as a police officer in another state in the Northwestern part of the country. Recruitment into the force is very porous. Like everything Nigerian, the process has been compromised: the Nigeria Police has become a magnet for crooks and their ilk. Recruitment is done without rigorous background check; there is no full-proof mechanism for vetting the claims and backgrounds of recruits. This explains why criminalities thrive in the Force, as people of questionable credentials and characters find their way into the organization unchecked. Exasperated by the untoward conducts of members of the Nigeria police, former President Olusegun Obasanjo (2005,p.8) gave a shocking assessment of the Force at a security retreat in Port Harcourt: "Some robbers have been recruited into the police, police hire out their guns to armed robbers, what do we do?" In the same vein, Obasanjo (2000:24) made a similar damning assessment of the Nigeria Police; "Nigeria Police is an organization that can boast of some of the best robbers Nigeria has ever produced."

The Force recruitment system scarcely pays attention to the psychological and emotional stability of the recruits. The resultant effect is that people of fiery temper who are eventually recruited soon become uncontrollably dangerous elements in the society. NPPRD should champion the cause of administering psychological tests on recruits in order to determine their true human nature and whether they are fit to perform the task of protecting lives and property. The curricula for the training of police officers, especially at the entry level are inadequate and narrow in scope. There is so much emphasis on physical exercise and police duties. Subjects such as criminology, victimology, computer science, psychology, sociology, political science, geography, law and public relations which could have prepared the recruits to perform their roles effectively in the society are left out. Also, NPPRD should ensure that police officers are properly trained in their various roles and services to the Nigerian society.

Fairness and Respect for all Members of Civil Populace

NPPRD should regularly train police operatives on how to deal with the civil populace. They should be educated on how to accord respect and equal treatment to members of the public irrespective of their social status. The Department should design measures that would enhance police-public cordiality. For instance, police officers should be well trained on how to address members of the public. Politeness and decorum should form the basis of their interaction with the civil public. Words such as "Sir, Mr." or "Madam" should preface their remarks, instead of the commonly uttered phrases: "Park! Come out. Bring your particulars", "You, Eh! Bloody Civilian" etc.

Indeed, NPPRD has structures such as Police Community Relations Committee and Police Public Complaints Bureau which if effectively put to use would help stamp out unethical practices in the force and improve police-public relations. In all, this paper has shown that NPPRD is a pivotal arm of the force that should be empowered, adequately funded and reengineered to perform its role effectively. Indeed, the Department is crucial to the successful transformation of Nigeria Police into a friendly, trusted and efficient police force.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Adesina, A. (2013): 'Attitudes and Beliefs of the Families of Policemen to the Nigeria Police, in Jike, V.T (Ed), *The Nigeria Police and the Crisis of law and Order* Lagos, NISS Publications.
- [2]. Akpotu, N.E. (2003): ' The Cost of Campus Violence and the Maintenance of law and Order in Nigeria Universities, in Ike, V.T (Ed) *The Nigeria Police and the Crisis of Law and Order*.Lagos: NISS Publications.
- [3]. Alemika, E.E. (1999). "Police-Community Relations in Nigeria: What went Wrong?" in I. Chukwuma and I. Ifowodo (eds) *Policing a Democracy*: Lagos: Center for Law Enforcement.
- [4]. Alemika, E.E.O. and Chukwuma, I. (2000): *Police Community Violence in Nigeria*, Lagos: Center for law Enforcement Education.
- [5]. Aver, T.T. (2011) *Assessment of the performance of police in Crime Control in Nigeria; A study of Benue State Command , Makurdi-Nigeria*, Saarbrucken, Germany: Lap Lambert Academic Publishers.
- [6]. Benjamin, S.A. (2001) Federalism, Identity Crisis and Resurgent Nationalism in Fourth Republic. Paper presented to the sustainable democracy in Nigeria NISER. Ibadan. May 31.
- [7]. Black, A. (1968). *The People and the Police*. New York: McGraw-Hill book company
- [8]. Black, S. (2011): *Introduction to Public Relations*, Lagos West African Book Publishers Ltd.
- [9]. Brewer, T.D. Guelke, A., Hume, L., Moxon-Browne, E. and Wilfords, R. (1996), *The police, public order and state: policing in Great Britain*. Northern Ireland, the Irish Republic the U.S.A Israel, South Africa and China: Macmillan Press Ltd.
- [10]. Danbazua, A. (2003) *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, Ibadan, Spectrum Books.
- [11]. DeRosso, D. (2011): *The Structural Functional Theoretical Approach*, (Accessed February 24,2012).
- [12]. Ekpeyong, R. A. (1989), Nigeria. *Major criminal justice system : A comparative survey* (eds). F. C. George; J.F. Stanislaw and G.G. Mark. London: SAGE Publications.
- [13]. FGN (1999): *The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*, Abuja : Federal Government Press.
- [14]. Hills, A. (2008). "The Dialectic of Police Reform in Nigeria", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol.2. Cambridge: University Press.

- [15]. Jike, V.T. (2003), The Nigeria Police and the Kaleidoscope of Manifest and Latent Functions. *Journal of the Nigerian Sociological Society Vol. No. 2*.pp 58-68.
- [16]. Keggku, T. (2005): *Public Relations and Nigerian Economy*; Makurdi, Aboki Publisher.
- [17]. Macionis, G. (2010): *Sociology*, 7th Canadian Ed. Canada, Person Inc.
- [18]. Mbachie, A.E. (2005): Operation fire for fire: Operation your money or Your life: A Security Challenge to the Nigeria Police Appraisal, *The Gleaner magazine*, Makurdi, St. Thomas Aquinas Major Seminary 8.
- [19]. Obioha, E.E (2004) *Public Perception of the Role of Nigeria Police Force and Civil Society Based Security Operative in Urban Crime Management in Nigeria: A Study in Onitsha, Anambra State*, Ibadan: NISER Monograph series no. i. 2004
- [20]. Odekunle, F. (1981) , Criminological knowledge and Nigeria's crime problem: The dilemma of social scientists in Nigeria, *Social Science and Social Policy in Nigeria*. Sanda A.O. Ed. Ibadan: NISER.
- [21]. Odekunle, F. (2004), *Overview of Policing in Nigeria: Problems and Suggestions*. Ikeja-Lagos: Cleen foundation.
- [22]. Odinkalu, C.A. (2004), When did the police become your friend? Changing Roles of Civil Society in Promoting Safety and Security in Nigeria. *Crime and Policing in Nigeria: Challenges and Option*. E.E.O. Alemika and I.C. Chukwuma (Eds), Ikeja: CLEEN Foundation.
- [23]. Ogundipe, A. and Ibobor, S.O. (2014), "Policing and Community Relations: A Case Study of Obiaruku in Delta State," Jike, V.T. (Ed) *The Nigeria Police and Crisis of law and Order*, Lagos: NISS Publications.
- [24]. Ohonobamu, O. (1972), The dilemma of police Organization under a federal system: the Nigeria example. *The Nigeria Law Journal* 73-87
- [25]. Okonkwo, C.O. (1993), *The police and the public in Nigeria*. London: Sweet Maxwell.
- [26]. Okumagba, P.O. (2003): The Nigerian Police and the Problem of Corruption, Jike, V.T (Ed) *The Nigeria police and the crisis of law and order*; Lagos: NISS publications.
- [27]. Onoge, O.F. (1993), 'Social conflicts and crime control in colonial Nigeria', in *Policing Nigeria Past, Present and future*. T.N. Tamuno, I.L. Bashir, E.E.O. Alemika, and A.O. Akano (Eds). Lagos: Malthouse press Ltd.
- [28]. Onyeozili, E.C. (2005), Police and Crime in Nigeria, *African Journal of Criminology and Justice Studies. Vol. 1, No. 1, April*,
- [29]. Orobator, S.E. (1993) The Political and Socio-economic Environment of Policing Since 1960, In *Policing Nigeria Past, Present and Future*. T.N. Tamuno; I.L. Bashir; E.E.O Alemika and A.O. Akano Eds, Lagos: Malthouse Press Ltd
- [30]. Oute, O. (1990) *Colonialism Pluralism and Ethnicity in Nigeria*. Ibadan: University of Ibadan Press.
- [31]. Quincy, R. (1979). "Community policing in Small Towns and Rural America". *Journal on Crime and Delinquency*, vol. 40 no. pp.371-383.
- [32]. Reiner, R. (2000). *The Politics in the Police*, Oxford: Oxford University press
- [33]. Reiss, R. (1971). *Criminal Justice Cultures: Bail and Remand: Contemporary Issues in Criminology*, Wales: University of Wales Press.
- [34]. Smah, S.O (2012): The Post Colonial police in Nigeria: Functional performance under pressure, Jike, V.T. (Ed) *The Nigeria police and the Crisis of law and Order*, Lagos: NISS Publications .
- [35]. Smith, D.J. (2010). "Corruption, NGOs, and Development in Nigeria", *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 31. No2,243-258.
- [36]. Tamuno, T.N. (1970). *Police in Modern Nigeria: Development and Roles*, Ibadan, University. Press.
- [37]. The Transparency International Report, 2009.
- [38]. Vrry, J. (2000): "Metaphors" *Sociology beyond societies mobiliteis for the Twenty-first Century*, New York: Routledge.
- [39]. White, M.F. et al (1991). The Theoretical Considerations of Officer Profanity and Obscenity in Formal Contacts with Citizens, in T. Barker and D.L. Carter (eds). *Police Deviance*. Cincinnati Ohio: Anderson Publishing Co.
- [40]. Yecho, J.I. (2005): Policing Crime or Status? A Review of police law Enforcement, *Journal of Economics and Research, Makurdi Benue State University*.3 (2)