

Institutional Decay and Corrupt/Unethical Practices: Problems and Prospects for the Police Force in Nigeria

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Abstract: *The importance of effective policing in every human society in general and Nigeria in particular can never be over-emphasized. This has become more so of the essence in recent times against the backdrop of the violent wave of security challenges rumbling across the globe. From brutality, extra-judicial killing; unlawful detention of suspects, demanding payments for bail, search and arrests without warrant, gun running, to complicity in crimes such as armed robbery, mounting of illegal roadblocks for the purpose of extortion of money from hapless citizens, harassment and intimidation of political opponents of ruling parties, and asking for bribe (popularly referred to as “egunje” in the Nigerian parlance), use of alcohol and other drugs, sexual misconduct racial profiling, the objectionable behaviour of the Nigerian police has made the establishment to be hated by majority of Nigerians. This systemic decay owe largely to the fact that, the police in what appears to be an “institutional conspiracy” by successive Nigerian governments are deprived of the minimum enabling environment to deliver on its mandate. It is against this background that the paper adopts the Sirota’s Three-factor theory of motivation as its theoretical framework. The paper among others, recommends urgent steps by the governments to improve on the welfare packages of members of the organization, particularly the rank and file, and to as a matter of necessity tackle the monster of corruption which has forced to its knees an organization that once prided itself as the moral compass of the nation.*

I. Introduction

Background to the Study

The importance of effective policing in every human society in general and Nigeria in particular, can never be over-emphasized. This has become even more imperative in recent times against the backdrop of the violent wave of security challenges rumbling across the globe. While the very early history of policing is not very clear, it is known that “at about the time of Christ, the Roman Emperor Augustus picked special, highly qualified members of the military to form the Praetorian Guard, which could be considered the first police officers” (Dempsey and Forst: 2008). Their job then was to protect the palace and the emperor.

The word police attract a broad meaning. It includes all Officers and Men who are involved in law enforcement (Caldwell: 1965). Professionally speaking therefore, the police should include any person who is concerned with law enforcement and crime control as well as other socio-political matters. However, within the context of this paper, we shall limit our scope to the definition of Henry and Wroblewski (2006), which refers to the operations of the police to include activities conducted in the field by law enforcement officers as they “serve and protect,” including patrol, traffic, investigation and general calls for service.

Brief history of the Nigerian Police and Corruption

To understand contemporary policing in Nigeria particularly, in view of the significant historical impact on modern policing, it is imperative to understand its antecedents. Policing predates the British colonial administration. As early as the eighteenth century, i.e. before the annexation of Lagos as a formal British colony, there were indigenous police systems organized by natives of different localities and ethnic groups (Iwarimie-Jaja, 2010:55). Writing on modern policing in Nigeria, Chiemelie (2014), observed that with staff strength of 371, 800 in its 12 zones and over 6,500 field formations, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) has certainly come a long way from independence.

The NPF is divided into the administration, anti-fraud section, central criminal registry, special anti-robbery squad, x-squad, general investigation, special fraud unit, legal section, forensic science laboratory, Interpol liaison, homicide, anti-human trafficking, special branch (criminal and special investigation bureau) and the force CID investigation Kaduna annex.

While it could be agreed that there is no perfect police anywhere in the world, every nation deserves the police that she has. This is because a perfect police can only be a chip of the old block (a perfect society). Constitutionally speaking therefore, the expectations of the public from a run of the mill Nigerian police officer must be the following among several others highlighted in Box 1 below:

Box 1: Public expectations of an ideal police

- He must be properly schooled in the art of making field enquires, interviewing and interrogating and they must do so alongside the duty of protecting the constitutional rights of victims, suspects and witnesses.
- Keep track of information obtained in effective, reader-friendly reports, and know how to use the diverse records available.
- He must be well rounded and comprehensive. She/he must understand the multifaceted communication course of action and the barriers that often exist within the process and within our varied society.
- He must become expert at conducting stops and frisks, making arrests, conducting searches and participating in covert operations all within the ambits of the law.
- Others include patrol operations, rapid response to distress calls, traffic operations, retroactive investigation of past crimes, detective operations and community crime prevention programs.

Corruption and Unethical Practices in the Police Force

Corruption within the Nigerian Police is not exclusive. It exists in the Force much the same as it does in similar organizations around the world, except perhaps, in terms of its degree and the organization's attitude to its society.

Police Crimes News (2004) views corruption within the NPF as a complex phenomenon, which does not readily submit to simple analysis. Police corruption is the abuse of police authority for personal gain, and a hallmark of professional dishonesty. Similarly, Kleinig (1996) posits that "Police officers act dishonestly when, in exercising or failing to exercise their authority, they act with the primary intention of furthering private or departmental/divisional advantage".

Interestingly, the Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2014 noted that Nigeria is up eight places to 136 out of 175 countries ranked by the index. Nigeria scored 27 out of a maximum 100 marks to clinch an unenviable 136th position out of the 175 countries surveyed for the report. In addition, an indigenous survey on corruption in Nigeria by the Institute for Development Research, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (IDR, Final Report, 2003), rated the police as the most corrupt institution in Nigeria. This calls for an urgent overhaul of public institutions in Nigeria especially the NPF.

The character of the NPF has been strongly associated with negative social vices either directly or indirectly. From brutality, extra-judicial killing; unlawful detention of suspects, demanding payments for bail, search and arrests without warrant, gun running, to complicity in crimes such as armed robbery, mounting of illegal roadblocks for the purpose of extortion of money from hapless citizens, harassment and intimidation of political opponents of ruling parties, and asking for bribe (popularly referred to as "egunje" in the Nigerian parlance), use of alcohol and other drugs, sexual misconduct to racial profiling, the NPF perpetrate objectionable behavior that have made them to be reviled by majority of Nigerians. They have also been targets of uncomplimentary headlines in many dailies for many inconceivable aberrations to duty.

In our society, the policeman may be seen as a hero or villain, protector or oppressor, corrupt or incorruptible but the police is a necessary political institution whose utility in all societies does not prevent them from criticism (Smith and Polack, 1980).

Similarly, opinions are far and wide on how well the Nigerian Police has discharged her constitutional mandate of protecting lives and maintaining law and order, and particularly its oversight function of dealing with the monster of pervasive organized corruption which has continued to bestride the nation like a colossus. Corruption no doubt is reputed to be endemic in the Nigerian society and the police by implication are only a reflection of the larger society. However, many are of the opinion that the police ought to be the "Knight in a shining armour", and to that extent, they are expected to be society's moral compass.

In contemporary times, the first inkling of the burgeoning culture of corruption that awaits the prospective officer of the Nigerian police begins at the point of application for enlistment. He has to tip someone (pay money) to overcome the barrier of "hoarding" of employment forms. In Many cases, desperate job seekers might have to pledge first salaries or more to their benefactors as a requirement to make the final cut.

In the views of Okonkwo (2003), it is alleged that people who seek to join the Police Force pay as bribe, between N30, 000 and N40, 000 before getting entry into the Nigeria police force training colleges across the country. The bar should have been raised far higher by now.

Leading this pack of infamy is the high command of the institution. For example, in October 1999, government investigations into abuses by the Abacha regime, including the assassination of Kudirat Abiola (wife of M.K.O. Abiola) in 1996 and the suspected murder of Shehu Musa Yar'Adua in detention in December 1997, resulted in the arrest of Ibrahim Coomassie, the then Inspector-General (IG) and other leading figures, including Mohammed Abacha, the dictator's son. Coomassie who was placed under house arrest was reportedly scheduled to appear before the police's Special Investigation Panel but later that month, Information Minister Dapo Sarumi denied reports that Coomassie was under arrest and so the matter fizzled out.

Following his place, a new IG Musiliu Smith emerged in 1999 but was quickly forced into retirement by the then President Olusegun Obasanjo following a controversial police strike that same year. The most unpopular IG Mustafa Adebayo Balogun fondly called Tafa who succeeded Muslilui in 2002. He was also forced to retire following widespread charges of corruption in January 2005. On 4 April 2005, Balogun was arraigned at the Federal High Court, Abuja on charges involving about N13 billion obtained through money laundering, theft and other sources.

While Balogun's corruption case was still ongoing, Sunday Ehindero considered the 12th IG was named in 2005. He quickly gathered public support when in 2006 they sent a bill to the National Assembly to amend police Act to remove gender bias but soon got caught in the web of corruption allegations. After his retirement in 2007, Ehindero faced a probe over N21 million frauds, N2.5 billion of police cooperative money, N300 million police funds and the source of money for allegedly building about eight magnificent houses. It is also on record that the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC) interrogated Mr. Mike Okiro, the Chairman, Police Service Commission (PSC) and five others over alleged N275.5 million frauds (Vanguard Newspaper, Thursday, 6th June, 2015).

Although it was reported by the Transparency International Global Corruption Index that the political sector seem to be the most corrupt in the African continent, a further breakdown of the corruption analysis in the same report highlighted the fact that the Police and the legal system (judiciary) stand at the top of the corruption perception index (Barameter, 2012).

Extending the corruption elasticity further, the IDR final report (2003) rated the police as the most corrupt institution in Nigeria. This is further corroborated by Okonkwo (2003) who asserted that the Nigerian police force is the most unscrupulous organization which the general public has totally lost confidence in and disaffected with. Thus given the statutory role of the Police in the fight against crime and corruption, it is quite ironic that the same body is now engulfed with serious issues of corruption to a very worrisome height. Figure 1.1 below shows two pictures of Nigerian Police men and women involved in corrupt/unethical behaviour



Table 1.1: Corruption by institutions in Nigeria.

Rank	Institution
1	National police
2	Political parties
3	National and state legislatures Local/municipal governments
4	Federal/state executive councils Traffic police and federal road safety corps
5	National electric power authority

According to Imhonopi, and Ugochukwu (2013), in another study of the integrity of key national public institutions in Nigeria, the level of integrity of institutions surveyed were abysmally low (ACBF, 2007). These institutions included the executive, parliament, the office of the auditor-general, the police, the judiciary and electoral commissions. The worst offender again turned out to be the Nigerian police force, which received the most negative ratings by all groups of concerned stakeholders: public officials, the private sector, and households.

Observers considered this negative image an upshot of the lingering legacy of protracted military rule, during which several societal institutions were effectively neutralized, resulting in what some concerned stakeholders referred to as a "vandalization" of the structure and normal procedures for purposeful public sector management. Non-state institutions, such as the private sector and civil society groups, are too weak and therefore are unable to put the national institutions in check.

Adekunle (2006) for instance, contends that white collar crime and brutality has eaten deep into the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) especially the collection of bribe from motorists by members of the Police force. Drawing from Adekunle's position, the Nigerian Police Force has been firmly criticized by the general public for what has now become open corrupt practice by the sector. The level of unethical practices portends great danger for the socio-economic development of the country.

II. Institutional Decay Of The Police Force In Nigeria

Interestingly, Umeagbalasi and Ijeoma (2013) argue that, "notwithstanding the forgoing inadequacies, there are still the good in the NPF working to the best of their abilities to give the Force a new good name and a new path". Thus, the Nigerian police, without any fear of contradiction, have been able to keep their head above the waters at international meets, particularly, in the area of peace-keeping operations. Never has the competence of the organization been called to question at such global assignments. If anything, like their Military counterpart, they have to the admiration of the whole world, demonstrated courageous leadership time and again, even in the face of most daunting of challenges.

For instance, the UN Correspondent of the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) reports that Nigeria occupies the fifth position as the largest Troop Contributing Country after Ethiopia. Likewise, **Newsdiary** (2010) reports that "the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) has presented special UN medals to 34 Nigerian Police Officers, including three (3) females, currently serving in UN international peacekeeping mission in Southern Sudan for their outstanding and exceptional performance in the discharge of their assigned roles".

In her speech, while decorating the officers with their medals, the SRSR Mrs. Hilda Johnson described the honour as hard earned considering the enormous commitment and sacrifices the officers are making in their efforts towards enthroning the rule of law in the newly independent state. She commended the Federal Government of Nigeria as well as the Nigeria Police Management Team for their strategic partnership and contributions towards global peace. She described Nigerian Police officers at the mission as one of the most resourceful and competent personnel in the mission and urged them to continue to uphold those virtues that have made the Nigeria Police Force one of the most sought after Police organizations in UN missions all over the world.

The puzzle however, is the level of mediocrity with which the same police has come to be known for at the domestic level. One cannot but wonder that an organization with such an age-long tradition of resounding international applause has had to persistently come under very heavy knocks at the home front. An average Nigerian police officer despite blazing the trail abroad commands neither respect nor confidence of the citizenry. He is canonized out of the country, yet demonized back at home.

The disproportion in the image perception of the Nigerian police at home and abroad is a creation of a fundamental institutional disconnect between the establishment and the relevant government authorities. The overall welfare packages and necessary structures needed by the institution for effective discharge of their duties are grossly inadequate. This owes largely to the fact that, the Nigerian police in what appears to be an "institutional conspiracy" by successive governments are deprived of the minimum enabling environment to deliver on the mandate. Yet, the system expects the organization to perform a magic of sort when the need arises. The police officer even though may be desirous of contributing his own quota to the system; he is so to speak, completely incapacitated.

Serious nations of the world where human lives command value have come to know, accept and live with the fact that adequate motivation can only precede performance in all spheres of life and the police in Nigeria is not an exception to this rule. It is against this background therefore, that this paper deploys the y states that we all, including all men and officers of the Nigerian police, start a new job with enthusiasm and motivation to do well. But over time, due to bad administrative policies and poor work conditions, many of us lose our motivation and excitement.

While it is easy to conclude that the police are victims of "self-inflicted injuries", it is however important to note that the typical Nigerian policeman is faced with a complex web of system-induced inadequacies which if not tackled, would further damage completely his already battered image. For instance, he considers as luxury what his counterparts in other climes take as basics for performance. Things like hand cuffs, operational patrol vehicles, computers, arms and ammunitions, power generating sets etc, are beyond his reach. There is also the issue of inadequate logistics to procure the much needed arms and ammunition, uniform and other accoutrement, which you often see policemen buying for themselves as against international best practices. The challenges are not only daunting but hydra-headed.

It is also stating the obvious that one of the challenges facing the police is inadequate manpower, both in terms of quantity and quality. Training and re-training of officers and men is in the front burner world over. They include basic training, field officers training and in-service training. However, in comparative terms, the

police in Nigeria lack proper training to hone their skills, in the area of information gathering and analysis, counter terrorism and insurgency as well as in other covert operations.

The issue of paucity of fund readily comes to the fore too. Often it is said, “If you pay peanuts, you hire monkeys”. Like most public servants in Nigeria, the police “take home” pay is not even enough to cater for basic needs, and most worrisomely, it is hardly paid, as at when due.

Table 1.2 below shows the appalling statistics of The Consolidated Police Salary Structure (CONPOSS) as at March, 2011.

Table 1.2: Consolidate Police Salary Structure (CONPOSS)				
S/no	Cadre	Rank	Salary Level	Monthly Salary (NGN)
1	Men	Recruit	Level 01 (1)	N8, 342.96
2		Constable	Level 02 (1)	N42, 508.13
			Level 02 (10)	N46, 840.86
			Level 03 (1)	N43, 293.80
			Level 03 (10)	N48,619.16
3		Corporal	Level 04 (1)	N44,715.53
			Level 04 (10)	N51,113.59
4		Sergeant	Level 05 (1)	N48,540.88
			Level 05 (10)	N55, 973.84.
5		Sergeant Major	Level 06 (1)	N53, 144.81
	Level 06 (10)		N62, 204.88	
6	Officers	Cadet Inspector	Level 07 (1)	N73, 231.51
Level 07 (10)			N87, 135.70	
7		ASP	Level 08 (1)	N127, 604.68
			Level 08 (10)	N144, 152.07.
8		ASP1	Level 09 (1)	N136, 616.06
			Level 09 (10)	N156, 318.39
9		DSP	Level 10 (1)	N148, 733.29
			Level 10 (10)	N170, 399.69
10		SP	Level 11 (1)	N161, 478.29
			Level 11 (8)	N187, 616.69
11		CSP	Level 12 (1)	N172, 089.06
			Level 12 (8)	N199, 723.96
12		ACP	Level 13 (1)	N183, 185.73
			Level 13 (8)	N212, 938.16
13		DCP	Level 14 (1)	N242, 715.65
			Level 14 (7)	N278, 852.79
14	CP	Level 15 (1)	N266, 777.79	
		Level 15 (6)	N302, 970.47	
15	AIG	Level 16 (1)	N499, 751.87	
		Level 16 (6)	N546, 572.73	
16	IGP		N711, 498	

SOURCE: <http://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/159124-exclusive-inside-nigeria-police-shocking-work-conditions-officers-left-homeless-paid-peanuts.html>

From the table above, it can be clearly observed that a police recruit earns a consolidated annual salary of N108, 233, 00 and a monthly consolidated salary of N9, 019.42 but when N676.46 is deducted as pension, the recruit goes home with N8, 342.96. A police constable on grade level 02 (1) earns a gross monthly salary of N42, 508.13 while the one on grade level 02 (10) earns a total of N46, 840.86 with rent. A police constable grade level 03 (1) earns a gross monthly salary of N43, 293.80 while the one on step 10 earns N48,619.16 including rent while a corporal on grade level 04 (1), earns N44,715.53 and a corporal on grade level 04 (10) goes home with N51,113.59 per month including rent subsidy. The gross monthly salary of a police sergeant on grade level 05 (1) is N48, **540.88** while a Sergeant on step 10 earns N55, 973.84. A sergeant major on grade level 06 (1) earns N53, 144.81 and the one on grade level 06 (10) earns N62, 204.88 per month.

For the officer cadre, a cadet inspector on grade level 07 (1) earns N73, 231.51, an Inspector on grade level 07 (10) earns N87, 135.70 including rent subsidy while a cadet Assistant Superintendent of Police, ASP, on grade level 08 (1) earns N127, 604.68 and an ASP on grade level 08 (10) earns N144,152.07. An ASP1 on grade level 09 (1) earns N136, 616.06, an ASP on grade level 09 (10) earns N156, 318.39, a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) on grade level 10 (1) earns a total monthly salary of N148, 733.29, a DSP on grade level 10 (10) earns N170, 399.69, a Superintendent of Police (SP) on grade level 11 (1) earns N161, 478.29, an SP on grade level 11 (8) earns N187, 616.69. A Chief of Superintendent of Police, CSP, on grade level 12 (1) earns N172, 089.06, a CSP on the same level on step 8 earns N199, 723.96, an Assistant Commissioner of Police on grade level 13 (1) earns N183, 185.73, an ACP on grade level 13 (8) earns N212, 938.16 while a Deputy Commissioner of Police, DCP, on grade level 14 (1) earns N242, 715.65, a DCP on

grade level 14 (7) earns N278, 852.79. Also, a Commissioner of Police, CP, on grade level 15 (1) earns N266, 777.79; a CP on step 6 earns N302, 970.47. While an Assistant Inspector General of Police (AIG) on grade level 16 (1) gets N499, 751.87, an AIG on step 5 earns N546, 572.73.

It is important to note that from a comparative point of view, the salary of the Nigerian Inspector-General of Police (IG) who is considered the highest ranking Police Officer is meager when juxtaposed the highest ranking officers in other similar organizations such as the heads of the; State Security Services(SSS); National Intelligence Agency (NIA) and the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). For instance, while the IGP earns N711, 498 per month, the Director General of the SSS earns N1, 336 million per month and the EFCC Chairman, N1.5 million, per month.

In a country reputed for her stupendous wealth from oil revenues, and where politicians and senior public officers plunder the wealth with impunity, the miserable stipends of a salary and emoluments of police officers to all intents and purposes, is simply unacceptable to say the least. The police officers' wives neither have any form of economic empowerment nor their children anything near quality education, yet they co-exist with the rest of the public who they are meant to protect, members of who flagrantly flaunt around and even intimidate them with their sometimes, ill-gotten wealth.

The housing condition (particularly for the rank and file) can at best be described as deplorable. Whilst the policemen are expected to be on top of their game professionally speaking, they face the challenge of inadequate office and residential accommodation. The police cells are not left out of these uninhabitable living conditions. The dilapidating structures (called houses) in most barracks littered across the nation are small in sizes and out of tune with modern architectural realities. The filth of the environments makes them vulnerable to outbreak of all kind of diseases. As is the case in their offices, electricity and even portable water are believed to be unaffordable luxuries.

Again more often than not, criminals of all sorts, find the barracks as safe haven, because it is littered with shanties, occupied by civilians. The implication is that all these rub off negatively on their performance and relationship with the larger society. Figure 1.2 below shows a police barrack with a poor sanitary condition.



Every policeman like most bread winners, would want to know what is on the table for him and his family members in the event of retirement, permanent incapacitation or even death in active service, particularly in a country where the insurance policies are not comprehensive enough in spirit and letters, and where octogenarians who served the country meritoriously, sometimes die on the queue in pension offices and banks while waiting to collect their monthly stipends. This lends credence to Okonkwo (2003) that “it turns out to be a nightmare for retired policemen to successfully secure their retirement benefits in a short while”. All these account for the frustrations that lead to some isolated cases of violent misconduct such as “accidental discharge”, a catchphrase that has found an objectionable place in the lexicon of the Nigerian police.

III. Conclusion

The study reveals that owing to age-long neglect of the police establishment, the monster of corruption has not only eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian police but it also portend grave danger that threatens the very foundation of the institution, and by implication, the larger Nigerian society. Unless drastic measures are taken and urgently too, a disaster of immense proportion awaits the nation in the not- too-distant future.

IV. Recommendations

Following the arguments in this paper, it is recommended that:

- As a paradigm shift in its attitude both to duty and the public which is its primary and only constituency, the police through its high command should as a matter of urgency, embark on a vigorous and deliberate reorientation of its teeming personnel through public lectures, seminars, workshops, symposia and other avenues of education.
- To have a proactive, responsive and responsible police, it is high time the issue of training and retraining is accorded its pride of place in the scheme of things. The governments should ensure that comprehensive and task oriented training structures are entrenched. To whom much is expected, much is given. Nigeria cannot as a nation in the 21st Century continue to relegate the manpower development need of her police to the background and expect anything short of mediocre performance.
- Giant strides in policing are remotely and directly connected with infrastructural enhancement and availability of logistics. On that premise, there should be a boost in housing, transportation, health and other schemes for the police. The current trend is a far cry from minimum acceptable standards.
- The Nigerian governments in a bid to reposition the Force should begin to look inwards with a view to completely overhauling the entire Police system, beginning with a blueprint for the take off of strong community policing networks otherwise referred to as neighborhood watch for information exchange, and to maintain a collaborative problem solving approach to crime.

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