



CIVILIAN DISTRUST AND POLICE INTELLIGENCE GATHERING IN LAGOS METROPOLIS.

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Abstract

Intelligence-led policing strategies are gradually becoming vital to the modern law enforcement approach. More than ever, this collaborative problem-solving enterprise fore-grounded in improved police intelligence operations and community members' collaboration is now considered beneficial in many parts of the world. Globally, police departments rely heavily on members of the community to effectively fight against crime and criminals. The realisation in recent times is that the roles of informants are becoming more critical as police and community members' relationships in fighting against crime are becoming more indispensable. However, the extent of distrust between police officers and members of the community has become a significant driver of the unwillingness and reluctance of many people to provide police with information that will aid criminals' arrest. Findings from the research have shown that many community members feel that the police are corrupt, do not protect informants and often do not effectively execute reported cases. This situation could make them vulnerable to criminal reprisal attacks. Based on the above, this study using exploratory research design investigates the opinion of 200 public members from four selected local governments in the Lagos metropolis to gauge how civilian distrust has impacted police intelligence gathering. The findings showed that most of the respondents (potential informants) indicated their unwillingness to give helpful information about criminals to police based on their distrust of them.

Keywords: *Civilian, police, intelligence gathering, distrust, Lagos metropolis*

Introduction

The place of intelligence-led policing as a viable option in the Criminal Justice System in any part of the globe cannot be over-emphasised. Information (Intelligence) professionally and stealthily gathered and processed by relevant police departments is critical for decision-making, planning, strategic targeting, and crime prevention. There is a broad unity among social researchers in crime, criminality and criminal justice systems that the success of law-enforcement organisations at all levels depends on intelligence operations. The consensus is that law enforcement agents cannot function adequately and effectively when and where intelligence gathering is lacking (Lum & Nagin, 2017).

Available evidence from many developed parts of the world has shown that intelligence-driven or intelligence-led policing strategies are gradually becoming a vital component of the modern law enforcement approach. Since the beginning of the 20th century, there has been a steady growth in the sophistication involved in how law-enforcement agents gather and process crime/criminal-related information and Intelligence (UNODC, 2006). Indeed, the process of gathering, analysing, and evaluating information by police, which had been hitherto done crudely, manually, and for long hinged on a 'demand-led' approach, has evolved considerably to embrace modern cutting-edge information technology systems and stratagems. Consequently, modern policing in developed worlds now exudes improved intelligence-gathering capacities that make decision-making more accurate and justifiable. As a cautionary note at this juncture, it is imperative to highlight the three main modes of intelligence gathering, which are: Open Source Intelligence (OSINT), Cyber Intelligence (CYBINT), and Human Intelligence (HUMINT). This study concentrates on the latter (HUMINT).

Unlike the recent development in intelligence gathering that is done proactively, detectives using 'demand-led' policing techniques traditionally discharge their responsibilities in a more 'reactive way'. With a 'demand-led' approach, cases are assigned to Police officers to conduct on-the-spot assessment of crime scenes to investigate, unravel, and ascertain criminals and their levels of culpability. However, modern-day intelligence-led policing has spurred activities that require detectives to know about the activities of prolific offenders and aptly set up proactive operations against them (Maguire & Norris, 1992; Ericson, 1981). Intelligence-led policing is all about the

analytic process that involves collecting and assessing information about crimes and criminals with the sole aim of making inferences about problems, criminal activities and thereby prosecuting criminals or making projections on crime trends.

Highlighting the indispensability of modern means of intelligence-led policing in the United States of America with particular reference to drug enforcement, the American *National Drug Control Strategy* states that:

"The war against drugs cannot be fought-much less won without good Intelligence. No military commander goes into battle without the best available information about his adversary and the field of battle itself. To effectively target our efforts where traffickers are most vulnerable, we must know the enemy far better than we do nowThat means we must collect critical information in imaginative and efficient ways; analyse data from all sources; produce intelligence tailored to the varying needs of decision-makers from the national to tactical levels; and see that the Intelligence is disseminated to users on time" (1989:87).

The above denotes the centrality and indispensability of good intelligence gathering among security and enforcement agencies.

In practice, intelligence-based policing is a collaborative scheme that comprises improved intelligence operations and community-based policing designed to solve problems through the collection and analysis of related data (Peterson, 2005). Unlike 'demand-led' policing, Intelligence-led policing prioritises the prevention of crime over its detection. When employed appropriately, it makes possible the development of strategic plans necessary for developing strategic plans to tackle current problems and prepare for future anticipated ones.

From all indications, intelligence gathering has been described as a task of monumental proportion that requires a potpourri of activities and players. Aside from the employment and adoption of technological gadgets and other valuable tools, informants and other members of the public (Civilians) are also used to source helpful information that might not be within the reach of police. The notion of the informant, as adopted in this study, suggests what is known as a confidential informant. As Donnelly (2011) puts it, with informants, law enforcement authorities would be efficient and effective in their bid to unearth and unravel the mysteries behind many

organised crime syndicates. He concludes that many pro-social individuals get indicted for criminal activities they do not commit due to the absence of information that informants should have supplied. There is a degree of consensus in the literature regarding how informants, sometimes called Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS), have become a core of modern-day policing in many parts of the world (Harney & Cross, 2008).

As enunciated in the work of Lum and Nagin (2017), the police and other law enforcement agencies have long relied on timely information from community members in their fights against crime. Many studies accentuate the unparalleled benefits of police-community relationships as a veritable mechanism for fighting against crime (Bergstrom, 2015; Chatterton, 2009). For instance, in the United States of America, the Criminal Justice System does not merely source information on criminal activities from community members. However, unlike many other countries, it regularly uses such information in combating crime (Blackmore, 2014). Blackmore (2014) further emphasised the essentiality and myriad of successes inherent in successful police-community relationships in the country. He further stressed how information sourced from community members is cherished and often seen as a reliable source of data necessary for fighting crime in the United States of America. Other factors that have made informants perpetually remain essential investigative tools among police and other law enforcement agents are the low cost of informants; their ability to provide timely information; and their lower level of risk when juxtaposed with the adoption of undercover agents and electronic gadgets for surveillance (UNODC, 2016).

African countries are also not exempted from information exchanges between police and community members as a reliable means of informing criminal investigations. According to Weiss (2016), police and security experts in Africa have severally retrieved raw confidential information from public members through tips, leads, and suspicious activity reports to capture and indict those in conflict with the law. For Manning (2004), informants have, over the years, provided reliable information on criminal conduct to police and other law enforcement agents. Evidence already cited also demonstrates that the capture of most culprits in Africa was made possible by informants' information acquired through the connection between the police and the community (Schreiber, 2001; Wisotsky, 1986).

Beyond the several benefits associated with the activities of members of the public (informants) in assisting police and other law enforcement agencies in gathering reliable information on criminal conduct, informants have also been negatively evaluated in several studies. According to Hutchins (2006), some informants' criminal histories and self-serving motivations are among the factors that raise doubt about or cast aspersion about their dependability and integrity. Similarly, there is a deluge of allegations in the literature that many potential or past informants are unwilling to provide police with information that may help them apprehend criminals because police do not sufficiently safeguard their privacy and maintain their anonymity. Another factor is that police do not fully prosecute most offenders until they are released off the hook (Hartley et al., 2007).

Against the background above, this study attempts to contribute to knowledge on how the police-public relationship in the Lagos metropolis has influenced police intelligence gathering. One prevailing argument in the literature is that a smooth relationship between the public and police will assist police greatly in gathering any form of Intelligence without many hindrances amidst the populace and vice versa. Furthermore, this study is also propelled by the widely touted distrust of many Nigerian against the police establishment.

Methods

Study Design

This study was conducted in four purposively selected local government areas in Lagos between July 2022 and August 2023. The four were purposely selected from the twenty local government areas in the Lagos States because they are the leading local government areas in population. Fifty people each were selected by accidental sampling from the four local government areas with the highest population in Lagos. The local government areas, according to the 2006 population census figures, are Alimosho – 1,456,783, Ajeromi-Ifelodun –2,000,346, Oshodi-Isolo -1,621,789, Kosofe – 665,421. For inclusion-exclusion criteria, only individuals (male and female) with relationships or direct contact with police were selected for the study.

Data Collection

This study triangulated both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. The data collection methods utilised in the study are in-depth interviews and questionnaire surveys. The researcher designed the questionnaire and interview guide to collect data from the respondents. Before collecting data for the main study, a pilot study was also conducted to modify the research instrument. The study population for the questionnaire survey consisted of 200 hundred individuals selected through accidental sampling in the four local government areas purposively selected for the study. Fifty respondents were picked from each local government area.

Similarly, five police officers working in the criminal investigation department of police in the selected local government areas were involved in the in-depth interview sessions. Altogether, both primary and secondary data were used in the study. Primary data was collected using qualitative methods (in-depth interviews) and supplemented by a quantitative method (a structured questionnaire survey). Secondary data was equally sourced from both unpublished and published materials.

Ethical Consideration

The data gathered was treated with the utmost confidentiality and was used for the purpose for which the study was conducted. The study was conducted in a language understood by all respondents, and adequate caution was taken to explain the rationale for the study to all that participated in it. The deception was never used, and the researcher ensured that the consent of all respondents was sought and obtained before the research instruments were applied to them.

Data Analysis

The analysis of data collected for the study was done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences software. The relevant variables were subjected to descriptive statistics. Simple frequency distribution and percentage were adopted to describe the outcome variables. Tape-recorded interview data were transcribed to analyse qualitative data gathered through in-depth interviews.

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Results

The focus of this section of the study was to present the descriptive data analysis and interpretation of the demographic and social characteristics of respondents for the study. The findings, analyses and discussions are based on data collected during fieldwork. The results of the demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 1. Majority of the respondents were male (52%), No formal education (2%), Primary education (2%), Secondary education (25%), and tertiary education (71%). Distribution by occupation showed unemployed (27%), Civil servants (25%), Trading ((28%), and Artisan (20%). The age of the respondents was 30 years and below (50%), 31-50 (31%), and 51+ (19%). For their marital status, married (50%), single (32%), and separated (18%). The demographic summary also shows the religion of the respondents as follows: Christians (51%), Muslims (48%), and traditionalists (1%). The distribution of respondents by ethnic group showed Yoruba (56%), Hausa/Fulani (27%), Igbo (9%), and others (9%).

Table 1
Frequency and Percentage Summary of the Socio-demographic Factors

Factors	Options	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	104	52
	Female	96	48
	Total	200	100.0
Religion	Christianity	102	51
	Islam	96	48
	Others	2	1
	Total	200	100.0
Education Level	No formal education	4	2
	Primary	4	2
	Secondary	50	25
	Tertiary	142	71
	Total	200	100.0
Occupation	Students	24	12
	Unemployed	30	15
	Professionals	38	19
	Businessmen	56	28
	Artisan	40	20
	Civil servants	12	6
	Total	200	100.0
Marital Status	Single	64	32
	Married	100	50
	Separated	26	13
	Widow/widower	10	5
	Total	200	100.0
Age	20-30	54	27
	31-40	46	23
	41-50	62	31
	51+	38	19
	Total	200	100.0
Ethnic group	Igbo	18	9
	Hausa/Fulani	54	27
	Yoruba	112	56
	Others	18	9
	Total	200	100.0

Author's field survey

Discussion

Based on the general knowledge which emphasises the necessity of public support for police successful enforcement of law and order in society, the study investigates respondents' opinions about the effectiveness of police services and how well they relate with members of the public as they discharge their official responsibilities and roles.

Table 2

Respondent's perception of police-public relationships

Items	Frequency Distribution	Percentage
Effectiveness and efficiency	51	25.5
Not effective/not efficient	147	73.5
Do not know	2	1.0
Total	200	100.0
Police relate with the public positively	62	31.0
Police relate with the public negatively	134	67.0
Do not know	4	2.0
Total	200	100.0
The police are friendly and nice.	42	21
Police are unfriendly	152	77
Do not know	4	2
Total	200	100

Author's field survey

As indicated in Table 2, the results from this study show that a quarter of the respondents (15.5%) thought that police are effective and efficient in how they perform their duty among ordinary members of society. Contrary to this claim, however, most (74%) respondents scored police low regarding their public image and crime prevention. Most respondents believed police officers in many parts of Nigeria could be more effective and efficient regarding crime prevention and police-public relationships. In addition, further analysis of data collected for the study shows that only a small fraction (31%) of the respondents maintain that police relationship with public

members is positive. In comparison, 67% asserted that how police relate with people could not be said to be positive. Closely related to the above, 21% of the respondents claim that police are friendly and nice. In comparison, 67% gave unfavourable and uncomplimentary verdicts that denote that police officers are always far from being nice and friendly as they attempt to perform their daily crime prevention tasks.

Similarly, the results of the data analysis collected through in-depth interview sessions show that most respondents doubted the effectiveness and efficiency of police officers. Many interviewed reported the commonality of inappropriate policing strategies, such as brutality against citizens, extra-judicial killing, corruption and extortion, and poor intelligence-gathering methods. The results further indicate that a significant number of police officers have reneged on their oath and role of protecting lives and properties and have enmeshed themselves mainly in the running after pecuniary gains, even at the expense of the rights and welfare of the people they have sworn allegiance to protect. One such discussion is presented below.

According to an interviewee:

Most police officers in Nigeria are not humane in treating innocent citizens. Even though their motto reads, "police is your friend"; many are not friendly. They are well known for the brutality of citizens and perversion of justice" **MALE/41/IDI/ – 05/03/2023**

Another had this to say:

“The common belief in Nigeria is that most policemen are untrustworthy; you cannot predict them. My personal experience with many police officers has shown that there is nothing they cannot do for the sake of money and gratification. However, the fact that many of them have trust issues has made many people look down on them and consider them the real enemy”. Often, they use brute force and barrels of their guns to extort Nigerians. **FEMALE/37/IDI/ – 05/03/2023**

Another remarked thus:

Generally, most police officers in Nigeria cannot be said to be effective and efficient in their lines of duty. We have heard of cases where criminals confessed that they were sometimes aided and abetted by members of the Nigerian Police. **MALE/ 29/IDI/ – 05/03/2023**

From the preceding, respondents' construction and narratives have, in a strong term, portrayed a significant number of police officers as unscrupulous individuals that use brute force to suppress people they ought to protect. These constructions have also shown some members of the Nigerian police to be violent, corrupt, and often connive with criminal elements to hoodwink unsuspecting Nigerians. Also, the in-depth data analysis shows that most respondents did not consider the police-public relationship cordial.

Trust or Distrust: Respondents' Relationships with Police

The rationale for this study stemmed from the intention of the researcher to gauge the quality of the existing relationships between members of the public and staffers of Nigerian police as the latter traverses the length and breadth of the city of Ibadan to control crime. To achieve this, questions ranging from the extent to which members of the public trust police in releasing sensitive information to them, their assertions about whether police officers abuse or misuse their powers on the citizens, how rife corruption is among the rank and file of police; and whether police officers are efficient and should be trusted in intelligence gathering.

Table 3*Measuring Respondents' Trust and Distrust for Police Activities*

Respondents' extent of trust in police	Frequency	%
Trust police	40	20
Do not trust the police	160	80
Do not know	-	-
Total	200	100.0
Respondents' narration of Factors responsible for Police Distrust		
Corruption	41	20.5
Extortion	07	3.5
Extrajudicial killing	60	30.0
Brutality of police	18	9.0
Disregard for the rule of law	19	9.5
Poor handling of cases	24	12.0
Poor methods of intelligence gathering	31	15.5
Total	200	100.0

Author's field survey

Table 3 shows the diverse views of respondents as they describe the extent of trust and distrust people have in police officers. The data presented in the table revealed divergent claims from respondents regarding whether police officers can be trusted. Most of the respondents (80%) indicated that they could not trust police officers in the country, while 20% of them claimed that some policemen are reliable and can be trusted. The respondents were further probed to list some factors that influenced their decisions on whether or not to trust police personnel in their line of duty. The majority of the respondents, 30% and 20.5%, highlighted corrupt practices and extra-judicial killings common among police officers in Nigeria as factors that influenced their claims that most police officers in Nigeria are not trustworthy regarding crime control. In a similar trend, 3.5%, 9%, 9.5%, 12% and 15.5% of respondents respectively indicated extortion, police brutality, flagrant for the rule of law, poor handling of cases, and poor methods of intelligence gathering as some of the factors that influenced their decisions that most police officers in Nigeria are not to be trusted when they discharge their responsibilities as officers of the law.

The above findings from survey respondents are corroborated by data from in-depth interviews with civilian respondents and selected police officers that participated in the study.

An interviewee had this to say:

I have learnt from my personal and direct experiences with police officers in many parts of the country that many of these government agents need to be more reliable and should be trusted. Some are even worse than known offenders and criminals based on various vices they perpetrate regularly.

Another retorted thus:

Most police officers in this country are fantastically corrupt; some engage in fraudulent practices to make illegal money. Many are lawless and can sabotage even the government they claim to represent when money is involved.

A respondent said this:

It is risky for any civilian to trust most Nigerian policemen and women; many will use whatever information you give them against you whenever they want to make quick money from you. Some may even divulge your secrets to criminals to make illegal money.

A 45-year-old police interviewee gave his observation:

It is not false that there are some bad eggs within Nigerian police. The misdeeds of some of the bad cops in the Nigerian police have pushed away a lot of potential informants from us. The reluctance of informants is one of the reasons police now use what is known as constabulary police to unravel the crime.

Another police interviewee observed in consonance with other respondents:

Some of our colleagues could be better and should have yet to find their way into the police department due to the many clandestine illicit activities they engage in. Despite this, the country still has a load of forthright and law-abiding policemen.

As seen in the preceding excerpts, respondents for the study, which included selected police personnel, have re-established the common conception among many Nigerians that many police officers are corrupt. Beyond the fact that many of these officers are corrupt, the findings from the study have shown that many of them are often enmeshed in regular conflict with members of society. In essence, the findings have shown that many of them indirectly break the law instead of enforcing it.

Respondents' Willingness to assist police in intelligence gathering

At this point, the researcher investigated respondents' perspectives on their Willingness to assist police in gathering Intelligence about crime and criminals. This is an important step that will help the researcher to sufficiently understand whether members of the public are open to providing Intelligence that would aid police in unearthing crime and criminality. With this stance, the researcher understood the respondents' mindset relative to them, providing necessary information that would assist police in breaking crime and implementing arrests. Against this backdrop, the study revealed that the negative perceptions and notions that many of the respondents have against many police officers strongly influenced their positions on whether or not they will make themselves available to assist police in gathering Intelligence. Most respondents rejected the claim that good citizens must work with police to expose crime and criminals (See Table 4).

Table 4

Respondents' Willingness to assist police in Intelligence Gathering

Respondents' Readiness to Provide Intelligence	Frequency	%
Trust police and willing to provide Intelligence	16	8
Do not trust the police and not willing to provide Intelligence	182	91
Do not know	2	1
Total	200	100.0
Respondents' Choices of types of information \ Intelligence they are willing to provide for police.		
Non-crime related information	167	83.5
Auto-accident information	13	6.5
Information about civil physical fights and quarrel	8	4
Information about the disappearance of people	12	6
Total	200	100.0
Likely reasons for suppressing Intelligence		
Police may divulge information given to criminals for pecuniary gains	171	85.5
Police can use your information against you	17	8.5
Many police officers are careless	8	4
Weary of frequent visits to police stations	4	2
Total	200	100.0

Author's field survey

The depiction of many officers of Nigerian police as untrustworthy, unreliable and money chasers has negatively affected the respondents' Willingness to provide the Intelligence reports that these agents of law may need to unearth hidden criminal acts and activities. Indeed, quantitative information in Table 4 has brought to the fore that most respondents did not hesitate to show their unwillingness to release vital information that might be useful for police officers to crack crime and criminality. While 8% of the respondents that participated in the study maintained that they were willing to assist police officers with the necessary information to crack crime, the majority (91%) showed their unwillingness to provide intelligence/ information to police to fight crime.

To clarify respondents' choices (approval and disapproval) to or to not furnish the police with Intelligence, the majority (83.5%) stressed that they would only provide information that is not crime-related to police. Similarly, 6.5%, 4%, and 6% of the respondents respectively claimed that they were only willing to offer Intelligence on matters such as cases of people involved in auto accidents, civil physical fights and quarrels, and information about the disappearance of people to police. Indeed, 85.5% of respondents hinged their unwillingness or reluctance to reveal information or Intelligence to police because they (police) have the propensity to divulge such vital information or Intelligence to criminals who may later stage reprisal attacks on them. Similarly, 8.5% of respondents claimed they would be unwilling to provide Intelligence because the police might use such information against them. Also, 4% of respondents claimed that they are not ready to provide Intelligence to police because many officers are careless, during 2% based their reluctance to supply information to the police. After all, they dislike paying several visits to police stations for unending interrogations and writing of 'statements'.

In consonance with the findings from the survey, the researcher also investigated the extent to which respondents were willing to assist police in intelligence gathering through the adoption of in-depth interviews. Most interviewees showed their scepticism towards willingly supplying Intelligence to police concerning arresting criminals and crime-busting. While few of the interviewees did not see anything wrong in providing helpful information to police to assist them in catching up with criminals and consequently reduce crime, most of the interviewees clearly

expressed the negativities and dangers associated with sharing information about criminals with police.

A married female interviewee captured her ambivalence like this:

I am very wary of the Nigerian police and their antics; no one can predict what they can do. I have seen witnesses that were later treated as criminals in Lagos. My resolve is not to provide information to the police so they do not use it against me later.

A 55 years old man located his narrative in Policemen's knack for divulging confidential information to criminals:

Under no circumstance would I want to share vital information about criminals with any member of the Nigerian police? I have reservations about anybody in the police department in this country; I will always keep whatever I know to myself because I do not want criminals to see me as the individual that leaked information about their criminal activities to the police to avoid reprisal attacks.

A 28-year-old male interviewee cited the warning his father gave to all his children to stay clear of police officers as his reason:

I have learnt from my father that many police officers in Nigeria must be more careful in handling vital information. He told us how a drunken policeman, many decades ago, carelessly revealed the identity of a whistleblower right in the presence of the concerned suspect in his presence.

The following observation from the views of the respondents expressed above has shown that a significant number of respondents have lost hope in the ability of many officers of the Nigerian police to sincerely and expertly used whatever information/intelligence that members of the public might share with them concerning the countering of crime. To this end, most of the study's respondents have indicated why they would not want to be used as informants.

Conclusion

This study has systematically examined how and the extent to which civilian distrust for police in Nigeria has impacted the intelligence gathering of this (police) agency of the government. While it can be argued that other government security agencies are equally responsible for intelligence gathering in the country, they need to be constitutionally enabled, like the police, to

collect timely information from community members in their fights against crime. Based on the ensuing findings from this study, while few respondents have shown their Willingness and readiness to cooperate with police in their bid to gather Intelligence from the public, most of the respondents are wary of police and have consequently indicated their unwillingness to release vital information that could assist police in crime control. Deductions from both quantitative and qualitative techniques adopted in the study have revealed the category of respondents that indicated their unwillingness to serve as informants based on their reluctance to work with police on their recklessness and mishandling of sensitive intelligence reports about crime and criminals. While accusations such as police inappropriate handling of sensitive information and outright divulging of whistleblower identity and information to criminals were generally agreed upon by most respondents to have had some impact in reducing their trust in police, it has also been commonly acknowledged by respondents that unwillingness of most people to work as informants for police is not unconnected with the fear of witness being taken as the culprit.

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