



(REVIEW ARTICLE)



Public perception on police effectiveness and accountability in Nigeria: Insights into crime prevention and control

Esther Chinaza Nwachukwu ^{1,*}, Imuetiyan Ruby Adeyemo ², Ohita Princess Asije ³, Gbemisola Odejide ⁴ and Diana Oboite Uwaila ⁵

¹ Nasarawa State University, Nigeria.

² Babcock University, Nigeria.

³ University of Ibadan, Nigeria.

⁴ North Dakota University, USA.

⁵ Texas Tech University, USA.

World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews, 2024, 24(01), 759–765

Publication history: Received on 18 August 2024; revised on 05 October 2024; accepted on 08 October 2024

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2024.24.1.2978>

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to assess the Perception of the Public of the Nigeria Police Force on the role of Effective Crime Control and Management in Kabong, Jos North local government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. Findings of the study revealed that the public perception of the police is on the negative side which negatively influences confidence and trust in the police by the public. This affects the effectiveness of the police in discharging its duty of crime prevention and control efficiently. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that the police force should foster community engagement and establish a system for continuous evaluation and improvement. This will result in a huge level of public support, and confidence will be gained in the police to effectively curtail crime. This will go a long way in reducing the negative perception of the public of the Nigeria Police.

Keywords: Crime; Crime Control; Nigeria Police Force; Public Perception; Community Policing

1. Introduction

Nigeria's rapidly rising crime rate has become a pain in the flesh and the topic of national conversation. There is not a day in the country when we do not hear about some crime being committed by various groups of individuals, which is disturbing. Terrorist attacks in most parts of Nigeria's northern region are the most common issue we face (Achumba, 2013). As a result, the Nigerian government has prioritized the threat of national crime, allocating a significant portion of the national budget to crime. The high number of violent crimes in the country, including terrorism, abduction, armed robbery and banditry, suicide bombings, religious killings, ethnic confrontations, politically motivated killings, and a variety of other criminal activities, is quickly becoming a common and natural occurrence.

Gradually, Nigeria has ranked low in the Global Peace Index (GPI, 2021), which shows or defines a state that cannot be amended regarding crime, insecurity, etc. In the same light, fellow researchers stressed that the issues of crime had taken a compelling depth and coaxed the country's political and economic managers and also the nation at large to a regretful situation, the loss of their loved ones, investment and absence of security in most facets of the state. As the days pass, innocent blood is spilled, and citizens' displays of enduring frustration have remained an excellent reason to seek assistance. Terrorist attacks and assassinations are rapidly resembling those that occurred during Nigeria's civil war. This major issue is quickly escalating and expanding beyond the capabilities of the Nigerian government, while we Nigerians perceive the government to be inept and incapable of producing beneficial results. Looking at the causes of

* Corresponding author: Esther Chinaza Nwachukwu

this abnormality, Onifade (2010) opined that there is a link between increasing ethnic hate, religious bigotry, political rivalry, and an increasing population of dissatisfied citizens in the country who feel short-changed and have limited or no access to the common inheritance. This expresses the point that the primordial abilities of various ethnic militias and the dominant religious fundamentalism in places, as represented by some areas of the dominant religious establishments in Nigeria, have unavoidably increased or maximized the level and tendency of various scholars who pointed out the same factors that are responsible for the country's sudden burst of crime. They discussed how the Nigerian government's response to the vast unemployment and fuel scarcity has exacerbated the country's crime problem. Poverty, unemployment, and poor savings, which have forced many retrenched individuals into an aggressive struggle for existence, as well as high inflation and political intolerance on the side of the ruling party, have all contributed in some way to the country's high crime rate. Another important reason for any government to exist is to have anti-corruption institutions. The function is emphasized in the Federal Republic of Nigeria's 1999 constitution, which states that "crime and the welfare of the people shall be the major reasons for the government's existence." The government entrusted the maintenance of internal crime to the Nigerian police to carry out this obligation. The Nigerian police are tasked by law with preventing, stopping, and detecting crime, maintaining national peace and order, and enforcing all rules and regulations. They are also expected to accomplish these tasks effectively and efficiently. With the increasing prevalence of crime in the country today, many individuals believe that the Nigerian police are falling short of their essential levels of performance (Okiro, 2007). They are considered toothless dogs that can just bark but not bite. Researchers discussed whether there is a necessity to prove the Nigerian police's non-performance in the current situation. Instead, all that is required is the identification of the significant incompetence, problems, and limits that are to blame for the current state of affairs.

The Nigerian police force is integral to the country's civil society. As a result, in addition to the challenges that have rendered their job ineffective in recent years, they face human issues that not only exacerbate their material deficiencies but also significantly negatively impact their overall performance from day to day. Under-funding and under-utilization of monies for essential aspects of force expansion, such as training, logistics, weaponry and ammunition, and so on, are teeth on the rim of competent and productive police performance. Morality is not a virtue among cops. Adegoke (2018) discussed that police corruption and the theft of money from individuals are significant concerns, as they are expected to be moral and valuable as law enforcement officers. Officers slaughtered efficient and productive performance of duties on the verge of corruption in their desire to meet up with mates in the community (Adegoke, 2018).

2. Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive survey design as the strategy or plan of action regarding events, which, upon implementation, will enable the researcher to investigate the problem of this study. This study used a questionnaire and in-depth interviews as research instruments. For the uniqueness and peculiarity of the subject of the survey, more than one data collection instrument was employed to get accurate and reliable information, known as the triangulation or mixed method. The data collection instruments used in this research were a structured questionnaire and an in-depth interview. Therefore, the design is suitable for this study because data was collected from respondents using questionnaires and in-depth interviews to assess public perception of the police force in crime control and management. The study was conducted in Kabong of Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State. The study population for this research consists of the total number of people residing in Kabong, Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State. The total number of people living in Kabong is 83,454, based on the National Population Census of 2006. Cluster Sampling technique was used for this study. The quantitative data obtained from the field were processed and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as simple percentages, tables, and frequency distribution. The data were obtained from the respondents by administering questionnaires collated and analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS Version 20.0). Three hundred and eighty-two (382) questionnaires were administered within the study area; out of the total number of questionnaires administered, only three hundred and fifty (350) copies were fully completed and returned by the respondents.

3. Results

Table 1 Opinion of Respondents on Negative Perception of the Police by Residents of Kabong in terms of Crime Management in Kabong

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	93	26.6
Strongly Agree	173	49.4
Disagree	52	14.9
Strongly Disagree	32	9.1
Total	350	100.0

Source: Field Survey, July 2023

Table 1 shows that the respondents indicated the public's perception of the role of the police in the management of crime in Kabong, Jos North. The table reveals that close to half (49.4%) of the respondents strongly agreed that they have a negative perception of the police in their role in crime management in Kabong. This shows a negative public perception of the police force in their crime control and management role in Kabong. This finding is in line with the findings of Alemika (2022), who revealed that the Public Perception of the police is on the negative side and that it is largely due to a combination of structural, political, socioeconomic, and cultural factors as well as institutional inadequacies that have prevented the Nigeria Police Force from adequately performing their duties satisfactorily. It also aligns with the findings of John (2017), who opined that the police have lost their respect and integrity in the eyes of many Nigerians due to unpleasant personal experiences or experiences of other people in the police force.

3.1. Excerpts from one of the respondents:

Like the subject of your research, people's perceptions of the police are one major challenge we are struggling with. People have developed a thick skin toward the police, and sharing information to help us in our investigation is becoming a challenge (KII with Superintendent of Police O.C Outstation, Kabong on the public perception of the police, 17th July 2023, Jos).

3.2. In similar vein, another respondent also stated:

The general perception people have about police is like you have in the general public, where people do not usually want to relate with policemen, and understandably so; this is because they have had bitter experiences relating to policemen, and these bitter experiences linger in their minds. (KII, Mai Angwa Gadabiyu Kabong community on the public perception of the police, 17th July 2023, Jos)

The interview revealed that ill-trained policemen who show unprofessional conduct in the discharge of their duties have dented the policeman's image in their role of crime management and control in the area. Both respondents agreed that the public's perception of the police has been bad.

Table 2 Opinion of Respondents on Low Confidence and Trust in the Police by Residents in Kabong

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	152	43.4
Strongly Agree	161	46.0
Disagree	35	10.0
Strongly Disagree	2	1.6
Total	350	100.0

Source: Field survey, July 2023

Table 2 reveals that two-thirds (45.7%) of the respondents agreed that they have low confidence and trust in the police force in their crime control and management role in Kabong. This shows that residents in Kabong have low confidence

and trust in the police. This finding aligns with the findings of Ikuteyijo (2020), who argued that there has been growing public distrust of the Nigeria Police Force, apparent loss of confidence in them, hatred and suspicion, and the feeling of intimidation by police presence. Ikuteyijo(2020) opined that most Nigerians are no longer prepared to provide or share information that will help expose criminals or even get involved in identifying them. It also aligns with the findings of Aniche (2021), who argued that unpleasant experiences with the police in the discharge of their duties, such as unwarranted stops on the road, verbal and physical abuse, individuals' experience seem disrespectful, unfair and intrusive have all created a level of distrust for the Nigeria Police who needs the public's partnership to effectively curb crime.

From the interview, one of the respondent, responded explicitly that;

Yes, the people here in Kabong have lost trust and confidence in us, which has stopped them from giving us the timely information necessary for prosecution. Although this is the case, the commissioner and the inspector General are trying to build on the police. On our part, we are doing our best even though it has not been easy because of their loss of confidence in us in handling reported issues; we are educating them now, letting them know that Kabong being safe is for their benefit as well their properties, visitors coming to Kabong and also the business people trading here in Kabong (KII with Superintendent of Police, O.C Outstation Kabong, on public perception of the police, 17th July 2023, Jos).

Another respondent backed the notion by saying;

Honestly speaking, as the Mai Angwa of this community, people have become very scared when it comes to sharing information necessary for prosecution when invited to my house to give a statement. This has become a burden for even me to adequately curtail the increase of crime in our society (KII with Mai Angwa Gadabiyu, Kabong on public perception of the police, 17th July 2023, Jos).

From the interview, it was evident that even though the police are making efforts to correct people's negative impressions of them, there has been a loss of trust and confidence in their ability to control crime in Kabong.

Table 3 Opinions of Respondents on the Non-cordial Relationship between the Police and the Public in Kabong

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	105	30.0
Strongly Agree	134	38.3
Disagree	104	29.7
Strongly Disagree	7	2.0
Total	350	100.0

Source: Field Survey, July 2023

Table 3 shows that more than half 29.7% and 38.7% (68.0%) of the respondents agreed that the relationship between the police and residents in Kabong has been poorly cordial and uncooperative. This shows that the relationship between the police and the public has been non-cordial and uncooperative in Kabong. This finding aligns with the findings of Ajayi and Longer (2019), who stated that the majority of the members of the public, both from rural and urban areas, described the relationship between them and the police as very antagonistic. Ajayi and Longe (2019) opined that the ordinary man on the street greets the police with fear and hatred, perceives them as inept and high-handed, and never sees them as allies or friends of the people.

A respondent from the in-depth interview stated that;

As an outstation in the community, I think our relationship with the residents has been really rough. It has been difficult to have a very cordial relationship with the residents of Kabong, and they have remained uncooperative. While some offer to give timely information to enable us to curtail the excess of criminal elements, some bluntly refuse. (KII with Superintendent of Police O.C Outstation Kabong on public perception of the police, 17th July 2023, Jos).

From the interview, it was discovered that the respondent agreed that the relationship between the police and residents in Kabong has been non-cordial as residents are unwilling to cooperate with the police. From an in-depth interview with

another respondent, it was discovered that despite the efforts of the police force to curtail crime, the residents have lost trust and confidence and have remained uncooperative in the sharing of timely information.

Table 4 Opinions of Respondents on the Poor Response to Emergencies by the Police Force in Kabong

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	90	25.7
Strongly Agree	180	51.4
Disagree	49	14.0
Strongly Disagree	31	8.9
Total	350	100.0

Source: Field Survey, July 2023

Table 4 shows that more than half (51.4%) of the respondents agreed that the police in Kabong have poorly responded to crimes reported at police stations in Kabong. The result implies that police response to emergency crime situations has been poor in Kabong. This finding is in line with the findings of Ajayi and Longe (2019), who opined that police response to crime cases has not been effective in responding to emergency incidents as expected and that the police insensitivity to the public has inhibited a harmonious relationship between them and the public. Policies must be formulated and implemented to restructure and reposition the police force to swiftly respond adequately to crime.

Excerpts from one of the respondents;

Well, I think about the limited resources, information, and shortage of personnel; the police have done fairly well in responding to emergencies in Kabong. However, there is always room for improvement and reform" (KII with Superintendent of Police, O.C Outstation Kabong on public perception of the police force, 17th July 2023).

From the interview, it was gathered that many challenges prevent the police from responding swiftly to crimes reported by residents. These include poorly serviced vehicles and a lack of allowance to carry firearms as an outstation, among others. Both respondents agree that the crimes reported have not been met with swift response.

From the data above, we can confidently conclude that the public's perception of the police's role in managing crime in Kabong is negative.

4. Discussion

After a careful and systematic study of the sampled population using questionnaires and interviews as instruments for data collection, simple percentage for presentation (SPSS version 25), and analysis done with the help of data collected and presented, the researcher was able to discover that more significant percentage of the respondents revealed the perception of the public on the role of the police in the management of crime in Kabong. The study shows that there is a negative perception of the police force in their role of crime management and control in Kabong as a more significant percentage of respondents agree to have a negative perception and loss of confidence in the police force, which has left a dent in the image of the police. This finding is in line with the findings of Aniche (2021), which stated that the factors responsible for the negative perception of the public towards the police on crime prevention and management stems from unwarranted stops by the police on the road, slow response to emergencies and incidents such as riots, verbal and physical abuse, individuals' bitter experiences seen as disrespectful, unfair and intrusive. This has created distrust for the Nigeria Police Force, which needs the public's partnership to effectively curb crime. Ikuteyijo(2020) also opined that there had been grown distrust of the Nigeria Police Force, apparent loss of confidence in them, hatred and suspicion, and the feeling of intimidation by police presence. Most residents and traders in Kabong are no longer prepared to provide or share information that will help expose criminals or even get involved in identifying them.

From the result of the study, recommendations will be made to help the Kabong community adjust their perception of the police and begin to have trust and confidence in the police force, and also propose specific strategies that can be deployed to help solve the challenges faced by the police force to eradicate the dent on their image by the public and enable and appreciation of their efforts in crime control and management.

5. Conclusion

The public perception in the Kabong area of Jos North of the Nigeria police force was negative, indicating a lack of trust and confidence in the police's ability to effectively address the prevailing crimes in Kabong. This negative perception may stem from inadequate resources, insufficient training, and lack of transparency and accountability within the police force. This study wishes to conclude that enhancing the public perception of the Nigeria Police Force in crime control and management in Kabong requires a comprehensive approach that involves active community engagement, continuous evaluation, and addressing the challenges faced by the police force. Implementing the recommendations makes it possible to build a stronger relationship between the police and the public, leading to improved crime control and management and, ultimately, a safer and more secure Kabong, Jos Plateau State.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following after carefully observing the data collected and analyzed based on the study's objectives.

- The Nigeria Police Force should foster and strengthen community engagement. The police should encourage regular interactions between police officers and community members through community policing initiatives, town hall meetings, and public awareness campaigns. Building positive relationships and trust with the community can lead to improved cooperation, confidence, and support among the community members in crime control and management in Kabong. The police force should establish mechanisms to ensure accountability and transparency within the police force. This can involve implementing a system for reporting and investigating complaints against officers, conducting regular internal audits, and promoting ethical conduct. Transparent practices and fair treatment involving the community can enhance public trust and confidence in the police, which will make the community begin to see the police in a positive light.
- While recognizing the police's efforts, it is crucial to establish a system for continuous evaluation and improvement. This can involve conducting regular assessments of crime trends, analyzing the effectiveness of implemented strategies, and seeking public feedback. By monitoring and evaluating their performance, the police can identify areas that require improvement and adjust their approaches. This ongoing evaluation process will help ensure
- that the police remain responsive to the evolving nature of crime in Kabong and maintain a high standard of crime control and management in Kabong.
- The Nigeria Police Force should have its resource constraints addressed. The police should be provided with adequate resources and infrastructure. This includes providing sufficient personnel, vehicles for patrols and response to incidents or emergencies, communication equipment where residents of Kabong can speed dial in case of emergency, forensic facilities to carry out investigations, and training resources. Adequate resources are essential for effective crime control and management in Kabong.
- The government should equip the youth with vocational skills such as shoe making, hairdressing, fashion designing, catering skills, and so on to equip them to earn a living. Again, the unemployed youths should be provided with gainful employment opportunities to get them occupied and valuable in the community. This will go a long way in crime prevention in Kabong as these equipped youths will have jobs that earn them money and not idle or have time to engage in criminal activities but contribute positively to the development of Kabong.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

References

- [1] Achumba C, Ighomereho, O. S and Akpor –Robaro, M. O. M (2013). Security Challenges in Nigeria and the Implications for Business Activities and Sustainable Development. *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development* .Vol. 14, (2), pp 79-99
- [2] Adegoke, N (2018). Kidnapping, Security Challenges and Socio-economic Implications to the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. *Central Point Journal: A Journal of Intellectual Scientific and Cultural Interest*. Vol. 16, (2).Pp 205-216.

- [3] Ajayi, J. O. & Longe, O. (2019). Public perception of the police and crime prevention in Nigeria. *British Journal of Education, Society and Behavioural Science*. 6(2), 145-153. Available from: www.sciencedomain.org [Accessed 19th June 2018].
- [4] Alemika E. O. (2022). *Criminal Victimization, Policing, and Governance in Nigeria*. Lagos: Cleen Foundation.
- [5] Aniche Blessing(2021) *Report of Youth and Policing Summit in Lagos State: CLEEN Foundation Lagos Office*, 2011.
- [6] Europol. 2018 Internet Organized Crime Threat Assessment(IOCTA) 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.europol.europol.eu/activities-services/main-reports/internet-organised.crime-threat-assessment-iocta-2018>.
- [7] ICPC (2010), *Combating Corruption in the Nigerian Police* . A paper presented at the Police Service Commission Retreat. August 8th
- [8] Ikuteyijo, L.(2020), *Community Partnership in Policing: The Nigerian Experience*. Ile-Ife, Nigeria.
- [9] John, M. D. (2017). *Public Perception of Police Activities in Okada, Edo State Nigeria.* *Covenant Journal of Business & Social Sciences (CJBSS)* Vol. 8 No.1, June, 2017.
- [10] Onifade (2016), *Community Partnership in Policing: The Nigerian Experience*. Ile-Ife, Nigeria
- [11] Okiro,M.M.(2007),*Foreword in Community Policing . Nigeria Police Force Operational Handbook*.
- [12] *The Dawn Newspaper* (2021), *Community Policing and National Security – Community Policing in Nigeria*. Thursday 27, January.
- [13] *The Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999). Constitution: Lagos: Government Printing Press The Police Act and Regulations, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004 Amended: Ikeja: Police Printing Press*
- [14] *The Nigeria Police Force in the year 2020 and Beyond: Imperatives of Peace and National Security*.