

Sociological Analysis of Police Public Relations in Yobe State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT : The study is an attempt to examine the police public relations in Yobe state, Nigeria. The aim is to identify areas of weaknesses and success in police community relation. Information and materials for the study were gathered from books, journals and government publications, interview and administration of questionnaire. The collected data was analyzed using simple percentage method and analyzed the data using statistical tools of analysis. Furthermore, the study revealed that the police as an institution are important for maintenance of law and order in the public but while the relationship between the police and the public is not cordial, because the opinion of the public is that of the police has an image problem and has not lived up to expectation. This is so because, corruption and indiscipline and maltreatment of suspects among others were identified as a problems affecting police public relations in the State. Therefore, most importantly the study recommended motivation of the policemen; training and enlightenment programmes among others as a way of enhancing police public relations in Yobe state and will restore the lost glory to the Nigerian Police.

I. INTRODUCTION

Community relation practices dates back to the creation of man. Public relations subsume varying definitions and as a profession, it started in the early twentieth century and has its origin from the United States of America. The development of public relations practice dates back to 1993 (Oditia, 1992). Although the public relations practices in Nigeria developed after the Second World War. The government was the first to recognize the importance of organized public relations. In 1940 at the peak of the Second World War, the then colonial government established the first information office in Lagos and the main objective of the office was to disseminate information. The office was also charged with the responsibility of sorting out matters connected with the newly established ministry of information. In 1944, the name was changed to public relation office which was accepted by the people who in those days had some misgiving about the information office (Okereke, 1991). Public relations as a profession, it emphasized that public relations makes an effort to project not only what it has been and is becoming, by interpreting it to the public in terms that people can understand, and interpreting the public to members of the organisation in terms they understand (Chucks 1990: p 53). Although, the essential ingredient of public relations has been summed up as the planned effort to influence opinions through good character and responsible performance based on mutually satisfactory two way communication between an organization and the public and vice versa (Jekins 1985: p 98, 99).

The stained relationship existing between the police and the community can be attributed to the involvement of the police in politics. They become politicized, hence very partisan in carrying out their normal duties. In Nigeria, the police are always ready to protect the government in power to the detriment of the public it serves. Clinard and Albolt (1973: p 41) observed that the police treat the middle and upper class with respect, because they see them as politically powerful and therefore worthy of respect. The orientation and training of the police is geared towards protecting the operative system (Clinard & Albolt 1973: p 41). There exist a strained relationship between the police and the public which affects police image and credibility in preventing crime. The role of the police in maintaining law and order as often been questioned by the public. The public negative attitude of the police is informed by the involvement of policemen with partiality of the police in cases to favour the rich, police brutality, and taking of bribe as well the poor response to distress call to mention but a few. The Yobe state police command is not different as many policemen have been found conniving with the men of the underworld. They are stealing, collecting bribes and then reckless killing of people during crises. In Yobe state, there is public out cry on the illegal extortion of money from motorist and motorcyclist, maltreatment of suspects by policemen, partiality of the police by taking side with the rich in cases brought to them, poor public interaction by policemen, and among other professional misconduct.

All these constitute serious problem and gives the police a bad image before the public. It is against this backdrop that the study is undertaken to examine; what are the role and function of Nigerian police in Yobe state, what are the strategies of Nigerian police in maintaining order among public in Nigeria, what is the Nature of relationship between the Nigerian police and the public in Yobe State? What are the impacts of police public relations in Nigeria? What are the problems militating against police public relations in Nigeria? What could be done to enhance police public relations in Yobe State?

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE ARTICLE

However, the major objective of the study is to examine the relationship between the police and the general public in Yobe state, while the specific objectives were to:

- a. Examine the role and function of the Nigerian police in Yobe State.
- b. Identify the strategies of the Nigerian police in maintaining order among the public in Yobe State.
- c. Determine the nature of relationship between the Nigerian police and the public in Yobe State.
- d. Examine the impact of police public relation in Yobe State command.
- e. Identify the problems of police public relation in the State.
- f. Recommend measures to enhance police public relation in Yobe State.

Significance of the Study

The need for the study arises from the realization that good police public relations are a catalyst for the image and performance of the Nigerian police. A study on the analysis of police public relations is a step in the right directions. The study possesses some academic value and would be of interest to student's individuals, academics, police officers and the general public. It will also be a contribution to knowledge and literature on the subject matters as well as a guide for further study. It is hoped that the result of the study will be an eye opener to the nature of relationship between the police and public a veritable material to the Nigerian police force in solving their image problem and enhancing police public relations.

Literature Review

Emery, Ault and Agee (1965: p 16) said, one of the most rapidly growing and attention exciting field in mass communication and social psychology is that loosely identified by the public relations. Probably, no term which became commonly misunderstand than public relations. They further noted that; much business assumed that a skilled publicity writer who could conceit interesting stories for the papers was a public relations man, not realizing the publicity writing needs to be done with purposeful planning as a tool operating in an overall public relations programme. The question now is what is public relation?The international encyclopedia of the social science (1986: p 669) defined public relations as: "an organized effort to communicate information and modify attitudes and behaviour on behalf of a client or cause" To this, Osuji (1992: p 7) summarized public relations as the distinctive management function which helps to establish and maintain mutual lines of communication, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between an organization and its public. Similarly, Chucks (1990: p 53) emphasized that public relation makes an effort to project not only what it has been and is becoming, by interpreting it to the public in terms that people can understand, and interpreting the public to members of the organization in terms they understand. One common trend, through which runs, these definitions are that they describe an activity. Thus, the common basic ideas in each contain;

Planning: Public relations are organized and direct towards the achievement of set goals and objectives which will include projections or creating of good image.

Social Responsibility: Public relations attempt to discharge social responsibility by creating and improving social interactions among members of the public.

Three Way Actions: - Public relation in its attempt to create a favourable public opinion involves a three way action talking, listening, and doing action.

Performance: - The organization or individual has to make the public approve its action. This approach must be measured in terms of the level and intensity of a favourable public opinion.

Public relations can be categorized into propaganda advertising, opinion poll, and publicity. These basic tools are expected to play direct and indirect roles in governing well for the institution and demonstrating public accountability and social responsibility. The process therefore is selective to testify the diverse expectations of the institutions and the target public.

It is necessary however, to bear in mind that public relation is after all not propaganda or lobbying but an activity involving all the above mentioned trends. It is also not advertising, publicity or marketing. Rather it is a practice which creates a favourable public opinion for tangible or intangible things. And in order to achieve this objectives, public relations may use publicity, advertising, marketing public opinion survey, to plan, execute and measure it success or failure (Agholar 2000: p 14).

In 1972, the public relations of the police were merged to form the full public relations department under the control of the force headquarters located at Lagos. All these changes continued until 1915 when the federal government amended the police regulations which gave the force public relations department of legal backing. It was given the following statutory functions to perform thus:

- a) Manning and coordinating of the force public relations policies with a view to improving relations with the public.
- b) Serving as the central source of public information concerning the force and the only official channel of publicity for the force.
- c) Production and distribution of the force magazine, news – letters, press releases, feature articles statistics, photographs, films, advertisements and other publicity documents to the information media concerned and the public.
- d) Examination of complains from the public.
- e) Education of all ranks on the importance of good public relationship.
- f) Performance of any other relations functions as the inspector general may direct (NFIH, 1981).

Today, the police public relations department exists in all the thirty six (36) states commands and Abuja. Aggrieved persons go to them for redress through written reports, or lodge their verbal complains with any of the police public relations officer who will investigate such complaints if they are not of criminal nature. But when the case is criminal in nature, it is handled by the state intelligence and investigation bureau. The need for public support of the police cannot be over emphasized. This is because the police exist primarily to ensure the safety of life and property of both the highly and lowly placed individuals in the society. The power of the police to fulfill their functions and duties depends on public appraisal of their existence, actions and behaviours and on their ability to serve and maintain public respect. These was the principles formulated in 1929 by the founder of the London metropolitan police and remain the guiding principle of good policing in any democratic society. But the actions and behaviour of members of the public today, leaves much to be desired especially if we look at it from the point of view of the negative image of the police in the public eye.

Tammuno (1970: p 121) observed that, the police in Nigeria was in the past associated with a reign of terror particularly during the 19th century. He went further to assert that it will be unreasonable to say that the public will whole heartedly welcome the local police whom the people still see as agents of colonial masters. He contained that in the nature of their duties, the police became so visible that their errors of judgment and blatant in discretion acquire unusual publicity and significance and that the police in their circumstances become scapegoats for the imperfection of society. Many of their critics blame them for doing too little or too much. Nigerians, lamented see their police as unwanted and wanted agent of law; therefore the police find themselves in a position of doing something for someone against someone. This goes to concretize the fact that Nigerian only cooperate with the police whenever they are in a difficult situation, but remain uninvolved in assisting the policeman in what does not involve them. In their view, Clinard and Albolt (1973: p 38) asserted that public opinion is given grudgingly and without interest and the police approach the public as a hostile group. The average Nigerian would rather allow a wanted criminal escape the clutches of the law than give him away. This is not out of ignorance or unpatriotism but he has learnt never to be involved with police. Potential interments have been taught to play blind, deaf and dumb to the crimes around them, after threats from criminals who make their closeness to the policeman an open secret (news watch 1986: 25). This means that the police do not receive the cooperation and the support of the public. Nigerians do not have confidence in the efficiency, dedication and impartiality of the police. The public have lost hope in the ability of the police to help them in the hours of need. Corruption, graft, abuse and misuse of power have tainted the public image of the police and this reached a climax during civilian regimes, when the police became a force that brutalize the people instead of protecting them, helped in aiding election ragging rather than ensuring free and fair elections (News watch 1986). Similarly, the *New Nigerian* (1992: 19) concluded that: A police force that bullies arbitrarily, detains, or owes no apology, or compensation for wrongly or arbitrary detention, cannot unclear itself to the innocent members of the public". Writing on the poor performance and bad image of the police in Nigeria Ikpeyong (1993: p 6) reported that the need for functional police public relation is highly significant in a developing nation like ours. He went on to say that Nigeria is a multi – ethnic state and the need to ensure peace and social co – existence is paramount, because the police which has a bad image needs to improve on its stereotyped perception by

members of the public as a group of highly corrupted and fraudulent people operating within falsehood and intimidation.

In the words of Odita (1992: p 77) to give the police a good image in the eyes of the public will involve three (3) assignments for the public relation unit of the police. They are:

- 1) To evaluate and interpret the opinion attitudes and aspiration of the various publics.
- 2) To propose to the management a policy and line of conduct making it's possible to reconcile particular interest of the organization with those of the publics concerned.
- 3) To plan and carryout short, medium and long term plans to create better knowledge and understanding, especially through dialogue.

In this contribution to enhancing the image of the police through public relations, Fagbola (1989: p 35) observed that police intelligence and public relations units which are supposed to be helping the police in creating a better image to the public are poorly equipped. He recommended that these units be adequately equipped in order to achieve the objectives of positive police image making. Hart (1981: p 47) has said that some people think that since the police has set up a public relations units, the responsibility for security and maintaining public good will toward the force is the sole responsibility of the unit. He explained that some policemen think that all unfriendly citizens are their enemies and that generally citizens are unfriendly to them (police). The neutral and friendly citizens become hostile when they are asked for assistance by the police in arresting criminals, they thereby make arrest difficult and conviction almost impossible. Courtesy by the police he argued that, is the passport to creating public goodwill, friendliness and good image.

For effective public relations and creations of good image, all police personnel has to be involved as the task must not be left to the police public relations unit. Policemen or women, working in police station, controlling traffics must follow their major rules. These rules are:

- [1] Smile and be polite and avoid rudeness.
- [2] Enthusiasm instead of dullness show interest with what you have at hand, learn about your job and locality to be able to discuss any problem freely and confidently.
- [3] Use courteous words instead of sharp reports.
- [4] Response instead of indifference, listen to those who come to complain, show you are interested and be alert to their mood.
- [5] Warmth instead of coldness.
- [6] Understanding instead of cold mind. Keep open mind to be able to discuss, reasons and arrive at sound judgment.
- [7] Attention instead of irritation neglect, listen and if necessary, disagree politely.
- [8] Patient instead of irritation.
- [9] Sincerity instead of dishonesty, say exactly what you mean, be honest and straight forward in dealing with the public.
- [10] Consideration instead of annoyance. Listen without annoyance. To persuade without apparent force is evidence of maturity (Ezekiel Hart 1981: o 49).

Wilcox (1972: p 21), the area of friction between police and the public include:

- [1] Dissatisfaction in handling of report due to public ignorance of police method and the law.
- [2] Rude treatment of citizens who come to the police with cases.
- [3] Unnecessary show of force and bestial pleasure to hurt people controlling crowd.
- [4] Unpleasant tone of voice.
- [5] Rough treatment of suspects and other offenders.
- [6] Tendency to except unmarried reward for performing lawful duties.

From various literature reviewed, it is clear that the problems facing the Nigerian Police Force are many, the public relations unit of the force needs to put in more effort in order to establish a good relationship between the public and the police, so as to give the police a good image.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on system theory as its theoretical framework. The systems concept is used by Talcott Parson, (1951), Ludiving Von Bertalanffy (1950), Katz and Khan (1960), Robert Chin (1969) and David Easton (1959) to denote an analytical scheme for underlying complexity.

The systems theory is a concept that refers to both complex of interdependencies between parts, component and processes that involves discernable regularities of relationship, and to a similar dependency

between such a complex and its surrounding environment (Encyclopedia of Social Science 1968: p 762). Toffler (1980: p 89) maintained that, “a system is set of interacting units which endure, through time within an established boundary by responding and adjusting to changing pressure from the environment in order to achieve and maintain goals”. A considerable number of system models have been proposed in contemporary social science literature. Our first step, therefore, is to specify the elements of our systemic conception. According to Mitchell (1962: p 101) a social system consists of two or more persons who are engaged in a patterned or structured form of relationship or interaction, and who are guided by sets of values, and norms generally called roles. The system thereby can be realistically applied to the study. The Nigeria police force is an organization established under law to achieve a set of objectives for the proper functioning of the system without which is made up of different parts, components and units and these parts interacts with one another to achieve a common goal.

The external environments are the centre of public that are affected by its output. This is also the economic and political variables in the country and state which influence the activities or workings of the police force. Input in this regard includes expectation support and demand into the Nigeria police force. Expectations are that rather amorphous group of beliefs that citizens have regarding what the police ought to do and the way its officials have to behave. Supports are similar to expectations and take various forms. Obviously, without some form of support, institutions could hardly survive. Support for the Nigeria police include public support, “specific support” stimulated by certain outputs from the police and involves the individuals perception of how their demands are met as well as “diffuse support” a more general concept referring to that reservoir of goodwill which a system may engender, not dependent upon a particular output, and at the extreme mode typical by up questioning loyalty or patriotism.

Demands comprise the third conceptual classification of inputs. These demands represent the need or interest pursued by different individuals and interest groups that operate within the context of police activities. The conversion process that transformed input into outputs includes the activities and functions of the various units of the police. The output represents the end result, outcome of the activities and functions of the police force in terms of maintenance of law and order enforcement of laws and relationship with the public it serves. The feedback represents the responses from the environment on how it is affected or perceives the output of the Nigeria police as well as demands placed on the police. This informs the police on its areas of efficiency on deficiency and the need to adjust. In support of the system theory, Brown (1985: p 93) observed that a system perspective is the basis for the given definition of public relations in that naturally dependent relationship are established and maintained between an organization and its public with which it interact. They argue that any organization is dependent upon the environment for its monitory, natural and human resources. Hence, for an organization to achieve its organizational goal in the eyes of the public, communicate effectively and achieve integrity. Since a system is an entity conceptual or physical which consists of interrelated inter dependent and interacting parts that interact with the environment (public) just like that of the Nigeria police force, the system theory remains the most appropriate theoretical framework work for its explanation.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study made use of survey research method. Survey research is defined as the systematic gathering of information from a sample of respondents for the purpose of assessing the behavior of the population of interest.

Instrument of Data Collection

Both primary and secondary data were used for the study. Secondary data consist of the information from the journals, books, news papers, online materials and other published and unpublished materials. Primary data were collected through a questionnaire designed with both closed and open ended items.

Sampling Techniques

In this study the researcher selected Yobe State as an area of study. The State is divided into three senatorial zones by Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Thirty five (35) respondents were selected from each of the zone, and used simple random sampling technique to obtained one hundred and five (105) respondents, but only Ninety two (92) questionnaires were retrieved. Consequently, three senior police officers were selected for an in-depth interview, one from each zone.

Method of data analysis

Descriptive statistical tools such as frequency, and percentage, were used to analyze the facts sought by the questionnaire.

Data Presentation and Analysis

In this research work data collected have been analysed by the use of tables, figures and percentage method of data analysis and will be solved by dividing the frequency of a variable by the total number of the respondents and then multiplying by one hundred. This was corroborated with information from interview session with police officers within Yobe State.

Table 4.1 Perceptions of public toward Police

| Responses | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Important | 32 | 34.8% |
| Very Important | 57 | 61.9% |
| Not Very Important | 3 | 3.3% |
| Not Important | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 92 | 100% |

Source: Field Survey 2013

From the above table it shows that, majority of the respondents, responded that police public relation is very important in the study area. This was indicated and determined through the interview made with ward heads by the researcher. In Nigeria and all part of the world the police is important in maintenance of law and order without which the society cannot function.

Table 4.2 Relevance of Police Public Relation Unit

| Responses | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|-----------|----------------|
| Yes | 84 | 91.3% |
| No | 3 | 3.3% |
| Don't Know | 5 | 5.4% |
| Total | 92 | 100% |

Source: Field Survey 2013

The result shows that majority of the respondents indicated that the public relation unit of the police is relevant. The interview section with senior police officers in the State command revealed that there is a public relation unit in the police command with the function of relating with the media and members of the public as well as coordinating the activities of the police. This correspond with Ikpeyong (1993: p6) reported that the need for function police public relation is highly significant in a developing nations and like ours.

Table 4.3 whether Public Relation is Necessary to Image making for the Police

| Responses | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Agree | 51 | 55.4% |
| Strongly Agree | 39 | 42.4% |
| Disagree | 2 | 2.2% |
| Strongly Disagree | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 92 | 100% |

Source: Field Survey 2013

The study revealed that public relations are necessary for image making for the police. During the interview with senior police officers it was revealed that the police command have public relations officers whose responsibilities are essentially that of image making for the command and facilitating press briefing. This is as a result of the importance attached to image making by the police administration.

Table 4.4 whether Relationship between Police and Public is Necessary

| Responses | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|-----------|----------------|
| Yes | 90 | 97.8% |
| No | 2 | 2.2% |
| Don't Know | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 92 | 100% |

Source: Field Survey 2013

The table indicated that majority of the respondents; we can submit that police – public relation is necessary. The senior officers of the police during the interview said that the police public relation is very important and relevant in the attainment of police objectives, brought putting the records right and disabusing the mind of the public from the bad perception of the police. This is relevant to the assertion of Osuji (1992: p7) summarized that public relations as the distinctive management function which help to established and maintained mutual line of communication, understanding, acceptance and co operations between an organization and its public.

Table 4.5 Rate of police public relation

| Responses | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Excellent | 5 | 5.4% |
| Good | 9 | 9.8% |
| Fair | 18 | 19.6% |
| Bad | 60 | 65.2% |
| Total | 92 | 100% |

Source: Field Survey 2013

This table shows that police public relation is bad. While majority of the police officers role of public relations in Yobe State is good, the ward heads said the public perception of the police in their ward is negative. They also stated that they have been co-operating and supporting the police to discharge its duties and crime in their wards is minimal. This is similar to what Tammuno (1970: p121) said Nigerians lamented see their police as unwanted and wanted gents of law therefore the police find themselves in a position of doing something for someone against someone.

Table 4.6 information on whether the police lived up to expectation.

| Responses | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Yes | 12 | 13.1% |
| No | 80 | 86.9% |
| Don't Know | 0 | 0% |
| Total | 92 | 100% |

Source: Field Survey 2013

The table shows that the police officers said given the circumstances and environment under which the police operate, the police has lived up to expectation. The ward head on their part felt that the police are trying but a lot still need to be done. However, the general opinion is that the police have not lived up to expectation in the eyes of the public. Reasons for these are the partiality of the police in cases to favour the rich, police brutality, taking of bribe as well as poor response to distress call to mention but a few. On what the respondents thinks are the problems of police public relations, they enumerate the following:

- Poor remuneration of policemen
- Maltreatment of suspects by policemen
- Involvement in crime by the police.
- Corruption and extortion of money from the public by policemen.
- Poor public interaction by policemen.
- Policemen not being friendly or service oriented.
- Lack of communication gadget by the police.
- Partiality of the police by taking side with the rich in cases.

On ways of enhancing police public relations the respondents suggested the following:

- Increased remuneration on staff welfare of policemen.
- Proper public enlightenment on the importance of police public relations.
- Proper finding and provision of communication gadgets materials and equipments.
- Discipline among rank and file of the police force.
- Rapid response by the police to distress call.
- Training and re-treatment of policemen.
- Courtesy and politeness by policemen when dealing with suspects.

IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The data presentation and analysis revealed that the police are an important institution that is necessary for promoting peace, law and order in the society. The public relations unit department of the police force is relevant. The function of the unit is to relate with public and coordinate the activities of the police. In the police command, there are public relations officers who are image makers of the police and also facilitating press briefing. The study also revealed that police public relation is necessary for image making for the police and for attainment of police objectives. This entails putting the records right and disabusing the mind of the public from their bad perception of the police. In terms of the relationship between the police and the community, the study showed that the police public relations is rated bad. Thus, this relationship has not been able to promote the image of the police. In addition, it was agreed that the police as an institution has not lived up to expectation in the eyes of the public. Problems of police public relations were identified as maltreatment of suspects, police brutality, corruption and corrupt practices by policemen and partiality or taking sides with the rich and affluent. Others are poor public interaction attitude of policemen, and lack of communication gadgets, vehicles and materials for police operation.

V. CONCLUSION

The study has given as a better understanding of the nature and problems of police public relations in Yobe State. The importance of police public relations in the attainment of the objectives of the police cannot be overemphasized. This is because the trend of modern organizations has made public relations an indispensable tool in management to achieve organizational goals. Organizations and governments the world over have come to recognize the effectiveness of public relations not only in times of crimes, but also when there is need to maintain and sustain the image, confidence and goodwill gained overtime. Today public relations have become an integral part of organizations activities and not a separate isolated function. The police public relations in the Yobe State leave much to be desired. No doubt the police force is faced with image problem. A police force that is corrupt, bullies' arbitrarily, detains without regard for human rights and owes no apology or compensation for wrongly or arbitrary detention cannot endear itself to the members of the public. Considering the state of police public relations in the Yobe State, concerned effort need to be made in sanitizing the police and earn the cooperation, support and goodwill of the public. Deliberate and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between the police and the public is therefore imperative.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the issues and problems raised in this study the following recommendations are made:

- [1] There is need for the state police command to put up a public relations programme on the radio and television to enlighten the public on the importance of police public relations, highlight the activities of the police and elicit the support of the public.
- [2] Ward heads within the local government and the entire society should assist the police in discharging its duties through provision of information and enhanced cordial relations.
- [3] Officers and men of the police force should be motivated through good pay, increased allowances and Staff quarters, provision of vehicles and communication gadgets as well as decent offices accommodation. This will boost their morale for enhancing job performance.
- [4] There should be constant training and retaining of officers and men of the force the art of policing, human relations and communication skills. All public relations officers as well as the entire members of the force should be involved in public relations.
- [5] The police force should embark on an accountability exercise to fish out the bad eggs. All police practices that are negative and infringe on human rights should be abolished. Similarly, disciplinary action for erring officers who are corrupt should be taken to serve as deterrent.
- [6] Community policing should be enhanced with effective strategies to penetrate all the nook and crannies of the State. This is with the view to enhance police public relations.

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