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**Image of Nigeria Police Force as Perceived by  
Osiele Community in Ogun State, Nigeria**

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**Abstract**

*In this paper, the authors used the survey design procedure to investigate the image of the Nigeria Police Force as perceived by the people of Osiele Community in Ogun State, Nigeria. A total of 800 respondents were randomly selected as study sample. A 25-item questionnaire titled "Peoples' Perception of Nigeria Police Image" (PPNPI) was designed to gather information on the four research questions that were raised. The result revealed that the perception of the people on image of Nigeria Police is negative. However, the percentage analysis showed that a majority (77.6%) perceived the Nigeria Police as a force that has no respect for human dignity, highly vulnerable to crime, brutal and bedeviled by nepotism and corruption. Furthermore, 58% can neither take Nigeria Police as intimate friends nor seek refuge in them. The respondents also detest their lifestyles and conditions of service, thus, making them to show apathy towards joining the force. The paper recommends among others that the Nigeria Police should be more enlightened on better value system and more importantly, the Nigerian governments need to sincerely give the Police quality support in terms of provision of adequate*

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*equipment, improved conditions of service and professionalism.*

**Key Words:** *Nigeria Police Force, Community, Human dignity, Crime, Corruption, Nigeria.*

### **Introduction**

The word Police is derived from Greek word 'polis' meaning that part of non ecclesiastical administration having to do with safety, health and order of the state. Greek policing meant the act of governing and regulating the welfare, security needs and order of the city-state in the interest of the public (Ehinderero, 2006). Ehinderero quoted the Oxford English Dictionary that views the Police as the department of government which is concerned with the maintenance of public order and safety and the enforcement of law. He further described the police as the civil force which is entrusted with the duty of maintaining public order; enforcing regulations for the prevention and punishment of breaches of law and detention.

The Nigeria Police is a colonial heritage. Its origin dated back to 1861 when the Acting Governor of Lagos Colony, McCoskry organized and established the nucleus of the first Police Force regarded as a Hausa constabulary of 30 men (Tamuno, 1970; the Nigerian Police, 1981 cited by Fakoya, 2008). Its primary duty was to protect the trade interest of the Royal Company along the River Niger in the North. It was augmented to 100 men by the following year and it rose to 600 men in 1863. This special constabulary later metamorphosed into Nigeria Police Force in 1930 (Fakoya, 2008). In the 1960s, under the First Republic, this force was first regionalized and then nationalized with the conventional Police functions and was responsible for internal security, for supporting the prison, immigration, and custom services among others (Wikipedia Online, 2009).

The Police play important roles without which the sustenance of order, legality, development and democracy may be difficult (Etannibi, Alemika and Innocent, 2009). Therefore, any change initiative must take account of the facilitative and inhibitive roles of the Police in the society. The primary role of the police is policing-

securing compliance with the existing laws and conformity with precepts of social order. The necessity of policing becomes even more evident in modern societies characterized by diversities and contradictions arising from population heterogeneity, urbanization, industrialization, conflicting ideologies on appropriate socio-political and economic form of organization. However, in most parts of the world, salaried policing to enforce law and maintain order is a recent development in human history (Reiner, 2000).

Traditionally, policing was the responsibility of all adults in the community since all adult males were obliged to contribute towards crime control under the systems of 'hue, cry and pursuit' and the 'watch and ward' that preceded the emergence of specialized police forces as organs of the state which later changed the traditional policing philosophy rooted in the idea of policing as everybody's business. Thus, the emergence of the state as an entity with claim to the monopoly over the means of legitimate violence in society resulted into the creation of specialized agencies such as the Police and armed forces for controlling the use of violence by the other groups (Weber, 1968).

#### *Theoretical Framework*

The concrete roles played by the police are defined by law and conception of order in accordance with the political and economic interests of the dominant or ruling groups in society. Etannibi, et al. (2009) further quoted Reiner (1993) who stressed that:

*The Police are the specialist carriers of the state's bedrock power: the monopoly of legitimate use of force. How and for what this is used speaks to the very heart of the condition of a political order. The danger of abuse, on behalf of particular partisan interests or the police themselves are clear and daunting (p. 3).*

To be specific, the Police has constitutional roles to play in any country. Section 215 (3) of the 1999 Nigeria Constitution spells out that the Nigeria Police Force is saddled with the maintenance of public safety, and public order. The Police are responsible for the



arrest of crime and criminals, and prosecution of criminals. It has the responsibility of protecting lives, private and public properties. The Nigeria Police is also constitutionally empowered to protect harbours, waterways, railways and airfields (FRN, 1999 Section 214 [2c]).

By expansion, section 4 of the Police Act Cap 359 law of the Federation 1990 cited by Ehindero (2006) stated the primary duties of the Nigeria Police to include the: (1) prevention and detection of crime, (2) apprehension of offenders, (3) preservation of law and order, (4) protection of life and property, (5) enforcement of all law, (6) regulation within which they are directly charge (7) military duties within and outside Nigeria as it may be required by the law.

By structure, the 1999 Constitution re-established the Police Council, which had hitherto been constituted in 1963 but absent from the 1979 Constitution. The Third Schedule (27) of the 1999 Constitution created the Nigeria Police Council whose constitutional function are stated in paragraph 28 to include:

- ❖ The organization and administration of the Nigeria Police Force and all other matters relating thereto (not being matters relating to the use and operational control of the force or the appointment, disciplinary control and dismissal of members of the force);
- ❖ The general supervision of the Nigeria Police Force; and
- ❖ Advising the President on the appointment of the Inspector-General of Police.

The 1999 constitution also provided for the establishment of the Police Service Commission and gave the commission the power to:

- Appoint persons to offices (other than the office of the Inspector General of Police) in the Nigeria Police Force; and
- Dismiss and exercise disciplinary control over persons holding any office referred to in the force.

In modern societies, there is an ideological assumption surrounding 'Police Fetishism' which regards the police force as a functional prerequisite of social order without which there would be chaos (Reiner, 2000). From the political economy point of view, it

has been argued that the economic structure of the society determines the character of the superstructure which includes the political, legal, cultural and religious relations as institutions of the society. Thus, police and policing are to be understood as the reflections or products of the way the society organizes its economy. While enforcement of law constitutes the rationale for the establishment and sustenance of police and judicial institutions, Etannibi et al. (2009) however observed several studies from anthropological point of view which linked the form and character of policing as well as the development of Police forces to societal, economic and political structures. This implies that the form and character of the Police force can be linked to class structures and differential access to resources that occur in the "transition from a Kinship-to a class-dominated society" (Reiner, 2000). At the extreme end of the argument is the role of the police as a repression of the poor and powerless in order to protect the interest of the rulers. This suggests that the police stand as a "buffer between elites and masses" and are "structured organizationally and ideologically to act against the magical strata" (Bowdon, 1978 and Broden, 1982 cited by Etannibi et al., 2009)).

On the contrary however, it is believed that the role of the Police is not limited to repression but maintenance of law and order by means of persuasion, indoctrination and incorporation of diverse interest into crime control and law enforcement polices. By this anti radical/social conflict paradigm, the police are seen as guardians of social order and vanguard for equitable society, social democracy, human rights and socio-economic justice (Alemika, 1993).

Thus, the Police are part and parcel of the community they serve and not apart from the community. From the foregoing therefore, Etannibi et al., (2009) submits that with pressures from the despotic rulers to curb and crush opposition and curtail rising crimes coupled with institutional neglect (suffered by the police) which is manifested in lack of resources, embargo on recruitment and promotion for several years, victimization and nepotism, the Nigeria Police embraced a culture of impunity. According to them, extra judicial killings, detention without trial and widespread corruption became the bane of the Nigeria Police Force.



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Indeed, Fakoya (2008) acknowledged the fact that human rights practices confirmed that the Nigerian Police, along with the army and other security forces, commit extra judicial killings and use excessive force to quell civil unrest even under the democratic (Obasanjo's) government. In the same vein, Etannibi et al., (2009) observed that the inefficiency of the police regarding maintenance of law and order became glaring as cases of armed robbery (now daily kidnappings) involving the use of sophisticated weapons and high casualties as well as incidences of ethno religious conflicts persisted.

It is equally observed that the Nigeria Police is highly and visibly subservient to the rich and powerful, even in the rendering of service. This is supported by Coomassie (1988) that any time a citizen becomes a public figure, his first official correspondence on assuming duty is to write the Inspector General of Police to ask for an orderly and policemen to guard his house, making every richman to use the police as a status symbol.

Fakoya (2008) adduced some allegations levelled against effective policing to include arbitrariness in exercising its power, corruption, perversion of justice and delays in the administration of justice. He further identified other stumbling blocks as cited in other works as god fatherism, nepotism, ethnicity, corruption, early socialization and language differences, inadequate manpower (both in strength and expertise), insufficient education and training, inadequate equipment and poor conditions of services of the average policemen (popularized by military dictatorships).

A major challenge to the Nigeria Police is police corruption which is a critical hindrance. Corruption is endemic in all segments of the Nigerian society as it is particularly objectionable among the police because it is their occupational responsibility to prevent and work on its elimination. However, the police itself cannot be exonerated from the act of bribery and corruption as it is a common witness on Nigerian roads as some of them collect ₦20 from public motor drivers as if they are collecting road tolls. To this end, it is argued that every society gets what it deserves and the Nigeria police corruption is a reflection of the social malaise that bestrides the Nigerian society. This is because government in Nigeria is a "cesspool

of corruption, an oasis of immorality and an open sewage of political prostitution and bastardy” which has occasioned the endemic poverty ravaging the land (Adeyeye, 2009).

Specifically, Onwuewe (1986) cited by Muhammed (2007) listed the forms of corruption in the Nigeria Police which manifest in their bail in the form of delay of justice, undue adjournment of cases, (4) destruction of exhibits and evidence, (5) issuing of licenses and permits, (6) falsification and tampering with statements and (7) police investigation.

Ehindero (2006) summarized the major challenges facing Nigeria Police into two viz: Firstly, is lack of motivation of members of the force. The dwindling image of the police before the public in recent time is caused not by unwillingness of the police to discharge their duties but the facts that criminals now possess sophisticated weapons, fast moving vehicles and good communication equipments which the government has not provided for the police. Secondly, is the nature of training in the Nigeria Police. Research findings have shown that civil society is disappointed in the performance of the police despite huge amount expended on their training, the reason being that the training did not reflect better result in their job performance (Ehindero, 2006). Quoting World Development Report (2000/2001) Etannibi et al (2009) argued that the major concerns of the police poor performance apart from material deprivation and lack of access to services are their vulnerability to insecurity, crime, brutality and denial of due process right. Perhaps, this is why in Nigeria, for instance, the Police are described more in negative terms such as lack rule of law, denial of rights, insecure, corrupt, brutal etc. by major segments of the population.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Whenever there are incidents of insecurity in the country, people look up to the Police to combat them. However, it has been observed that incidences of armed robbery, nepotism, bribery and corruption, inhuman treatment, brutality and denial of rights are common nowadays. Comments from the public as a result of these involved serious indictment of the Police Force. It appears people do no longer

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place their confidence in the Force as an agent of law enforcement. It is therefore the concern of this study to investigate the image of Nigeria Police Force as perceived by the people of Osiele community in Nigeria.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions were answered in this research:

1. What is the perception of the people of Osiele community on the social life style of the Nigeria Police?
2. What is the perception of the people of Osiele community on the Human Rights attitude of the Nigeria Police?
3. What is the perception of the people of Osiele community on the performance of duties by the Nigeria Police?
4. What is the perception of the people of Osiele community on the condition of service of the Nigeria Police?

### **Methodology**

This study was a descriptive survey research. A convenient random sample of 800 out of about 8,000 people in Osiele community was used for the study. A questionnaire titled 'People's Perception of Nigeria Police Image' (PPNPI) was developed by the researchers. It was made up of two sections: the first section requested for personal information from the responder



## Data Analysis and Results

Table 1: Peoples Perception of the Social Life Style of the Nigeria Police

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank
1.	Nigeria Police is bedeviled by Nepotism	0.93	0.83	7 <sup>th</sup>
2.	Ethnic conflicts in Nigeria are caused by the Police	1.02	0.87	4 <sup>th</sup>
3.	I can have police as my intimate friend.	1.05	0.89	3 <sup>rd</sup>
4.	Nigeria Police Force is characterized by corruption.	0.98	0.86	6 <sup>th</sup>
5.	Nigeria Police is bedeviled by god fatherism.	1.16	0.93	1 <sup>st</sup>
6.	Religious conflicts in Nigeria are supported by the Police	1.02	0.87	4 <sup>th</sup>
7.	I like Nigeria Police Force lifestyle.	1.07	0.89	2 <sup>nd</sup>
	<b>Weighted Average</b>	<b>1.03</b>		

Table 1 shows that the perception of the people of Osiele community on the social lifestyle of the Nigeria Police is negative (weighted mean = 1.03). For instance, the respondents had a negative perception of the Nigeria Police since it is bedeviled by nepotism ( $\bar{X} = 1.16$ ); they also agreed that the Nigerian Police contributes to ethno-religious conflicts ( $\bar{X} = 1.02$ ). However, a majority of the respondents cannot have the Police as intimate friend and also detest the lifestyle of the Nigeria Police ( $\bar{X} = 1.05$  and 1.07 respectively).

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S/N	Items	Mean	Std.Dev.	Rank
1.	Nigeria Police has no respect for human dignity.	0.94	0.84	6 <sup>th</sup>
2.	Police brutality is a major occurrence in Nigeria society.	0.96	0.85	3 <sup>rd</sup>
3.	Nothing like the rule of law in Nigeria Police Force.	1.20	0.95	1 <sup>st</sup>
4.	Once fundamental human right cannot be protected by the Nigeria Police	0.90	0.82	8 <sup>th</sup>
5.	People can be detained by the Police without trial.	0.94	0.84	6 <sup>th</sup>
6.	There are excessive uses of Force by Nigeria Police.	0.96	0.85	3 <sup>rd</sup>
7.	Nigeria Police Force is good in the perversion of justice	0.96	0.85	3 <sup>rd</sup>
8.	Delay in the administration of justice is not common with the Nigeria Police.	1.18	0.94	2 <sup>nd</sup>
<b>Weighted Average:</b>		<b>1.01</b>		

Table 2 shows that the perception of the people of Osiele community on the human rights attitude of the Nigeria Police is negative (weighted mean = 1.01). For instance, the respondents believed that nothing like the rule of law in the Nigeria Police Force ( $\bar{X} = 1.20$ ); delay in the administration of justice by the Nigeria Police ( $\bar{X} = 1.18$ ). However, the respondents agreed that police brutality, excessive uses of force and perversion of justice are common occurrences with the Nigeria Police ( $\bar{X} = 0.96$ ).

**Table 3: Peoples Perception of the Performance of duties by the Nigerian Police**

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank
1.	Nigeria Police are highly vulnerable to crime	0.96	0.85	5 <sup>th</sup>
2.	Nigeria Police is the root cause of incidences of armed robbery.	0.99	0.86	3 <sup>rd</sup>
3.	Nigeria Police are greatly insecured.	1.02	0.88	2 <sup>nd</sup>
4.	Nigeria Police helped in the maintenance of law and order	0.96	0.85	5 <sup>th</sup>
5.	Nigeria Police Force are not effective in curbing civil unrest in a democratic government.	0.99	0.86	3 <sup>rd</sup>
6.	I can seek refuge in Nigerian Police.	1.20	0.95	1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Weighted Average</b>		<b>1.02</b>		

Table 3 indicates that the perception of the people of Osiele community on the performance of duties by the Nigeria Police is negative (weighted mean = 1.02). Indeed, the respondents had a negative perception since they believed that Nigeria Police is the root cause of incidences of armed robbery and are not effective in curbing civil unrest in a democratic government ( $\bar{X} = 0.99$ ). This is because these items came 3<sup>rd</sup> in the ranking order. Also, they agreed that Nigeria Police are highly vulnerable to crime ( $\bar{X} = 0.96$ ).



**Table 4: Peoples Perception of the Condition of Service of the Nigerian Police**

SN	Items	Mean	Std. Dev.	Rank
1.	Nigeria Police lacks proper education and training for effective service delivery.	0.95	0.84	3 <sup>rd</sup>
2.	Nigeria Police lacks adequate equipment to combat crime.	0.95	0.84	3 <sup>rd</sup>
3.	Nigeria Police condition of service is good.	1.00	0.87	2 <sup>nd</sup>
4.	I can join the Nigeria Police Force.	1.12	0.92	1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>Weighted Average</b>		<b>1.01</b>		

Table 4 shows that the perception of the people of Osiele community on the condition of service of Nigeria Police is negative (weighted mean = 1.01). For instance, the respondents negative perception is evident in their belief that the Nigeria Police lacks proper education, training and equipment for effective service delivery ( $\bar{X} = 0.95$ ), and would therefore not want to join the force ( $\bar{X} = 1.12$ ).

### Discussion of Results

On a general note, the foregoing analyses revealed that the perception of the people of Osiele community on the image of Nigeria Police is negative. Specifically on their social life style, results from the respondents revealed that 90% and 76% agreed that the Nigeria Police Force is bedeviled by nepotism and corruption respectively. It is therefore not astonishing that 60% majority cannot have the policemen as their intimate friend. This finding confirms the submission of Fakoya (2008) that corruption and extortion are the major challenges facing the Nigeria Police Force. This equally agrees with scholars assertion that the problems of corruption, ethno-religions conflicts, favoritism and nepotism had combined to create a deep-seated legitimacy crisis for the Police to the extent that today, if there is any institution that Nigerians detest, the Police readily

comes to mind (Alemika, 2003; Ehon, 2003; Ninalowo, 2003 and Etannibi, et al., 2009).

Similarly as evident in the findings of the study, the perception of the people on the human rights attitude of the Nigeria Police is negative. This is because 69% majority agreed that the Nigeria Police has no respect for human dignity; is brutal; it lacks the rule of law and cannot protect the fundamental human rights of the individual. Corroborating this findings are the arguments of Ehindero (2006) that the Nigeria Police is perceived by members of the society as an instrument of oppression, an agency with no regard to fundamental human rights, rule of law, civil order and of low integrity. To make matters worse, Muhammed (2007) also lamented that through Police brutality and corruption, the level of insecurity in the county has heightened to the extent that the Police have tragically become the enemy of the people it is meant to protect.

Moreover, the study revealed that people had a negative perception of the performance of duties by the Nigeria Police. This is evident as 74.7% of the respondents agreed that the Nigeria Police are highly vulnerable to crime; the Nigeria Police is the root cause of incidences of armed robbery and are not effective in curbing civil unrest in a democratic government. This is why Alemika, (2003), Ninalowo, (2003) and Akinwunmi, (2005) asserted that day and night, lives and properties of innocent citizens are being endangered with the police helpless in most cases to deal with the situation. This also confirms the submission of Muhammed (2007) and Etannibi, et al. (2009) that the major concerns of the Police poor performances are their vulnerability to crime, insecurity which in consequence could not make an average Nigerian to regard the Police as a trusted and trustworthy institution but as an evil institution.

Furthermore, the findings indicated that people's perception of the condition of service of the Nigeria Police is equally negative. Evidently, 74.1% of the respondents agreed that the Nigeria Police lacks adequate equipment, proper education and training for effective service delivery. To corroborate this finding are the arguments of Muhammed (2007) and Fakoya, (2008) that ill-equipment and poor quality education and training are the major challenges facing the Nigeria Police. Specifically, security gadgets/

facilities including transports facilities, communication gadgets, sophisticated arms and ammunition are grossly inadequate or lacking in the Nigeria Police Force (Omotola, 2004 cited by Muhammed, 2007).

### **Recommendations**

Arising from the findings of this study, it is recommended that there is the need for the Nigerian government to give the Police force quality control and support in terms of provision of adequate equipment and funding instead of unnecessary proliferation of law enforcement agencies to handle matters that fall within the purview of the criminal law for which the Police is statutorily supposed to be responsible.

To effectively control the menace of corruption and nepotism among the police and the nation in general, the force and the general populace should be re-orientated to a better value system. This is because Nigerians have for long been 'living on the survival of the fittest and grab whatever comes your way mentality' (Dike, 1999). The re-orientation of the youths, police inclusive to a good value system can help in the war against corruption. This is because the crisis of the Police is a reflection of the deeping crisis of the Nigerian state.

Every police officer needs to be familiar with the provision of Chapter 4 of the Nigerian Constitution, which deals with fundamental human rights. Above all, since the police are most viable elements of the security sector, there is the need for its professionalization through training, equipment, motivation and well enhanced condition of services that would be equal to none.

### **Conclusion**

Corruption is a potent factor which gave the Nigeria Police Force a poor image in the society. As an agency that should protect fundamental human rights and the rule of law, including civil order, the Nigeria Police Force is perceived by members of the society as an instrument of oppression and often described in more negative terms. The military character as represented by the Nigeria Police with colonial mentality is accused of brutality, pervasive corruption, ill equipment, injustice and poor condition of service. These among



others need to be addressed urgently by the government and other stakeholders in order to build societal confidence in the Force.

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