

Volume: 7
Number: 4
Page: 1079 - 1087

Article History:

Received: 2026-05-29
Revised: 2026-06-30
Accepted: 2026-07-24

PUBLIC CONFIDENCE AND WILLINGNESS OF REPORT CRIMES IN NIGERIA; THE SUBMISSION OF THE RESIDENTS OF ABEOKUTA SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT

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Abstract:

In Nigeria, the several publications have decipher poor performance of the Nigerian Police through internal and external factors. However, this paper intends to inquiry into the willingness of the residents towards reporting crime to the Nigeria Police as expected. Extant literature were reviewed while instinctual drive theory was adopted for the explanation of the research inquiry. The study adopted Mixed (quantitative and qualitative) methods and cross sectional survey for collection of data from 256 residents of Abeokuta South Local Government area in seven (7) wards. Multistage was adopted was adopted to break the study locations to wards, streets and house numbers before purposive sampling method was adopted for the administration of the questionnaire face to face to the respondents. The Linear Regression analysis was adopted and the study found out that trust in police fairness (0.152, $p=0.005$), Openness in engagement (0.200, $p<0.005$), Trust in police procedure (0.172, $p<0.005$) Rights protection (0.138, $p<0.005$) and Institutional commitment (0.127, $p=0.005$) were significant compared with other variable stated. The qualitative result corroborate with scholarly submission of the past indicating that lack of confidence and willingness to report crime stem from corrupt nature of the Nigeria Police and poor response to emergency as it occurs the study recommended that encouragement of confidentiality in crime reporting techniques, advocacy for transparency community support in policing, and continuity in whistle blowing reporting.

Keywords: Crime-Reporting, Public-Confidence, Willingness, Social -Order

INTRODUCTION

Global police are charged and expected by the citizens to ensure internal security to lives and properties and also maintain laws and order in a given society compared with other security agencies. In modern days the multiple tasks expected to be carried out by the police mostly overwhelmed and effect their performance. The assertion was supported by Ogunmefun et al (2024) when they stated that in the contemporary world the tasks of the police advance from primary function to legal function and modern function. The overwhelming nature of the tasks expected to be performed by the police called for community involvement in security related matters in their various communities globally

In Nigeria, the police are overloaded with multiple tasks which negate or undermine their performance (Aborisade, & Ariyo, 2022). The above statement shows that the the citizens must equally support the growth and development of security issues through their willingness to report crime or suspected to the Nigeria Police to aid their performance in term of providing security to lives and properties of the citizens. Also

Scholars such as Tyler, 2017; Boateng, 2018; Murphy & Mazerolle, 2016). opines that the understanding of the willingness of the citizens in crime reporting is influenced by multiple variables such as perceived police legitimacy, fear of retaliatory attack, police-citizen contact



experience, and socio-economic standing of the citizens According to Hornby (2024) willingness is a voluntary process or procedure for carrying out a task to the end. The word willingness should be adopted and embrace by Nigerians in other to promote the task of security to lives and properties of the people which can be collectively achieved by the police and community engagement in security works

A comparative research conducted and reviewed from scholarly publications in Nigeria shows that public-police relationship is characterized by dissatisfaction and distrust. Ikea et al. (2021). This is because the result of their findings indicated that series of police misconduct and malpractices were found among the law enforcement by the citizens which negate their trust about the work of the Nigeria Police. Also, Nwachukwu et al. (2024) further research on the image of the police in Nigeria and reported that large number of the community questioned the image of the police in terms of transparency, integrity, and responsiveness. These negative perceptions were found to be major deterrents to effective crime reporting and crime control in general.

In Nigeria's Ogun State, the police-public relationship is not an easy one. Ogunmefun et al. (2024) carried out an empirical survey and found out that over 60% of the respondents reported that police-public engagement enhances community crime prevention and improve social order. This finding points towards the value placed on the possibilities of cooperation, partnership and problem solving in the state. To advance the effectiveness of the cooperation of the citizens in promoting and supporting the good work of the Nigeria Police. Sani (2022) clarifies that the Ogun State Police Community Relations Committee (PCRC) are theoretically and practically positive mechanism that assist in establishing trust and communication among the Police and the citizens through their willingness to work with the police.

The study study intends to research on the level of public confidence and their willingness of reporting crime to Nigeria police with a particular reference to collection of primary data from the resident of Abeokuta Souths, Ogun State, Nigeria

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework. Within the framework of the paper several publications were consulted and the scholarly submissions of the scholars were reviewed in line with the aim of the study while instinctual drive theory was also adopted to explains the public confidence and the willingness of the public members in reporting crime to the Nigeria Police . Instinctual drive theory was rooted back to the scholarly work of Sigmund Freud. The theory is psychological in nature but suitable to analyses the paper. According to Sigmund Freud in the Instinctual drive theory, there two (2) major instinct in every human being their direct or control their actions. Freud identified the instinctual drives to; Eros instinct drive and Thanatos instinct drive

The Eros according to Sigmund is the drive that direct or control individuals towards positive thinking such as thinking towards positive development and growth, thinking towards perceiving the police as legal security agents, thinking towards reporting crime to support the security network of the police,, thinking towards trusting the work of the police, thinking towards having confidence in the police tasks, thinking towards solving problems through the help of the police and thinking towards promoting the image of the police in a progressive matters. In other hand, Sigmund explains thanatos as a negative thinking process such as thinking towards perceiving police as bad police network, perceiving them as a failed security agent, perceiving them as agent of corruption and bribery, seeing and explaining them from point of serial killers among others. Sigmund further explains how each of the divided instinctual drives works, He explains that when an individual instinct outweigh the others it will result or determine the confidence and willingness of the person or individuals towards crime reporting. Sigmund explains that if thanatos instinct outweigh the eros

thinking of an individual such person will never have confidence in police tasks neither shows willingness to reports crime to the Nigeria police because every explanation of the Nigeria Police seems negative while if the eros thinking outweigh the thanatos thinking the individual concerns will effectively and efficiently report crime to the Nigeria police and also have confidence in the tasks of the Nigeria Police at any point in time Literature reviewed shows that there are diverse orientation to the study while some of them supported the eros submission others are of the thanatos submission. For example scholars such as (Mourtgos, Adams & Nix, 2021; Jackson et al., 2015). opines that of the attitude and performance of police can determined how well people can support them or rate of cooperation the police receive from the public through their willingness to report crime, provide information to help investigations, and view policing institutions as legitimate Others scholars who supported the thanatos submissions such as Tyler & Jackson, 2014; Mazerolle et al., 2014; Boateng, 2018) opines that negative experiences like corruption, abuse or neglect, which would led to public unwillingness to assist, which would affect crime reduction..

Research has found that people are likely to cooperate and trust the police when they perceive them to be fair, respectful and responsive to public (Murphy & Mazerolle, 2016). Using instinctual drive theory to analyze the concept public perception, police openness, neutrality reflect on the values the public associated with their personality in the tasks they performed.

There have been several reports and cases misuse of power, extrajudicial killings, extortion, unlawful detention, by the Nigerian police force (Alemika, 2016; Human Rights Watch, 2020). These has led to loss of trust and the belief that the police force of oppression and not protector of public order. There was a first-hand evidence of police harassment, arbitrary arrest and bribery, especially in urban areas like Abeokuta (Nwachukwu et al., 2024). The experience generate fear of law enforcement agencies, preventing witness from approaching police agencies.

Several articles reviewed have shown that there are multiple factors that negate public confidence and ability to report crime which include poor public perceptions of the profession, slow response to emergency calls, refusal to follow up investigations after crime reporting and poor public trust. (Adamu & Rasheed, 2021; Olutola & Bello, 2018). If the public complains are poorly addressed by the organ of justice. (Adeyemi & Asaju, 2021). There will be negating implications on the confidence and willingness of the citizens to partake in reporting crime to the Nigeria police which may led to either jungle justice or underrating the works of the Nigerian Police in term of providing security to lives and properties

METHODS

The study adopted the use of Mixed (quantitative and qualitative) methods and cross sectional survey method for the administration and collection of research instruments (structured questionnaires) from 256 residents in seven (7) and 10 in-depth interviews were conducted with the use of unstructured questionnaire at Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria. The study population for Abeokuta South was estimated to 425.700 population by the Projected Population Census in 2022 with about 15 wards and various streets The sample size was derived through the use of Taro Yemane sampling formula which was estimated to 399. Probability (Multistage) and non-probability (purposive) was adopted to served the instrument The beauty of adopting multistage sampling is to break Abeokuta South Local Government from Local government to Wards to streets and house numbers before purposive sampling was adopted for the administration of the instruments directly to the identified residents of Abeokuta South Local government in Ogun State, Nigeria .In addition before the questionnaires were served all ethical conditions were met such as informed consent from the study local government and the residents,

confidentiality was maintained among others The instrument served were retrieved and screened, coded and edited to reduce the possible errors. At the end of the screening, coding and editing 256 structured questionnaires and 10 In-depth interviews were found useful for the inferential and descriptive analysis In the analysis of the primary data collected from the residents of Abeokuta South Local Government Area in Ogun State, Nigeria on their confidence and willingness to report crime to the Nigeria Police inferential (Linear Regression) and descriptive (Percentages, Frequency distribution, mode and mean) statistical analysis were adopted

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section present a comprehensive data analysis and interpretation of information collected through designed questionnaires administered to Abeokuta south local government residents in Ogun state, Nigeria. The section is centered on the analysis of data to assist the main study aimed at examining citizen trust in the police and their willingness to report crime The response in the table below expresses an insight on the general perception and confidence level of respondents regarding performance, responsiveness, and trust of the Nigerian police force

The Relationship between Public Confidence and Willingness to Report Crimes to Police in Nigeria.

Table 1. Multi Variant Linear Regression Result showing the relationship between public confidence in the police and willingness to report crimes.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	1.145	.374		3.063	.002
Trust in Police Fairness	.152	.045	.176	3.363	.001
Perceived Safety	-.060	.049	-.064	-1.216	.225
Police Responsiveness	-.007	.060	-.007	-.116	.907
Police Integrity	-.026	.055	-.026	-.478	.633
Civic Responsibility	-.022	.054	-.024	-.406	.685
Police-Public Relationship	-.083	.047	-.089	-1.741	.083
Openness in Engagement	.200	.054	.201	3.682	.000
Trust in Police Procedure	.172	.044	.202	3.896	.000
Complaint Handling Confidence	.039	.055	.040	.712	.477
Rights Protection	.138	.046	.157	2.975	.003
Institutional Commitment	.127	.055	.143	2.319	.021

Dependent Variable: Crime Reporting

The results of the multiple linear regression analysis shows the relationship between public confidence in the police and citizens' willingness to report crime. The regression model was framed to evaluate the degree to which each of these dimensions of public views and trust in the police institutions, independent variables, reflecting on various police-public interface, dependent variables were regressed which pointed out citizens willingness to report crimes. As shown in Table 1; the regression model also exhibited a statistically significant intercept ($B = 1.145$, $p = .002$) which indicates level of willingness to report crimes even without strong perceptions of police performance. This implies a kind of inherent reporting behavior among the population, possibly prone to the impact of civic norms or external enforcement mechanisms. It was clear that several dimensions of public confidence were importantly positively related to the dependent variable. Trust in police fairness was an extremely strong predictor, with a regression coefficient of 0.152 ($p =$



.001). This result suggests that citizens are more likely to cooperate by reporting crimes when they believe that the police operate fairly with them. In the same way, openness in engagement was highly positive with a relationship of $p < .001$ with $B = 0.200$; meaning that whenever police officers are open and communicative with the public, then people will be moved to report crime. Belief in procedural justice that police officers follow due process also positively determined reporting behavior with $B = 0.172$ and $p < .001$ indicating that institutional legitimacy would remain important for shaping public cooperation. Besides, citizens' rights protection was significant ($B = 0.138$, $p = .003$), indicating a positive effect of police rights-respecting behavior on citizen intention to report crime incidents. Institutional commitment, which is perception of professionalism and consistency within the police, had a statistically significant positive impact as well ($B = 0.127$, $p = .021$). Overall, these results imply legitimacy, fairness, and accountability are important in building public trust as well as encouraging active civic engagement in combating crime. On the other hand, the model also identified various factors that did not predict statistically significant likelihood of reporting crimes. There is no statistical significance of perceived safety ($B = -0.060$, $p = .225$) and police responsiveness ($B = -0.007$, $p = .907$), implying that general feelings of safety or the speed of police response may not individually motivate a person to report crime. Similarly, another variable such as police integrity ($B = -0.026$, $p = .633$), civic responsibility ($B = -0.022$, $p = .685$), and complaint handling confidence ($B = 0.039$, $p = .477$) was not found to be related to the dependent variable either. Interestingly, the police-public relationship variable had a negative coefficient $B = -0.083$ and was approaching significance with a $p = .083$, so there may be a developing trend that deserves more attention, particularly in as much as citizens understand general rapport vis-a-vis procedural trust. General regression results underscore the primacy of trust and institutional fairness over operational metrics in shaping public willingness to report crimes. While aspects of operational elements like responsiveness and community relations are more into policing reforms, this analysis suggests that the more profound aspects like transparency, procedural justice, and rights protection drive cooperative behavior. Findings fit with the procedural justice theory, according to which people are likely to comply with authority figures if they consider them legitimate, fair, and respectful of their rights.

It is, therefore, obvious that improving crime reporting strategies would necessarily demands improvements in service delivery but instead be anchored on the ability to strengthen police institutions' legitimacy through their commitment to principles of fairness, transparency, and protection of individual rights. Internal values create an environment in which citizens have confidence and are empowered and motivated enough to contribute toward controlling crimes through reporting and cooperation

Qualitative Result. The outcome of the qualitative result corroborates with the quantitative result but a bit advance in the submission derived from the structured questionnaires. Ten (10) residents were interviewed and they gave different submission to the outcome of the public confidence and willingness to report crime to the Nigeria police in Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria

The question asked was structured along how would describe public confidence and willingness to report crimes to Police in Nigeria. The following responses were gathered from different residents of Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria in their wards, streets and houses

The first respondent

I am not standing against Nigerian police because they are trying to be honest. Although it might not be enough best they choose to work as security personnel and they are paid for their services. The truth is that it is not an easy tasks at all even I don't pray for my family to do the work because they can loose their lives at any time. So I gave them the support they are doing. I know and am sure if they police in Nigeria are ready to work they will do it but we all know that corruption is the major reason for not really trusting them

IDI/Community Resident/Sodeke-Isale Ijeun Ward 10/Abeokuta South

The submission of the second residents contradict with the submission of the first participants

I cannot trust them and am also afraid of reporting crime to them because they are also crime at night. Police that can kill you at night if you are traveling in your car at night. So why should I trust them. I don't even pray I have something to do with them. Go to their station and try and report crime they will tell you to pay for biro and book to document your statement. Even call them on emergency calls that thieves are raiding on e area in your community, they will tell you they don't have fuel in their patrol vehicle. So why trusting them

IDI/Communitrt Resident/ Itoko Ward 06/Abeokuta South

In another ward at Abeokuta South Local Government Area of Ogun State, Nigeria The same question was asked from another participants and she submitted that

Police are neither good or bad but it depend on the individual person or motive of the person in the uniform. I cannot not totally condemned them and I cannot finnaly trust them because they are human being who are bound to run vested interest over the general interest of the nations.If the person in the uniform is good to be I see no reasons fir not building my confidence around police as security agent in Nigeria but if the person in the uniform is bad then the problems comes in because a bad person will affect the growth and development of the nation. So such person are not to be trusted and I cannot willingly report crime cases to a criminal that will make my case worst

IDI/Community Resident/Keesi/Emere Ward 04/Abeokuta South

The submission of another residents from the wards shows that Police as a profession is not bad but the individual mission in carrying out their tasks differs. The participant submitted that



I trust police and I will help them because the profession is not easy to do. If it is easy every Nigerian should go and join the profession. It is not easy while you and I were sleeping one man cannot do that because he or she is working. We are the one destroying the image of the Nigeria Police. The work is too much, the number of the people in police is short so we need to work hand in hands with them to do something good to the security of lives and properties of the Nigerians. Know that while you are sleeping a policeman is outside helping you. Let trust Them and have confidence in their work so that we can both achieve greater Nigeria today and forever

IDI/Community Residents/Ake Ward 01/Abeokuta-South

The outcome of the result gathered from the qualitative analysis indicated that the police profession is not a bad profession but the mission of the individual or persons who took the job as a tasks are the major elements that makes people to see police as a bad job. Three community residents interviewed at their wards, streets and houses out of ten (10) community residents submitted that the job is bad while six (6) out of the ten (10) community residents explains that it is the human factors that affect the profession and not as if the profession is bad from onset. It is also shared that adequate screening and meritocracy should be looked into for the appropriate selection of individuals or persons before they employed them in to the profession

This section presents an integrative discussion of the key findings, connecting statistical results with conceptual insights and theoretical frameworks. The purpose is to interpret how public confidence, institutional challenges, and social influences shape crime reporting behaviors in Ogun State, with a focus on Abeokuta South Local Government Area. The data supports how public trust in the police significantly affects crime reporting behavior. Respondents who viewed the police as honest, fair, and responsive were more inclined to report crimes. This finding affirms the hypothesis formulated for the study which intends to research on whether public trust significantly impacts crime reporting to the police.

The outcome of the linear regression analysis on public confidence and the willingness to report crime to the Nigeria police in Abeokuta South Local Government, Ogun State, Nigeria shows that several variables were tested. The quantitative outcomes show that out of all the variable tested trust in police fairness is significant at 0.152 with $p = 0.005$. Also, Openness in community engagement with police in crime reporting was found significant at 0.200, $p = 0.005$. The result of trust in police procedure proved significant because the result was significant at 0.172, $p = 0.005$. In addition to some of the variable that are tested and also significant the rights to protection was tested and proved significant at 0.138, $p = 0.003$ while the last variable out of the tested and significant variable is institutional commitment which prove significant at 0.127, $p = 0.005$. Other variable tested that are not significant are perceived safety, police responsiveness, police integrity, public-police relationship and complaints handling confidence While the qualitative responses interpreted and summarized shows that police as a profession should be perceived by the citizens from transparency and accountability views rather than condemning the profession from general perspectives. The profession is not corrupt but the human factor in the profession corrupt the tasks expected to be carried out by the people employed as security agents in the states. The submission is drawn and related to the Sigmund Freud theory of instinctual drives that explain the importance people associated with their thinking orientation whether to report crime or not to report crime to Nigeria



police due to they personal perceptions of value attacked to security works of the Nigeria Police (Tyler & Jackson, 2014). Respondents who felt listened to or treated respectfully were more willing to assist investigations. On the contrary, those with prior negative experiences such as indifference, bribery, or arbitrary arrests exhibited reluctance to engage police services.

CONCLUSION

The outcome of the study that intends to inquired on public confidence and willingness to report crime to Nigeria police concluded that poor public perception and preconception notion labeled against the Nigeria police has huge impact on crime reporting, cooperation, and problem solving on crime related matters in the country,

It on this ground the following recommendations are derived to support the outcome of the research inquiry

1. Preconceived notion or stigmatization against police profession must be erased and public awareness and orientation must be advertise for new beginning about the profession
2. Whistle blowing policy(ies) must continue for transparency in reporting crime
3. Encourage of transparency and accountability in community policing or police -public relations
4. Creation of multiple safe and accessible reporting channels, such as toll free hotlines, mobile applications, community police post, and anonymous reporting platform,
5. Regular monitoring strategies such as police body cameras should be encourage to fetch out bad eggs from the good ones
6. Continuous training and retraining programme for both the citizens and the police in term of reporting crime
7. Needs to strengthen Police Community Relation Committee

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