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CONTENTS

Title of Paper/Author(s)	Pages
Level of Access and Utilization of Antenatal Care Services among Primigravida and Multigravida Mothers in Edo South, Nigeria O.A Dawodu & I.U Nwankwo	1
Patients' and Relatives' Satisfaction with Neurological Care in a Nigerian Hospital R.E Omu	18
Cattle Rustling and Kidnapping in Northern Nigeria: A Review A.T Mahmoud & A.C Augustine	34
The Role of the Extended Family on Marital Instability in Egor Local Government Area, Edo State, Nigeria O.J Egharevba & J. I Omosuvbe	43
Conjugal Brutality and Women's Productivity in Formal Organizations in Nigeria Woyengitari Imbazi	57
A Reflective Review on the Sociology of Deviant Behaviour E.T Ingiabuna	69
An Assessment of the Marital Conflicts Resolution Services of the Ministry of Women Affairs, Ilorin, Kwara State A. Abdulhameed, M.S Yusuf, K.A Kelani, A.H Mohammed, T.O Arinde-Simeon & A.A Atiku	82
Perceived view of Police- Public cooperation in combating Child Trafficking in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State T.O Arinde-Simeon & S.E Abonyi	95
Lockdown during Coronavirus Pandemic and Urban-Rural Migration in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni LGA, Rivers State, Nigeria A.S Ekpenyong & C.N Omere	106
Street Begging Practices in Nigeria: A Conceptual Review R.K Yusuf	117

Editorial

Perceived View of Police- Public Cooperation in Combating Child Trafficking in Ilorin Metropolis, Kwara State

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Abstract

Trafficking in persons has become a perennial problem in the contemporary world and also seems to have affected the sustainable development goals of many nations in Sub-Saharan Africa. This modern-day slavery is now a pandemic and a security threat to human existence. The study examined the overall perception of people in Ilorin metropolis of North Central Nigeria on the extent to which public-police cooperation had contributed to combating this heinous crime. The Procedural Justice Theory initiated by Thibaut and Walker in 1975 was used as the theoretical orientation. Equally the study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design with a structured questionnaire and an in-depth interview Guide using 132 respondents (for questionnaire) and 18 participants (for in-depth interview). Data collected were coded and analyzed using descriptive statistics and a chi-square test of significance. While In-depth Interview was transcribed and thematically done. Findings of the study reveal that there was a significant relationship between socioeconomic status and perceived view of people in police-public cooperation in combating child trafficking ($\chi^2= 16.69$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.05$). Also, there was a significant relationship between place of residence and perceived view of people on police-public cooperation in combating child trafficking ($\chi^2=22.15$, $df=2$, $p<0.05$). Findings also reveal that educational attainment is a critical factor that provides the impetus for police-public cooperation in the fight against child trafficking in Ilorin ($\chi= 9.25$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.05$). In addition, corruption and institutional weaknesses in police organization and government were found to have posed a threat to effective police-public cooperation in the war against child trafficking in Ilorin metropolis. The study, therefore, made some recommendations which include the need for synergy among governmental agencies and stakeholders to provide a better quality of life for Nigerian citizens and total overhauling of the Criminal Justice System. Again, security studies should be incorporated into the curriculum of Nigerian primary and secondary schools and become a general study course in all tertiary institutions.

Keywords: Perceived view, Police, Public Cooperation, Trafficking, Child Trafficking

Introduction

In the present age of rapid techno-industrial development, the emergence or aggravation of certain social problems has become a worrisome phenomenon, especially in a capitalist state like Nigeria. Child trafficking seems to be one of such problems confronting Nigeria and other Sub-Saharan African countries or the world in general. According to Babatunde (2014), trafficking in children (both boys and girls) have become a booming business in many parts of the world, including Africa, irrespective of all efforts put in place at both regional and global efforts to combat and

eradicate the scourge. It is likely that among countries in Africa, Nigeria seems to constitute the largest number of victims in the organized human trafficking networks. The International movement against all forms of discrimination and racism; IMAOR (2015) also noted that in the West Africa Sub- region, the phenomenon of trafficking in persons especially the under aged is widespread in Nigeria.

This implies that even though the United Nations Assembly in 1954 set aside a universal children's day to be observed as a day to celebrate children, many more children in different parts of the world are still being exploited and trafficked as slavery from one country to the other (Soeze, 2008). Although there are no reliable data to show the number of children trafficked out or within the country, not less than ten Nigerian children likely pass through the borders for slavery in other countries monthly since independence. This lack of data has also made it difficult for law enforcement agents and the general public to ascertain the enormity of the problem to proffer a lasting solution to these social vices.

The cooperation between the police and the citizens, therefore, becomes necessary as the vast majority of human or child trafficking cases become known to the police through being identified first by members of the public and then transmitting the information to the police (Bradford & Jackson, 2016). In other words, cooperation between the police and the public could be seen as an act of social control initiated at the informal level. According to Waddington (1999), such cooperation results from the way people react to the development and characteristics of events in their social environment making them invoke and hand over the problem to the police as soon as they arrive. People, therefore, tend to cooperate with the police when they witness transgressions in social norms, disorderly behaviours and other conducts regarded as undesirable from a normative viewpoint (Black, 1993). On the other hand, the absence of cooperation between the police and the general public may impair the efficiency of the police and other arms of the criminal justice system. (Goudriaan, Witterbrood & Nieuwbeeta, 2006).

Going by the fact that trafficking of children in Nigeria and other countries of the world have assumed a frightening dimension, the United Nations in 2015 emphasized that police, in particular, have a key role to play in working with the public/communities towards preventing child trafficking using such approaches that encourage collaborative arrangement between police and citizens (UN, 2015). This is necessary because the people are already abreast with the environment and can easily reach out to the vulnerable members of the group or others at risk. Amado (2018) also noted that both the police and the general public have a responsibility to stop child trafficking and protect the wellbeing of children in line with the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

However, the emergence of community-based associations in many countries seem to have contributed immensely in providing the necessary information and other services to the police with the aim of stemming down the rate of criminality and other social vices. In some cases, the police

may choose to partner with the business sector or market traders and non-governmental organizations within the community, ex-service personnel or retirees, civil servants, volunteer groups, neighbourhood groups, traditional rulers and town union presidents, women associations, the church and clergies or Imams, academia and the private sectors. According to Bradford and Jackson (2016), the police are held by the citizens as representative of law/ order and their only hope of safety from criminals.

Nevertheless, people's willingness and ability to contact the police in the event of child trafficking and other criminal activities may be related to such normative assessment of the individual's socioeconomic status, place of residence, age, educational level, religious affiliation, occupational status and others. The normative assessment may help in determining what should be done about a particular crime or what ought not to be done. In other words, it promotes fairness and encouragement on the ground that both the community members and the police have a shared set of goals and should work together to achieve them. It also leads to greater trust in the police serving as an evidence-based approach in crime reduction. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees; UNHCR (2000) observed that the increase in cases of child trafficking in many parts of the world could be as a result of the global economic crunch, gross poverty and absence of necessities of life, corruption, social and political conflicts.

Oden (2018) on the other hand noted that child trafficking had brought a negative image to Nigeria and expressed doubt of this social ill-being curative any longer. The 2018 Global Slavery Index Reports revealed that Nigeria ranked 32nd position out of 167 countries with the highest number of trafficked children. The implications are that the basic rights of children enshrined in Nigeria's 1999 constitution, the International Labour organization convention, the United Nations Convention and other international treaties on the rights of children are being violated with impunity (Egede2003, Soeze,2008, Enaikele & Clutayo, 2011). Although many studies have been undertaken at both national and international levels on the cases of child trafficking and the role of the police/public in strengthening its prevention (Goudriaan, Wittebrood & Nieuwwbeerta 2006, UN 2015), none have been situated in Ilorin metropolis. In resolving this unmet expectation, the study examined the perceived view of citizens in Ilorin metropolis on the extent to which police-public cooperation had contributed to combating child trafficking in the area. Protecting the Nigerian child from becoming prey to traffickers has become ever necessary in the contemporary humanitarian crisis and craziness to become rich overnight.

In pursuing this general objective, the following hypotheses were posed and tested: (i). There is a relationship between socioeconomic status and perceived view of people on police-public cooperation in combating child trafficking in Ilorin metropolis. (ii). There is a relationship between place of residence and perceived view of people on police-public cooperation in combating child trafficking in Ilorin. (iii). There is a relationship between educational level and perceived view of people on police- public cooperation in combating child trafficking in Ilorin metropolis.

Theoretical Orientation

The study was anchored on Procedural Justice Theory developed in 1975 by Thibaut and Walker in Chicago, the United States to provide a foundation for police training programmes. This theory was further expounded and elaborated by Tom Tyler and his associates to examine the causal link between perception of justness or justification of police practices, citizen's perception of its legitimacy and legal compliance (Tyler 1988, Gangl 2003, Hagan & Valerie, 2017). In other words, it tries to check the public perception of police activities on some social issues and bring improvements that it demands. In Nigeria for instance, the majority of citizens do not approve of the way the police go about fighting some challenging social problems and criminality such as child trafficking and hence, the need for synergy between the police unit and the residents.

According to Adegbile (2017), community or public involvement has become an essential component of crime prevention especially in the areas of child trafficking in many countries of the world. It presupposes that since the police are assigned with the primary duties of law enforcement and maintenance of order, the ability of the police to perform these duties creditably depends on the level of cooperation the public extends to them. Nigeria that has been labelled by other nations as a transit and destination points for child trafficking also have the widespread belief that the police are inefficient, corrupt, not trusted and friends of criminals and other perpetrators of child trafficking. In this respect, the perceived view of the citizens on police-public cooperation in the fight against child trafficking in Ilorin metropolis will go a long way in explaining some of the disdains or misgivings surrounding this important social issue.

Material and Methods

The study was conducted in Ilorin metropolis, Kwara state of North Central, Nigeria, the 7th largest city by population in Nigeria. The cross-sectional survey research design was used and a multi-stage sampling technique employed to collect data from respondents in three local government councils that make up Ilorin metropolis using questionnaire and In-depth Interview (IDI). The three local government councils were; Ilorin East, Ilorin West and Ilorin South. A total of 150 respondents (ie 50 for each of the council area) who may have attained the age of 18 years and above were chosen randomly using balloting and administered with a questionnaire. In addition, 18 participants (ie 6 for each of the council area) were purposively selected and In-depth Interview conducted. These participants were all police officers attached to each of the local government police stations who may have stayed not less than one year in the council area. The interview was done with the participant's consents using a specific venue within each of the police stations and within a particular time agreed upon by both the participants and the researchers.

Data collected were coded using SPSS (version 2.0) and analyzed using descriptive statistics while the hypotheses were analysed using the chi-square statistical inference (χ^2). Similarly, data obtained from the in-depth interview were transcribed and phrases with contextual meaning indicated and pulled out as illustrative quotes to support the theme of the discussion and also complement the findings derived from the statistical data. Out of the 150-questionnaire

administered, only 132 were returned or properly filled and then used for analysis.

Table 1: Socio- demographic characteristics of Respondents (n= 132)

Variable	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	78	59
Female	54	41
Age Group (in years)		
18- 28	10	7.6
29- 39	29	22
40-50	42	31.8
51- 61	33	25
62 +	18	13.6
Religion		
Christianity	48	36.4
Islam	63	47.7
Africa Traditional Religion	21	15.9
No. of yrs resident in Ilorin metropolis		
Less than one year	16	12.1
1- 5 years	25	19
6- 10 years	52	39.4
10 years +	39	29.5
Educational Attainment		
No formal education	10	7.6
Primary	14	10.6
Secondary	26	19.7
OND/NCE	45	34.1
HND/First Degree & above	37	28
Occupation		
Civil Servant	57	43.2
Trading	32	24.2
Farming	20	15.2
Artisan	15	11.4
Others	8	6

Table 1 above shows that the majority of the respondents (59%) were males while the remaining 41% were females. It seems that men are more sensitive than women on issues bordering on security and fighting criminality. On the age of respondents as depicted above, a greater percentage of respondents (31.8%) were within the ages of 40- 50 years, followed by those within the ages of 51- 61 years (25%) and the least percentage of respondents (7.6%) being those within the ages of 18- 28 years. The religious affiliation of respondents shows that 40.7% were Muslims while the remaining 36.4% and 15.9% respectively were Christians and traditionalists. A greater percentage of respondents (39.4% and 29.5%) have lived in Ilorin metropolis for 6- 10 years and 11 years/above, 19% have stayed between 1- 5 years while 12.1% have spent less than one year in the metropolis.

The educational levels of respondents as displayed in the above table (Table 1) shows that 7.6% of respondents have no formal education, 34.1% possess OND/NCE while 28% have HND/first

degree and above. Since the majority of the respondents are literates, the finding confirms the submission of UNESCO (2002) that education helps one in maintaining the capacity to advise the government or make meaningful contributions on attending to critical national issues that affect national and regional cultures. The occupational category of respondents reveals that more of the respondents (43.2%) were civil servants, 24.2% were into trading/business and 15.2% were into farming.

Table 2: Respondent’s view on ways of promoting police- public cooperation (n= 132)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Information exchange	87	66
Logistic assistance	25	19
Legal aid/services	16	12.1
Others	4	2.9

Table 2 shows that 66% of respondents see exchange of information between the police and general public as the most fundamental means of promoting police- public cooperation especially in combating child trafficking in Ilorin metropolis. This finding is in tandem with the view of Adegbile (2017) that the communication or flow of information between the police and public helps to reduce criminal cases in the society. More so, 19% of respondents indicated logistic assistance while 12.1% indicated legal aid/services. The United Nations Organisation noted that the growing number of community-based groups in many countries providing legal services and other logistics to the police help to track down criminals following the principles of procedural justice.

Table 3: Respondent’s view on whether there is a relationship between socio- economic status and perception of police- public cooperation in combating child trafficking.

Responses	Socio- economic level		Total
	High	Low	
Yes	60 (64.5%)	21 (53.8%)	81 (61.4%)
No	28 (30.1%)	6 (15.4%)	34 (5.8%)
Don’t know	5 (5.4)	12 (30.8%)	17 (12.8%)

..... $\chi^2=16.9$ df=2 p<0.05

The calculated χ^2 (16.69) is greater than the table value (5.99), hence, the hypothesis which states that that there is a relationship between economic status and perceived view of the general public on police-public cooperation on combating child trafficking in Ilorin metropolis was upheld.

Table 4: Respondent’s view on whether there is a relationship between place of residence and perceived view of people on police- public cooperation in combating child trafficking in Ilorin.

Responses	Place of Residence		Total
	City Centre	Suburb	
Yes	50 (73.5%)	21 (32.8)	71 (53.8%)
No	10 (14.7%)	31 (48.4%)	41 (31.1%)
Don’t know	8 (11.8%)	12 (18.8%)	20 (15.1%)

$\chi^2 = 22.5$ df= 2 p<0.05

The calculated χ^2 (22.15) is greater than the table value (5.99), hence, the hypothesis which states that there is a relationship between place of residence and perceived view of people on police-public cooperation in combating child trafficking in Ilorin was upheld. The finding corroborates the submission of Flanagan (2010) that life in the city centre is morally corrupt and filled with hostility, marginalization, powerlessness and apathy that may need the combined efforts of the residence to ameliorate. The author noted that messages of danger of criminal activities tend to permeate the consciousness of urban residence which make them establish a relationship with the police and other law enforcement agents.

Table 5: Respondent’s view on whether there is a relationship between educational status and perceived view of the general public on police- public cooperation in combating child trafficking in Ilorin metropolis.

Responses	Educational status		Total
	High	Low	
Yes	34 (49.3%)	25 (39.7%)	59 (44.7%)
No	28 (40.6%)	18 (28.6%)	46 (34.8%)
Don’t know	7 (10.1%)	20 (31.7%)	27 (20.5%)

$\chi^2 = 9.25$ df = 2 p<0.05

The calculated χ^2 (9.25) is greater than the table value (5.99), hence, the hypothesis which states that there is a relationship between educational level and perceived view of the public on police-public cooperation in combating child trafficking in Ilorin metropolis was upheld. This finding is in tandem with the view of Onwuka (2002) that through education, one gets information about the workings of the government, the responsibilities and limitations of government officials which also bring impetus in the direction of progress, justice and freedom. Thus, only an educated man can wade into the tricks and strategies adopted by criminal elements and reveal them to the law enforcement agencies. This implies that the fact that many people lack the knowledge of what child trafficking is all about, they find it difficult to establish suspicions that could be reported to

the police, NAPTIP and other law enforcement agents. Many of the In-depth Interview participants also aligned with this finding. According to one of the participants, 'educated people are prime movers of the society's development agenda devoid of rancour and insecurity'.

Respondent's view was also sought to ascertain whether corruption and Institutional weaknesses influence the perceived view of the general public on the issue of police-public cooperation in combating child trafficking in Ilorin.

Table 6: Respondent's view on whether there is Influence of Corruption and Institutional weaknesses on police- public cooperation in combating child trafficking (n = 132)

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	105	79.5
No	22	16.7
Don't know	5	3.8

From the above table (Table 6) an overwhelming majority of respondents (79.5%) indicated that corruption and Institutional factors pose a threat to effective police-public cooperation in combating child trafficking in Ilorin metropolis, 16.7% indicated otherwise while 3.8% had no opinion. This finding aligns with the submissions of Egede (2003) and Babatunda (2014) that corruption and Institutional weaknesses by security forces and government establishments have facilitated trafficking in persons in Nigeria by allowing traffickers to do away with their victims without tendering the necessary documents at security checkpoints. The police and government officials especially at the Immigration Checkpoints are accused of collecting monetary gratification from traffickers without considering the implications. The author also noted that the fragility of the Nigerian political system is such that anything goes.

Many of the In-depth Interview Participants (IDI) attributed the rising cases of child trafficking in Nigeria to the inability of the government to provide the necessary and adequate welfare services to her citizens and the rising youth unemployment, socio-economic lack in addition to poor remuneration of police officers and other security personnel. A female participant unequivocally said, 'what everybody needs in this country is money no matter the means it was gotten; people are tired of being poor; our leaders are very wicked'.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Child trafficking has become one of the most rampant crime in Nigeria and other countries of the world. This modern-day slavery has posed a serious threat to human existence. Since anybody can fall victim to this evil monster, the perceived views of the general public become necessary for police-public cooperation needed to stamp out this ugly development in Nigeria.

Findings of the study reveal that the perceived view of people on police-public cooperation in combating child trafficking in Ilorin metropolis is related to individual's socioeconomic status ($\chi^2=16.69$, $df=2$, $p<0.05$) and place of residence ($\chi^2 = 22.15$, $df = 2$, $p <0.05$). This implies that people of high socioeconomic status especially those in the city centres are more sensitive to rising cases of insecurity than those in the rural communities who sleep in houses without gates or those living at the ghettos. The study findings also reveal a relationship between educational levels and perceived view on police-public cooperation in the fight against child trafficking ($\chi^2 = 9.25$, $df = 2$, $p < 0.05$). It was also revealed from the study findings that corruption and institutional weaknesses or fragility of the Nigerian political system have had a serious influence on our perception of the war against child trafficking using public-police cooperative efforts.

The study, therefore, recommended the need for synergy or joint effort among all governmental agencies, the civil society, the military and para-military, non-governmental organizations and others with the determination to provide all that it takes for effective policing. There is also the need for more sensitization through seminars, workshops and conferences in addition to the total overhauling of the entire security architecture of the nation. People should learn to see the police as a trusted compatriot. In addition, security studies should form part of the education curriculum of our primary and secondary schools as well as becoming a compulsory or general study course in the Nigerian tertiary institutions. Finally, there is the need to come up with new technology and sophisticated security devices that are capable of tracking down these traffickers so that Nigerian children are given the proper attention and care they deserve as leaders of tomorrow.

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