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Training Manual for Effective Service Delivery and Security

Measures in the Nigerian Police Force

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Abstract

There is increasing concern about insecurity in the nation and the modern Nigerian police force, now in its 81st year, still needs improvement in the area of psychological readiness in order to effectively protect life and property of the people. In this article it is argued that a highly functional police system usually begins with a psychologically competent police man or woman; as such, a psychological-based manual is being proposed. In the 21st century the road to the internal security of the nation will only open widely when the police organization enhances its functional performance and fulfills its proper role in society using officers and resources that are psychologically and emotionally adequate. This paper provides an overview of the essential procedural aspects of the pre-employment psychological screening process for potential law enforcement officer candidates and for post-psychological updates and followups for serving officers. This paper presents the basic steps of the psychological screening process and argues for it to become standard, mandated requirements of the nation. In this article the characteristics and the attributes looked for in law enforcement candidates through the psychological screening process are explained.

Keywords: police, testing, competent, manual, training, psychological, psychologists.

1. Introduction

As Nigeria begins with this new start in the Fourth Republic of Nigeria, it is imperative that the feverish nature of the national security system in Nigeria is addressed. The police and other law-enforcement agencies are essential to the country's national security (Whisenand et al, 2002; Fisher, 2003; Igbinoia, 2000; Jimoh, 2011; Curry, 1999). The focus of this paper will be on the modern Nigerian police force, now in its eighty-first year, consisting of about 371,800 or so sworn officers. There is now a wider call for the police to show that adequate management of national security challenges can be carried out effectively with the presence of competent police personnel. The critical shortcomings in security management relating to the psychological readiness and preparedness of the police officer and other related agents remain a concern nationally (Onyeozili, 2005). For the sake of high standards in national security it is essential to have a police system that ensures that only psychologically apt or suitable individuals are identified to serve as law enforcement officers and those unfit are also discovered. By all definitions, a potential law enforcement officer in Nigeria has remarkable power and authoritative contact to some form of national security measure or information. Therefore, he or she should be the right kind of person to be entrusted with such responsibilities.

2. Need for Psycho-Screening

A candidate for any national or state security-related job such as the police should go through an extensive battery of intellectual, personality, visual-motor, and ethics-related testing. There is a need to understand the quality of some psychological requirements and instruments and their applicability for selecting potential law enforcement officers. Psychology, like all professional bodies makes sure that standard professional tests are not open to the public or online because the tests are copyrighted by the test publishers and the security of the tests must be maintained (APA, 2000; Richmond, 2011).

3. Qualities of a Good Police Officer

Psychologists are continually under ethical obligations (enforced by licensing boards in up-to-date countries) to maintain proper assessment security. Common sense can tell us what personality characteristics make good police officers. For example, they should have good self-esteem, good self-concept, and evidence a modest value toward themselves. Police officers should be enthusiastic, yet not be so involved with numerous activities that they become ineffective. They should have good impulse control, adequate self-control, and be able to tolerate slight without becoming short-tempered. They shouldn't hold personal grudges but should be fair, kind, and objective. They should be dutiful to authority and yet be able to make good judgments independently. They should have stamina when under intimidation.

4. The Use of Psychological Instruments

Psychological tests fall into several categories (Richmond, 2011). Intelligence tests attempt to measure one's intelligence or one's basic ability to understand the world around him, assimilate its functioning, and apply this knowledge to enhance the quality of your life. Intelligence, therefore, is a measure of a potential, not a measure of what you've learned. It is supposed to be independent of culture but the challenge is to design a test that can actually be culture-free; most intelligence tests fail in this area to some extent for one reason or another. Achievement and aptitude tests are usually seen in educational or employment settings and attempt to measure either how much you know about a certain topic (i.e., your achieved knowledge) such as mathematics or spelling or how much of a capacity you have (i.e., your aptitude) to master material in a particular area such as visual-motor relationships.

The concept of IQ derives from about 1916 when a Stanford University psychologist Lewis Terman translated and revised the intelligence scale created by Alfred Binet and Theodore Simon. In the test, which is known as the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale, Terman used the ratio of mental age to chronological age. This ratio or quotient concept led to the use of the term IQ (Intelligence Quotient). For example, a twelve-year-old child with a mental age of twelve would have an IQ of 100 (the "average" IQ score). Currently, intelligence is measured according to individual deviation from standardized norms with 100 being the average. The Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS-IV) remains a popular test the measurement of intelligence.

Psychoneurological or neuropsychological tests (e.g., the Wechsler Adult Memory Scale) attempt to measure deficits in cognitive functioning (i.e., your ability to think, speak, reason, etc.) that may result from some sort of brain damage, such as a stroke or a brain injury.

Occupational tests (e.g., Holland's Self-Directed Search) attempt to match your interests with known careers. The logic here is that if the things that interest you in life match up with, say, the things that interest most school teachers, then you might make a good school teacher yourself.

Personality tests attempt to measure your basic personality style and are most used in research or forensic settings to help with clinical diagnoses. The most well-known personality test is the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) or the revised MMPI-2, composed of several hundred "yes or no" questions. A competent psychologist has to make an interpretation of the overall MMPI-2 profile. For example, in the selection of a potential police officer, the MMPI results have to be interpreted in consideration of other general information such as earlier job performance, academic performance, letters of recommendation, and so on. The issue of issue of false negatives and false positives should always be in the mind of the testing psychologists.

Psychological tests are usually administered and interpreted by a psychologist because of his or her studies in psychopathology along with academic courses and supervision in psychological testing, which are an integral part of the doctoral degree in clinical psychology. Ordinarily, psychological testing is usually not a part of a psychiatrist's medical training as their competency lies in the area of medication evaluation, treatment, and maintenance. Most psychiatrists can fittingly administer only some specific clinical tests that are straight-forward check-lists of symptoms and are not involved in the use standard psychological

instruments.

It is essential to understand that when trying to select good candidates for police officers, if it's too difficult to "handpick in" good traits, then the next best option is to "handpick out" obvious negative qualities (Richmond, 2011). Again, this is where the MMPI-2 comes in as it is an objective psychological instrument that measures levels of psychopathology. It helps to tell if someone is always depressed, has bizarre ways of thinking, is always complaining about health problems, or is socially introverted or overly aggressive, and so on.

In the area of projective or subjective psychology, there is the classic Rorschach test that uses inkblots to assess a person's inner psychological experience. The Rorschach ("inkblot test") is composed of several cards of inkblots; the examinee simply gives a description of the images and feelings being experienced while looking at the blots. Specific clinical tests attempt to measure specific clinical matters, such as one's current level of anxiety or depression. Several methods for administering and scoring the Rorschach have been developed. Although some of them have a considerable amount of published research, it is commonly known that any two or three independent psychologists could administer the Rorschach to the same person and achieve identical findings.

Similarly, projective tests such as the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), which asks a person to tell stories about various pictures of social interactions, and the Draw-A-Person and House-Tree-Person tests, which ask a person to draw pictures, give results of subjectivity and in general terms could result in questionable validity from the perspective of objective psychologists.

The sole reason for using psychological tests is to help answer the question, Do we accept this person or not into the police force? Even when a qualified psychologist makes a decision based on all the available evidence, there could still be doubts and questions (Oladimeji, 2005). It is essential that one try to minimize false negative mistakes that occur when a person truly qualified for a job is rejected or a false positive mistake when a person not truly qualified for a job is accepted; that is a killer or worse!

5. Common Challenges in Testing Outcomes

When a psychologist tries to minimize false negative mistakes in a test like MMPI-2, one might maximize false positive mistakes, and vice versa. Most employers, therefore, should try to make spot-on decisions so that the false negative mistakes are minimized, especially when good employees are hard to find. But for some individuals, such as police officers and other security workers, the risks are too great for any false positive mistakes. In general, some applicants who have been rejected as a result of psychological testing may feel that they have been treated unfairly. Therefore, a psychologist must always be cautious as to avoid high-security mistakes.

Richmond (2011) notes that when one is disqualified from a job application for psychological reasons, it means that there are things about one's behavior and attitudes that are of concern to the psychologist evaluating the candidate even though one may not be aware of them. Therefore, the candidate may need one recourse, which may not be pleasant or suitable, that is psychological treatment or psychotherapy.

6. The Issue of Test Translation

If a test is translated into another language, either in print or through a translator, all kinds of problems can occur. Anglo-linguistic words with numerous meanings cannot be adequately translated. English idioms cannot be expressed in another language without changing the entire sentence structure along with the underlying logic of the sentence. When that happens, standardization and the guarantee of fairness becomes a problem, possibly even lost. When one uses translated versions of tests, one might be given a score that appears to be official and scientific, that score is nothing more than "the score you have gotten on that test" at that particular time and under those particular circumstances.

7. Beyond the Usual Psychological Tests

Routine, periodic psychological assessment should be carried out on serving officers in the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) beginning with the lowest rank of constable to those at command levels. This testing must be done with all boldness and no stone must be left unturned. We need competent officers serving the public all the time. A highly functional police system usually begins with a psychologically and physically competent police man or woman. As an extension, his or her professional readiness flows into national security preparation. As most of us know psychological science studies the individual in the areas of thoughts, emotions, and behavior especially (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 1998). To this writer the individual police man or woman needs to be psychologically qualified in an overall manner as an emerging society like Nigeria requires an optimistic view of national security systems and all of its functions (Hills, 2008). No one wants to put the pillar of national security on the “head” of an imprudent or impulsive officer but that is what is likely to occur in the management of national security by a psychologically unprepared security agent.

According to competent psychologists the most important structures of personality are those that allow for the description of the individual in terms of individual characteristics, especially in the area of attitudinal functioning (Aremu & Oluwole, 2000; Aremu, 1998). As in psychological measures, a detailed historical, personal, family, and work background check is important and a criminal background check is part of the pre-employment requirement. Therefore, efforts should be made by government to provide the resources for the technology necessary for workable fingerprinting and for data collection and banking of a citizen’s social history. A psychologically and physically competent police man or woman is not all that is needed for an officer to produce a good work since the problems of national insecurity are made worse when police personnel and other security officials are not well paid, resulting in greater security risks (Onyeozili, 2005; Hills, 2008).

Richmond (2011) notes that psychological tests were created for three main reasons, all of which are interconnected. As most clinicians are aware it is easier to get information from tests than through clinical interview. However, one should still conduct a competent interview followed by a battery of psychological tests. Richmond (2011) further stated that the information from tests is more scientifically consistent than the information from a clinical interview. It is essential to note that when a psychologist is simply trying to arrive at a diagnosis to help determine the course of psychotherapy, a detailed interview is just fine. Note that examinees will try to get away with lying on a test more than in a clinical interview but standard testing tests have multiple “alarms” or alerts that go off when a test taker tries to lie.

8. The Issues of Validity and Reliability

One must make sure that psychological tests are valid in their ability to measure what they are supposed to measure. The accuracy or usefulness of a test is known as its validity. For example, suppose a clinician wanted to develop a test to determine which of several job applicants would work well in the police force. Would an arithmetic test be a valid test of job success? Well, not if the job required other skills, such as stress-intensive dexterity or social skills. A psychological test should give dependable results; that is known as its reliability. It is essential to understand that without reliability there can be no validity. However no psychological test is ever completely valid or reliable because the human psyche is just too complicated to know anything about it with full confidence. That is why there can be such uncertainty about a case even after extensive testing. For example, the problem of validity arises in the MMPI-2 when someone uses a test for a purpose for which it was not designed. The MMPI was designed to measure pathological personality traits, yet it (or the current MMPI-2) is often used as a screening tool for law enforcement, firefighters, paramedics, and others. As such, many persons wonder if this is an appropriate use for the test.

Clinical diagnoses of candidates should be the overall aim of testing a potential officer. Testing or screening should be focused on a candidate’s ability to perform the essential functions of the position. Specific cut-off scores should be highly discouraged, if not avoided but when cut-off scores are used, the basis for using the specific cut-off level should be provided. Conclusions about candidates’ qualifications should be based on consistencies across data sources.

As part of pre-psychological screening and evaluation, a semi-structured, job-related interview format should always be employed and interviews should be scheduled to allow for sufficient time to cover appropriate background and test results verification. Administrators or supervisory staff involved with employment decisions should have written reports. Reports should evaluate the candidate's suitability based on all materials, including assessments and interview results. Reports should contain a rating, recommendation, references for employment, explanation for the recommendation, and any reservations the psychologist may have.

9. Needed Outcomes and Some Expected Attributes

Professionals in the mental health field and more specifically police psychologists have long studied what kind of person is best suited to be a law enforcement officer. The pre-employment psychological examination offers a way to discover what applicants will best fit the structure and responsibilities of law enforcement service. Proper screening also reduces turnover caused by law enforcement agencies need to find people with the potential and/or attributes to be good officers. Likewise, agencies also must identify people that should not have the power and access that law enforcements officers are entrusted with by society and government.

There is need for appropriate level of intelligence. Officers must be able to reasonably analyze situations that range from the mundane to the exceptional. An officer must have at least average general intelligence. Above average intelligence may be a benefit but not always. Persons with below average intelligence may not be considered. Officers respond to drastically varying situations and must make appropriate and decisive decisions under difficult circumstances. The ability to exercise proper judgment under a range of environments is critical to public safety, proper service, and success of an agency. People demonstrating poor judgment should not be recommended for police work.

Officers must react quickly but not without first considering the ramifications of their actions. Law enforcement demands decisiveness but not impulsiveness. Applicants that demonstrate an impulsive tendency should not be recommended. Some examples of poor impulse control or impulsivity are bookmaking, gambling, poor self-control, poor anger control, poor personal financial management, alcohol or drug abuse, and medication misuse.

Uprightness, honesty, morality, and veracity are important in any profession but especially so in law enforcement or security work. An agency's public image and an officer's career will surely fail if faithfulness, straightforwardness, or truthfulness is in doubt. A candidate's honesty can be evaluated through testing and the readiness to provide information that is consistent with the background investigation. Candidates must demonstrate conflict resolution skills through the ability to diffuse conflict and anger without resulting to aggression. Testing or a history of fighting or verbal abusiveness may discover overly aggressive attitudes.

In accordance with professional ethics it is essential that officers leave bias and prejudice at home and officers must be able to enforce laws and interact fairly with co-workers and the public. Police candidates that are not able to accept criticism within the work structure of an agency should not be recommended for enlistment. Law enforcement officers must be able to work as a team especially when there are an increasing number of two-officer patrol cars. Candidates must demonstrate a willingness to develop positive relationships with fellow officers, since teamwork saves lives. A history of healthy relationships indicates the tendency to develop positive work relationships as well. People lacking such social tendencies may be unsuitable for law enforcement. Candidates that express a desire for supremacy or power are generally unacceptable as the public is usually apprehensive towards overly authoritative or power-drunk officers. Officers with these types of attributes understandably cause antipathy or anger in the public and damage the image of law enforcement as a whole. Potential officers ought to express an appropriately positive motivation for becoming a law enforcement officer. Candidates need to show an ability to manage routine events repeatedly. Thrill seekers or happy-go-lucky individuals are generally not good candidates.

The law enforcement culture demands a high degree of dependability as law enforcement profession is

greatly structured and part of that structure is consistency. Potential officers should demonstrate a higher degree of responsibility and should be expected to be punctual for roll call everyday throughout a career. Persons that demonstrate an overly averse behavior toward risk or demonstrate a high degree of passivity should not be endorsed. An overly passive officer is a danger to him/herself, colleagues, and the public.

Along with integrity in a law enforcement officer, the public and other law enforcement officers, and administrators will not be able to work with an officer that uses illicit drugs or is involved in excessive alcohol consumption. The days of sentimental protection by senior officers or departments and officers protecting troubled officers are over with.

People that suffer from psychosis or incapacitating mental condition are also unfit for law enforcement service. A history of treatment for personal reasons is not an instant disqualifier; however, certain psychological disturbances are unsuited for law enforcement. Severe psychological problems like major depression, a psychotic disorder, or specific phobias are examples of disqualifying conditions.

An officer's work experience can prove highly stressful both physically and mentally. Applicants must have the ability to handle consistent moderate to high levels of stress. Entrants who lack such ability will eventually leave law enforcement for another profession. Stress tolerance may be judged from testing, history, or even from psychological interview.

A candidate that desires a law enforcement career in order to control others or who demonstrates an anti-social or dangerously deviant sexual tendency cannot be recommended. Law enforcement officers are often in positions of power over others that may be detained or vulnerable. A dangerous sexual predisposition may place helpless people in harm's way. Although a candidate's sex life is generally a private matter individuals that demonstrate dangerously abnormal sexual attitudes or tendencies should not be recommended.

Known publishers and sellers of psychological tests:

- Psychological Assessment Resources, Inc.
- Pearson Assessments
- The Psychological Corporation
- Western Psychological Services

10. Conclusion, Reflections, and the Future

There is a reason why police psychological services within the police administration are important. For decades there has been no independent or a fully staffed doctoral level psychologist or a standard psychological testing and readiness unit in the Nigerian police force. Not long ago in Abuja, the media reported that a police officer shot at a bus conductor after being asked for his 20 naira (Nigerian denomination) or about 20 cent bus fare (Modesty, 2010). We should try to "buy" into psychology now as the goal here is to focus on persons with the power of guns, sticks and badges that could be misused by any ill-cultured person attracted to security agencies like the police force and other related agencies (e.g., Economic and Financial Crime Commission, Nigeria Prisons Service, and State Security Services).

It is essential that the law enforcement agencies discontinue the habit of calling persons with a first degree in psychology experts, recruiting them, and calling them psychologist. A more appropriate term could be *psychological counselor*. Those with a master's degree in psychology could be classified as *psychological specialists* and the ones with doctorate degree should be known as *psychologist* (with graded levels per stated guidelines of a governing psychology board officially recognized by the New Age Nigeria Psychological Nigeria Association). However, that does not mean they will not be useful in social welfare issues as police work is mostly about solving social problems.

The current leadership at the Nigerian Police Service Commission supports the idea of an applicant going beyond being accepted into a police academy either as rank and file officer or as a cadet for inspector or superintendent position, with only an aptitude test, a physical exam, and meeting the federal character or entry qualifications like secondary school. These are not enough! To be accepted into a junior or senior

academy a battery of evaluations conducted by a doctoral and certified clinical psychologist is paramount. The number of tests administered should cover personality, drug, lie-related tests, and other psychological related measurements deemed essential by the psychological examiner.

It is argued that the Nigerian individual law enforcement agencies, law enforcement related organizations, and other psychological professionals and institutions should formulate elaborate evaluative processes and procedures, hopefully to guarantee to the public and all institutions that the police or law enforcement candidates hired are capable of maintaining the trust of society (Aremu, 1998). Ujomo (2001) pointed out that the foundation of national security in Nigeria should be erected on sustained ethical and political morality, mostly on the part of a nation. Therefore, a national instrument like the Nigerian police force should always up-hold ethical and political morality. Ujomo (2001) argued that national or state-oriented establishment of basic morality principles are important if a nation is to have maximum safety, peace, and harmony. This is more reason why any security agent or law enforcement officer of the government should be mentally, emotionally, and behaviorally sound in order to represent national security and protect the public, as well as to prevent these agents from being susceptible to sub-standard practices. The national interest in the area of law and order could be served better as different state governments more fully and severely take a greater interest in protecting the people and their properties.

As it is currently, the Nigeria police force should use many points recommended in this paper to reduce its longstanding problems with sub-standard recruiting and training processes where there is a huge need to develop a training manual for potential and actual members of the police.

It is recommended that the law enforcement administrators work in collaboration with competent psychologists in order to help in integrating the psychological contents, measures, testing, therapies, and systems into the pre-selection process and into the curriculum of the Nigerian police institutions. The stated positions in this paper will enable the Police Service Commission, the Federal Ministry of Police Affairs, and other stakeholders to help reduce some of the national security challenges through the use of sound minded 21st century police officers.

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