

Crime and Criminal Investigation in Nigeria: A Study of Police Criminal Investigation in Enugu State

CHINWOKWU Eke Chijioko, M.Sc. CPO.
Department of Sociology, Federal University Lafia
E-Mail:- eke-chinwokwu@gmail.com

Abstract

This study inquired into the activities of the police in crime and criminal investigation with particular focus on the Police Criminal Investigation in Enugu State Police Command. The specific objectives of the study include: (1) an examination of the factors responsible for the high rate of 'undetected' and 'pending investigation' of criminal cases in Nigeria as well as in Enugu State (2) an investigation of the training skills and strategies adopted by the police officers in criminal investigation (3) an assessment of the effectiveness of such techniques and training (4) an identification of the challenges confronting the police in criminal investigation. A total of 330 respondents were used for the study. Data were collected through the use of questionnaire, oral interviews, as well as from documents and crime statistics. Data generated through questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive techniques such as frequency count and percentage while the data obtained through interviews and documentary sources were content analyzed. The findings revealed that factors such as lack of training, skills, facilities, corruption, disobedience to due process and ethical standard among others account for the high rate of "undetected" and "pending cases" of criminal investigations in Nigeria as well as Enugu State. It also shows that the investigative strategies and techniques adopted by the police are not effective enough in addressing the challenges facing the police criminal investigation department.

Keywords: Crime, Criminal Investigation, Police, Enugu State.

1. INTRODUCTION

Crime is a social canker-worm that has eaten deep into the social fabric of the Nigerian society such that its effect is multifaceted. Although Durkheim (1958) opines that "crime is inevitable and normal aspect of social life, it is an integral part of all healthy societies; it is functional" (cited in Haralambos & Holborn, 2008:322), its functionality in a society such as ours has to be viewed seriously because of the social and psychological problems it has caused many victims. In fact, no matter the functionality of crime in the society, the act of crime is condemnable and unacceptable in a healthy society, no matter the justification criminals may present.

In the 1970s the popular crimes that were prevalent in Nigeria include : armed robbery, stealing, assault, burglary, rape etc; but today terrorism, bomb blasts, kidnapping, drug trafficking, money laundry, child trafficking, assassinations and other criminal activities have become the order of the day. Victoria Ekhomu (2010) noted that "Nigeria was beset with myraid of security challenges such as kidnapping, terrorism, civil disturbance, political violence, fraud, assassination, armed robbery, among others" (cited in Utebor & Ekpimah, 2010:11). In spite of stringent laws and punishments to check these crimes, they have continued to be on the increase with the police seemingly helpless and incapable of savaging the situation.

The Police are charged with the responsibility of internal security by ensuring safety of lives and property. But the question here is "have the police been able to carry out their functions effectively and efficiently?" It has to be recalled that in 1986 Dele Giwa, a founding editor of the Newswatch Magazine was killed during General Ibrahim Babangida government through a parcel bomb (Oyeniya 2007:51), the first of its kind in Nigerian history. Reacting to the assassination of Dino Dipo an Action Congress Gubernatorial candidate for Ogun State in 2007, Yinka Odumakin, National Publicity Secretary of the Party; described Dina's murder as a shame to the country. He went on to say that "Dina has now joined the league of Bola Ige, Ayo Daramola, Funso Williams and so many other non-prominent people who lost their lives since the inception of do-or-die politics. One common thread in all these assassination is the inability of the police to bring to book the perpetrators" (Akintunde, 2010:31).

The steady increase of crimes and undetected crimes of various criminal activities recently has raised a general feeling of insecurity of lives and property among Nigerians and those in Enugu State in particular. Between 1996-2000, the police recorded a total of 1,072,026 cases. Out of this, 462,058 or 43.1 percent of the cases were prosecuted while 540,899 or 50.5 percent cases were 'under-investigation, undetected or unsolved' (Soyombo, 2005). The implication of this is that a very significant whopping number of 51.0 percent of the cases were under-investigation or undetected or even closed for want of evidence. This is very bad for a police organisation that is supposed to be efficient. Similarly, in 2008 a total of 90,156 cases were recorded by the police. Out of these cases, 51,816 or 57.5 percent were prosecuted and 23,589 or 45.5 percent cases were convicted. This is a very significant improvement in the prosecuting capacity and ability of the police and a welcome development. However, we have to note also that of the number of cases prosecuted, a total of 3,705 or 15.7 percent were discharged and acquitted. This also dwarfs the improvement made on conviction, because the

significant number discharged and acquitted is not unconnected to improper investigation. More so, 38,342 or 42.5 percent remained 'under-investigation, undetected or unsolved'. This is very significant in police performance. Significant also was the number of property lost. Out of 5,257,710,145 lost only 2,014,425,676 or 38.3 percent was recovered (<http://www.cleen.org/summary/percent2dofcrimepercentstatisticspercent2cs.nigeria.2008>). From the above illustrations, it is obvious that the police performance in terms of investigation and detection or clearance rate have been inefficient as evidenced by the overwhelming cases that remained under-investigation, undetected, unsolved or even discharged and acquitted.

This apparent inefficiency of the Nigeria Police to combat crime in the society through effective management of criminal investigation is a serious set back in the criminal justice system. This is because "the police is the pivot on which the justice system stands" (Conklin, 1989:384). Hence the police inefficiency in controlling crime through effective criminal investigation has been so glaring that people now live in fear i.e. fear of being victims of criminal violence. The socio-psychological effects this fear has generated on the people is better imagined than said. However, the general insecurity and fear of victimisation and seemingly inability of some State Governors, especially the five South Eastern State's Governors to express thus "the type of arms and ammunition at the disposal of the criminals and professionalism of the criminals are beyond the capabilities of the states" (Chidozie, 2010:6). This came at the heels of upsurge of armed robberies, kidnappings and other violence in the city of Aba and its environs in Abia State of Nigeria. It is important to note that between 1996-2003, a total of about 800,054 cases of property crimes were recorded by the Nigeria police (Dambazau, 2007 cited in Ugwoke, 2010:116).

The magnitude of these crimes and the modus operandi of the criminals seem to put the police off-balance. The former Inspector General of Police, Mr. Ogbonnaya Onovo told his officers and men in Owerri, Imo State at the peak of the kidnapping saga in the South East Zones of Nigeria that "you have done well in maintaining peace and order. But you have failed in preventing crimes" (Akasike & Abimbola, 2010:3). This was further emphasized by the immediate past Inspector General of Police Mr. Hafiz Ringim who blamed "the incessant armed robbery, kidnapping, and similar crimes on policemen's corrupt practices..." (Akasike & Abimbola, 2010:7). These raises a lot of questions on police efficiency and effectiveness in handling criminal investigation matters in Nigeria.

It is pertinent to mention that the level at which crime is prevented in the society will very much depend on the level at which the police are able to investigate, prosecute and gain conviction of criminals. It is because of their importance and position in the criminal justice system that they have been chosen for this study. Moreover, Gibbons (1968:6) contends that "crime is a social phenomenon, as a social phenomenon, the methods or ways of investigating the commission of crime needs to be studied in our social settings". This study was conceived to examine the efforts of the police at checkmating the high rate of undetected and pending criminal investigation cases in Enugu State, Nigeria. In the pursuance of this, the study will seek answers to the following questions (1) What are the factors responsible for the high rate of undetected and pending criminal investigation cases in Enugu State? (2) What are the investigative techniques adopted by investigating police officers in criminal investigation? (3) How effective are these techniques in criminal investigation? And (4) what are the challenges confronting the police in criminal investigation? The result of this study will among others contribute to a better understanding of the issues militating against effective crime investigation in Nigeria. The findings of this study will also go a long way in making an important practical contribution to the literature in Criminal Investigation in Nigeria.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Enugu State Police Criminal Investigation Department was established immediately after the creation of the state in 1986 by the Ibrahim Babangida administration. The headquarters of the Police command Criminal Investigation Department is located in Enugu. Aside from the State Criminal Investigation Department (SCID), the Enugu Police Command is comprised of 3 (three) Area Commands and 44 (forty-four) Divisional Crime Branches. Enugu State Police Command consists of about 8,000 police officers and men (Nigeria Bureau of Statistics, 2009). Out of this number the total strength deployed for criminal investigation in the state is about 950 (Police Annual Report, 2011). This forms the sample size frame for the study. The study population consists of members of the Nigeria police, Enugu state command attached to the criminal investigation branches across the command irrespective of the rank. As regards the selection of the sample, the command was stratified administratively into 3(three) Area Commands and 44 (forty-four) Police Divisions/Stations. The study was carried out in 15 (fifteen) police criminal investigation units including the State CID. As a result of its position as the headquarters of the Criminal Investigation Branches and the custodian of all criminal cases in the state, the State CID was chosen purposively for the study while a simple random sampling (balloting) methods was used to select 14 (fourteen) Divisions/Stations that make up the three Area Commands. This was done to ensure that each Division/Station in the Area command has equal chance of being selected for the study (Watt, 1993). The Police Divisions selected are: Nsukka Urban, Igbo Eze, Uzo Uwani, Oji River, Awgu, Udenu, Nkanu, Udi, Igbo

Etiti, Abakpa Nike, New Haven, Uwani, Ogui, and the State CID. The stratified random sampling technique was used to select 22 (twenty two) respondents of various ranks from the 15 divisions/stations including the State CID to give a total of 330 (35.0 percent) respondents. Twenty two close ended questionnaire forms were administered in each of the 15 divisions making a total of 330 questionnaires. The questionnaire was other-administered. Oral interview was conducted with some of the Divisional Crime Officers (DCOs) and Unit Heads of some of the Criminal Investigation Units. This was done in order to gain a better understanding of the operations of the criminal investigation Department.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in **Appendix 1**. It shows that about 90.9 percent of the respondents were male while the remaining 9.1 percent were female. The high figure of male respondents in the criminal investigation Units show the disproportionate recruitment of male officers over female police officers in Nigeria. The male dominance in the unit may also be attributed to the hazardous nature of dealing with hardened criminals which the female officers may not be able to handle. The female presence in the criminal investigation branch is to assist their male counterparts in handling cases involving female suspects and juvenile offenders. On the marital status of the respondents, about 64.0 percent are married while 29.1 percent are single. This was obvious since most police officers were of adult age and suitable for settled married life. The 29.1 percent of singles in the investigation unit was significant since most of them were young and within the constable rank who may be inexperienced in the rudiments of criminal investigation. The age of the respondents shows that about 45.5 percent fall within age 25-31 years. 24.2 percent were within age 18-28 years while 15.2 percent fall within age 32-38 years. This result is very significant in this study. It shows that majority of the respondents in the Criminal Investigation Units are young and in their active working years. The educational level of the respondents shows that 51.5 percent of the respondents have secondary or General Certificate of Education school certificate while 24.2 had Primary Six Certificate. Significant in this study is that only 6.1 percent of officers in the criminal investigation hold a degree certificate. Although, majority (51.5 percent) of the respondents are literate in that they hold the minimum educational qualification for any public office holder in Nigeria, however this has not been reflected in the rate of clearance rate of criminal investigations in Nigeria. The implication is that there is low level of educated personnel with degree certificates. The result is that where highly educated personnel are lacking it will reflect in the productive output of the criminal investigation department. It might be important to reiterate that education remains one of the most vital tools in criminal investigation. Respondent's religious affiliation shows that majority (60.6 percent) were Christians, about 30.3 percent were Muslims while only 9.1 percent had other religious backgrounds. This is because the study was carried out in a Christian dominated state. Respondent's rank shows that majority (42.4 percent) fall within the rank of Sergeant while respondents with the rank of Corporal were 27.3 percent. The implication of this in our study is that majority (69.7 percent) of the respondents are "none commissioned officers" (NCOs). This depicts that this "rank group" is the most vibrant and energetic backbone of the Criminal Investigation Department in particular and the police in general. The finding shows also that 16.7 percent of the respondents were Constables while 10.6 percent represent Inspector rank. Further findings indicate a very insignificant 3.0 percent of respondents within the Assistant Superintendent of Police and above. The reason for this is that most of these officers are either Divisional Crime Officers or Unit Heads which main job function is to give instruction regarding criminal investigations. Respondent's working experience shows that a majority (36.4 percent) had 6-11 years of working experience, about 21.2 percent had between 12-17 years of working experience, while 15.1 percent had between 18-23 years of working experience. The high proportion of those whose years of working experience falls between 6-11 years is an indication that majority of the respondents (personnel in the Criminal Investigation Department) are young and perhaps without adequate training and skill in tackling criminal investigation cases. The respondents whose experience falls between 24-29 years is about 10.6 percent, an indication that experienced men in the criminal investigation department are few resulting to massive undetected and pending investigation cases in Nigeria. A more serious observation shows that the average years of working experience of the respondents is 15.5 years while the standard deviation is 21.3 years. The implication is that majority of the respondents (personnel in the criminal investigation department) are within the rank and file who are inexperienced, untrained and unskilled in the handling of criminal investigation cases. Consequent upon this, we infer that the apparent large number of cases under investigation and undetected in Nigeria are spiral effects of the inadequacies that are found in the criminal investigation department as shown in this study.

3.1. Factors Responsible for the High Rates of Undetected and Pending Investigation of Criminal cases.

Police efforts in checkmating the activities of criminals in the country through the appropriate investigative techniques have not yielded the desired result instead unsolved crime abounds. Our socio-demographic characteristics analysis revealed some salient factors considered responsible for the high rate of unsolved criminal cases in Nigeria generally and Enugu State in particular. Education and training are very vital in criminal investigation. Accept that majority of the respondents possess the minimum secondary school certificate

but they lack the training and experience required in handling criminal investigation matters. This finding was collaborated in **table 1 below**. Table 1 further shows that majority (60.6 percent) of the respondents did not attend any kind of detective training or even a refresher course before being posted to the investigation department. Only very handful of the respondents attended one form of detective training or the other. For instance only about 18.2 percent of the respondents attended the general detective course while only about 2.1 percent attended photographic course. It is important to note that every police station especially the crime branch ought to have a photographer who is well trained in handling criminal evidence, but this is not so in the Nigeria Police. The implication is that most of the respondents are posted to the investigation unit due to corruption. Therefore corruption is a great factor affecting the rate of unsolved crimes in Nigeria. In an oral interview conducted with one of the officers, it was revealed that personnel of the force who had attended Police Detective College are normally recommended by the Commandant of the college to be posted to the criminal investigation branch so that the country at large will benefit from their training and skill. But the officer argued that this is jettisoned by superior officers who have the sole privilege of posting whosoever they please to the criminal investigation branch irrespective of whether the person has the experience, training, qualification and skill required for such office. Another impediment is the lack of investigative facilities. It was revealed that the police lack facilities even for finger print and handwriting analysis. These findings are in consonance with the findings of previous study by Walker (1989), Finnegan (1976) and Rosberg (1978). Each of them noted the importance of training, experience, education and facilities in criminal investigation enterprise.

Table 1: Respondents and Detective Training Courses Attended

COURSES ATTENDED	FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Finger Print	9	2.7
Anti-Fraud	16	4.9
Anti-Robbery	15	4.5
General Detective	60	18.2
Photographic	7	2.1
Records Keeping	8	2.4
Modus Operandi	15	4.6
None of the above	200	60.6
Total	330	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012

Table 2 below shows some of the investigative techniques or strategies which members of the Nigeria Police Criminal Investigation Department adopted in their efforts to unravel the culprits behind criminal cases. About 39.4 percent of the respondents indicated detective techniques, 15.2 percent signified modus operandi, and 13.6 percent indicated surveillance while 12.1 percent signified undercover technique. Significant in this study is the number 9.1 percent of respondents who identified intelligence technique and 10.6 percent respondents that indicated informant data base.

TABLE 2: Investigative Techniques adopted by the Police in Criminal Investigation

Investigative Techniques	Frequency	Percent
Detective	130	39.4
Undercover	40	12.1
Intelligence	30	9.1
Surveillance	45	13.6
Informant data base	35	10.6
Modus operandi	50	15.2
Total	330	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012

Intelligence is very vital in criminal investigation and it seems to be neglected in the police. Intelligence is the collection, collation, processing, examination, and dissemination of information regarding a suspect or a crime committed with the aim of solving it or preventing future occurrence. Osborne and Wernicke (2003), Boba (2005), Innes, Fielding, and Cope (2005) and Maguire (2000) discussed extensively the importance of intelligence in solving criminal cases. 10.6 percent of the respondents also identified informant data base as a technique in solving criminal investigation. This also was neglected significantly thus downplaying the importance of informants in criminal investigation. This is because the respondents lack basic detective training and so lack the knowledge and the imperative of informants in crime solving ventures. While, identifying this weakness of the police Walker (1989:135) argued that “if the police provided better training and had better procedures for handling informant, they will catch more criminals”. Finnegan (1976) and Rosberg (1978) found in their studies the relationship between education and the use of informant in criminal investigation. Thus, we infer that “the higher the educated level of policemen, the greater their utilization of informants and the more efficient in the arrest and prosecution of criminals”. This is our contention and it is in consonance with the findings of the mentioned scholars.

Table 3 below shows the degree of the effectiveness of the investigative techniques adopted by the police in criminal investigation. The table shows that majority (47.0 percent) indicated that the investigative techniques adopted by the police was fairly effective while 33.3 percent showed that the techniques was effectively good and appropriate in solving criminal investigation matters.7.6 percent signified the approach to be effectively poor and 5.4 percent respondents were not really sure whether the techniques were effective or not. Significant was the 6.7 percent of the respondents who indicated that the techniques were effectively excellent. All other things being equal, the clearance rate, the number of undetected and pending investigation cases indict the investigative techniques as ineffective in solving crime problems in Enugu State.

Table 3: Respondent's rate of the Effectiveness of Investigative Techniques

Degree of effectiveness of investigative techniques	Frequency	Percent
Excellent	22	6.7
Good	110	33.3
Fair	155	47.0
Poor	25	7.0
Not Sure	18	5.4
Total	330	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012

Appendix 2 shows the problems facing the Nigeria Police Criminal Investigation Department. It is important to mention here that these challenges are not atypical to the Criminal Investigation Department alone, it is general to the police and it impedes criminal investigations in Nigeria. The table revealed that majority (29.7 percent) of the respondents indicated insufficient training, 21.8 percent signified inadequate modern technological investigative facilities while 13.6 percent of the respondents specified interference from interest group. The table also showed that 13.1 percent of the respondents signified unwillingness of the public to assist the police, 11.5 percent indicated poor welfare while 10.3 percent of the respondents signified disobedience to due process and ethical standard. These findings are very significant in Nigeria and very critical to ending the mass cases of unsolved and pending investigation cases in Nigeria. For instance, lack of training and inadequate modern technological investigation facilities have been aptly demonstrated by our various national security managers during the bomb attacks at the Police Force Headquarters on June 16, 2011 and UN House on August 26, 2011 bomb explosions all in Abuja by the invitation of foreign security experts to investigate the cases. This was a confirmation that the country's criminal investigation personnel lacks the skill, training and technological equipment to handle the incidents. The finding is significant in that the respondents acknowledged that interference – political, social, economical, cultural or religious affect investigation in Nigeria. It is also significant that the respondents recognized disobedience to due process and ethical standard as impediment in criminal investigation. This occurs where square pegs are put in round holes. The respondent's acknowledgement of poor welfare as the least problem of the department is an indication of the efforts of the government in improving the welfare package of the personnel of the Nigeria police. The result of these findings supported earlier research findings of (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2000; Odekunle, 1979; Onyeozili, 2008) which enumerated the problems of the police to include: poor wage, poor funding, insufficient training of officers and inadequate equipment. Although the emphasis they placed on poor remuneration was downplayed in this study finding.

4. CONCLUSION

The issue of criminal investigation is a very serious and fragile one to deal with in the sense that the crime rate in any society depends on the efficient and effective management of police criminal investigation department. The accusation of the police not being able to solve many cases of murder, armed robbery, kidnapping, theft etc. lies in the way cases are handled in the criminal investigation department. There is no society that can talk of crime prevention, crime control, social control or social order without a very good grip of the criminal investigation department in terms of skilled and experienced, trained and equipped criminal investigation/intelligence department. This study examined the activities of the police in relation to crime and criminal investigation with special reference to the Enugu State Police Command. The findings revealed among others such factors as corruption, lack of experience, inadequate training and under utilization of informants as responsible for the many cases which have remained undetected or unsolved and under investigation in Nigeria generally and Enugu state in particular. In response to the many unsolved or undetected and pending criminal investigation cases, the Enugu State police command mapped out strategies or investigative techniques such as detective technique, intelligence technique, surveillance, informant data base among others with the view of containing the rising cases of unsolved crimes in Nigeria. However, these strategies were found not to be highly adequate and effective in addressing or reducing the rate of undetected crimes in the society and this was ascribed to the innumerable problems confronting the Nigeria police among which are unwillingness of the public to assist the

police, interference from interested groups, insufficient training, inadequate modern investigative facilities, poor welfare package and disobedience to due process and ethical standard. Based on the findings of this study one can infer that Enugu State Police Command has not adequately responded to the high rate of unsolved, undetected, and pending criminal matters in the state regardless of the numerous strategies and techniques developed to tackle criminality and other sundry vices as well as improving its response and solvability rate in crime investigation and ensure a free crime society.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the foregoing and in order to further advance police strategic investigative techniques as well as improve their performance in criminal investigation and crime solvability rate in Enugu State in particular and Nigeria in general, the following recommendations are put forward:

- a) The Police should give adequate and continuous training to personnel in the field of criminal investigation, and only such men should be deployed to the investigation departments to enable them exhibit their training skills.
- b) Graduates of various academic fields should be recruited into the criminal investigation department. This will not only boost the investigative abilities and clearance rate of crime but will enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the police.
- c) Policemen should be trained in the use of modern and scientific equipment in the investigation of criminal matters.
- d) There should be a computerized data bank where records of all persons arrested in connection with any criminal matters are kept and especially those involved in violent crime.
- e) In the new global war on terrorism, trans-border crime, money laundering, organized drug gangs, armed robbery, kidnapping etc. information is the key. Therefore it is very imperative that 'Informant data bank' should be established.

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APPENDIX 1: socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percent
Sex		
• Male	300	90.9
• Female	30	9.1
Marital Status		
• Single	96	29.1
• Married	211	64.0
• Divorced	12	3.6
• Widowed	8	2.4
• Separated	3	0.9
Age		
• 18-24	80	24.2
• 25-31	150	45.5
• 32-38	50	15.2
• 39-45	26	7.9
• 46-51	15	4.5
• 52+	9	2.7
Educational Level		
• Primary 6	80	24.2
• G.C.E O/L	170	51.5
• N.C.E./Diploma	60	18.2
• Degree	20	6.1
Religious Affiliation		
• Christianity	200	60.6
• Islam	100	30.3
• Traditional	30	9.1
Ranks		
• Constable	55	16.7
• Corporal	90	27.3
• Sergeant	140	42.4
• Inspector	35	10.6
• ASP+	10	3.0
Years of Working Experience		
• 0-5	35	10.6
• 6-11	120	36.4
• 12-17	70	21.2
• 18-23	50	15.1
• 24-29	35	10.6
• 30-35	20	6.1
Total	330	

Source: Field Survey, 2012

APPENDIX 2: Problems facing Criminal Investigation Department in Nigeria

Challenges highlighted by respondents	Frequency	Percent
Poor welfare package for officers and men	38	11.5
Inadequate provision of modern investigative facilities	72	21.8
Insufficient training of Criminal Investigation personnel	98	29.7
Unwillingness of the public to assist the police	43	13.1
Interference from interested group	45	13.6
Disobedience to due process and ethical standard	34	10.3
Total	330	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012.