

Understanding the Attitude of Nigerians Towards Police Treatment of Crime Suspects

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Abstract

The study examines the attitude of Nigerians towards police treatment of criminal suspects. Specifically, the study examines whether the socio-economic factors of crime suspects influences police attitudes, the educational level of crime suspects influences the way Nigeria Police treat crime suspects. Public awareness varies on police treatment of criminal suspect and the attitude of Nigeria Police have influence crime control. Anchored on Max Weber's Conflict theory, this study adopted the cross-sectional research design and surveyed 400 respondents which comprised the criminal suspects, the police and the general public and tested four specific hypotheses with the Chi-Square statistical technique. The study reveals that Criminal suspects are treated according to their age, and educational qualification. Also, the repressive attitude of the police to criminal suspects increase the frequency of crime commission. Police brutality on criminal suspects has resulted to public hostility on the part of the police and when the police brutalize criminal suspects, they do not pay close medical attention to them while in the police custody and getting useful information to assist in crime control is always difficult in that situation. The study recommended that the police should adopt preventive measures rather than proactive systems where some innocent citizens are arrested, detained and treated as criminals without prosecution and the mutual respect of the police will be reciprocated in as much as the police should be-courteous in dealing with the people.

Keywords: Police, Crime Suspects, Attitude, Police Treatment, Nigeria

Introduction

There are several accounts on the origin of Nigerian Police Force, and they all point to the colonial government brutal mechanism of coerciveness and subjugation adopted to facilitate economic and political exploitation across the 250 ethnic groups in the country (Opara, 2000). Before Nigeria's independence, the colonial police force was made up of people from different nationalities to serve the interest of the then Nigeria territory. The adoption of this by the colonial masters was an exploitative mechanism established by the British for her interest. The declaration of Nigeria as an independent State in 1960 from the British colonial rule did less to transform the police system inherited from the colonial rule. The inherited police from the colonial government were like troops constituted to protect government interest and not the collective interest of the people and national security (Elwell, 2009; Opara, 2000; Torrible, 2020).

Following political independence in 1960, there were expectations for re-organization and re-orientation of the Nigeria Police to change from colonial occupational force to serving the people. This expectation did not happen. The parties that were elected into government after independence found it more convenient to retain the colonial structures of coercion in dealing with the people. Instead of re-organizing and reorienting the police to serve and protect Nigerian people, it was only a ceremonial oath for transfer of allegiance from the British to the elected Nigerians and the change of the police crest (Hou, 2001; Torrible, 2020). Other features of the colonial police that made them widely feared and despised under the colonial government were left untouched (Opara 2000; Basham, 2020). These widely feared and displeasure of the police still loom in the people's mind (Cao, & Huang, 2000). This raises some questions such as: Are Nigerian Knowledge and perception about the police operations and activities different from that of the global community? And, how are the Police perceived globally?

Globally, the Police are an important agent of society. They occupy a position to maintain law and order, perform duties of crime prevention, investigation and detection of crimes and criminals, as well as the prosecution of criminals (Tyler, 2004; Sun, & Triplett, 2008; Paoline, 2004; Miller, 2011; Torrible, 2020). Police effectiveness, as enforcers of the state law, largely depends on its relationship with members of the public which they serve. A cordial relationship between the police and the public assist them to discharge their duties efficiently and diligently.

In Nigeria and most third world countries, this cordial relationship promoting police effectiveness is lacking. What exists between the police and the public has been, as described by Alemika (1993), as hostility and mutual distrust. The Nigeria Police received persistent criticism from the public for eroding liberty, freedom, security, human rights and welfare, even more than what holds for other agencies that are involved in criminal justice administration and crime control in the country. Nigerians have severally criticized the police for their non-observance of the rule of law, the poor performance of their tasks including preventing, investigating, detecting and prosecuting of crimes. They have been also accused of suppressing human rights activism and struggles for socio-economic and political -justice and democracy (Opara, 2000).

The Nigeria police do not usually see themselves as a non-performing agency of society. Severally, on crime-related issues, the police are known for persistent arguing that they are

performing their legal and constitutional responsibilities of checking and controlling criminal activities and bringing criminals to book. In bringing criminals control, there are several accounts that the police violate the fundamental rights of the people through brutality, intimidation, harassment, extortion, bullying, torturing, threaten and even killing (Opara, 2000; Torrible, 2020; Perry & Jonathan-Zamir, 2020; Merenda, Trent, & Rinke, 2020). Though the Nigeria Criminal Law allows the police to use minimal force on crime suspects when the need arises, the police have capitalized on this law to brutalize and intimidate crime suspects during interrogations and make some to confess to crimes they did not commit (Basham, 2020). This attitude of policing and prosecution of not adhering to human rights protection reflect decadence in the Nigeria police force. Although the police are charged with the task of law enforcement and protecting lives and property, they must guard against infringing upon individual rights (Membere, 1982; Tyler, & Fagan, 2008).

A subset of criticisms against police is the nature of treatment against criminal suspects. Nigerian Police attitude towards crime suspects has been severally described as unfair and inhumane. The police are still being accused of brutality, political repression, partisanship, corruption, failure to curb public disorder without inflicting unnecessary injury, failure to protect life and property, illegal killing of citizens and inability to stop protests from escalating into riots (Tyler, & Fagan, 2008; Perry & Jonathan-Zamir, 2020; Merenda, Trent, & Rinke, 2020). Treatment of crime suspect appears not uniform, but base on certain socio-economic variables of suspects (Omoroghomwan, 2019; Basham, 2020). Psychologist and criminologist have, overtime, accentuated the important socio-economic factors on the behaviour of police criminality and discretion (Sun, & Triplett, 2008). Needless to say, that Police officers' behaviour and actions towards citizens are influenced by the same forces driving citizens in the environment. Research shows that the identification and treatment of crime suspects by a police officer is strongly influenced by place-based cues noticeable by the police. These place-based cues are socio-economic factors, poverty, ethnic configuration, crime density, and topography of the neighbourhood (Perry & Jonathan-Zamir, 2020; Merenda, Trent, & Rinke, 2020). In Nigeria, past research on police attitude towards crime suspects was based on individual characteristics like sex, age, personal outlook, with little attention given to socio-economic factors (Alpert, Dunham & Smith 2007; Farrel & McDevitt, 2006; Schafer, Katz-Bannister & Wells, 2006; Warren, Tomaskovic-Devey, Smith, Zingraff, & NDJSA, Vol. 2 No. 1, March, 2021 <https://www.ndu.edu.ng/ndjsa/>

Mason, 2006; Basham, 2020). This study examines the attitude of Nigerian Police towards crime suspects with attention given to socio-economic variables.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Max Weber's Conflict theory. Weber rejected Karl Marx's (1818 - 1883) view that the division between the owners and non-owners of the property was the only significant division between groups in society. He argued that numerous divisions within the two basic classes could depend upon the market situation forcing individuals (Weber, 1954). Weber claimed that people could be divided by their status situation and political interests as well as by their economic positions. For Instance, Parties could be formed based on status, groupings or classes, and that it was also possible for them to cut across class or status groups. The attitude of the Nigeria Police towards criminal suspects is one that the police exercises legitimate power against a "subject-class". The police behave authoritatively towards criminal suspects like "master-servant" relationship leading to conflict in most cases. In this situation, the criminal suspects perceive the police as protecting the political elite class and being against the poor and disadvantaged class.

On this note, the conflict theory of Weber provides a better understanding of police attitude towards criminal suspects, extrapolating that inequality exists because those in control of a disproportionate share of society's resources (power and authority) actively defend the advantaged against the disadvantaged (less privileged) class/status.

Materials and Methods

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey design. This was chosen because of its effectiveness in seeking the views of people about issues that concerns them (Ogege, 2010). The study covered the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria. The Sample size was a pull from the estimated total population of Nigeria. The sample size of this study comprised of members of the public (most especially those who have been victims of police differential attitude or have their relations under police custody), the police and criminal suspects themselves. The actual sample size was calculated using Taro Yamane (1964) formula for sample size determinant to arrive at approximately 400 sample size. The sample size determinant criteria are given below

$$n = \frac{P}{I + Pe^2}$$

Where: n = Sample
P = Population
I = Constant
e = Error limit (0.05)

A 400 sample was drawn from the from Nigeria total population. Below is the distribution of the categories of respondents

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents

| Categories of Respondents | Sample Size |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| Criminal Suspects | 56 |
| Policemen | 92 |
| Civilians | 252 |
| Total Population | 400 |

The sampling technique adopted for this study is purposive sampling techniques. The pool of the sample size was from a larger study which cuts across the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. The researcher, using research assistants, visited the different Zonal headquarters of the Nigerian Police Force. Police personnel and criminal suspects were purposively selected. Most of the visitors to the police stations were interviewed making up the civilians. The choice of this technique is based on the fact that the individual selected for the study are known and there is an underlying interest in the selected groups. The instrument adopted in eliciting data for this study is the questionnaire instrument. The questionnaire was structured in such a way that questions which are regarded as ambiguous, misleading or vague were avoided (Creswell, 2009). Data was collected through a well-structured questionnaire instrument. The data obtained were analyzed using statistical tables, frequencies and percentages. The Chi-square (X^2) test was used to test hypotheses. The face and content validity of the item questionnaire instrument was confirmed by the researcher's supervisor after going through them and making necessary amendments. The Test-Retest Statistical method was used to establish the reliability of the questionnaire instrument. Five Percent of sample size population was used to conduct the pilot survey test and a re-test was also carried out using the 5 % sample size population after 2 weeks of the initial test. Scores derived from both tests were correlated to find the stability of the rank order of the individual respondents over some time, using Spearman's Rank Correlation Co-efficient Formula. The value of the correlation coefficient was 0.67.

Results and Findings

Out of the 400 copies of the questionnaire administered to respondents, only 365 copies were returned completely and accurately filled, while 35 copies, though returned were not accurately filled. It was based on the 365 copies of the questionnaire that the researcher presented the analysis and discussion of findings.

Table 2: Socio-demographics of the respondents

| Items | | Civilians | Criminal Suspects | Police | Total |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|------------|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Sex of Respondents | Male | 105(46.3) | 39(76.5) | 61(70.1) | 205(56.2) |
| | Female | 122(53.7) | 12(23.5) | 26(29.9) | 160(43.8) |
| Age of Respondents | 18-37 | 33(14.5) | 173(3.3) | 20(23.0) | 70(19.2) |
| | 38-57 | 63(27.8) | 19(37.3) | 41(47.1) | 123(33.7) |
| | 58-77 | 63(27.8) | 10(19.6) | 17(19.5) | 90(24.7) |
| | 78 and above | 68(30.0) | 5(9.8) | 9(10.3) | 82(22.5) |
| Educational Qualification | FSLC | 23(10.1) | 4(7.8) | 14(16.1) | 41(11.2) |
| | WAEC/SSC/NECO | 89(39.2) | 21(41.2) | 29(33.3) | 139(38.1) |
| | NCE/ND | 39(17.2) | 7(13.7) | 10(11.5) | 56(15.3) |
| | Degree/HND | 56(24.7) | 18(35.3) | 32(36.8) | 106(29.0) |
| | Others | 20(8.8) | 1(2.0) | 2(2.3) | 23(6.3) |
| | Total | 227(100.0) | 51(100.0) | 87(100.0) | 365(100.0) |

Table 2 shows the demographic distribution of the 365 respondents that participated in the survey. About 56% of them were males while 43.8% were females. Specifically, male respondents (76.5%) were higher among crime suspects while female respondents (53.7%) were higher among the civil population. The age distribution shows that age of the respondents was unevenly distributed, for instance, 33.7% were between ages 38-57 years, 24.7% were aged 58-37 years, 22.5% were 78 years and above, and 19.2% were between the ages 18-37. The percentage of the police (47.1%) was higher among those between aged 38-57 years. The crime suspects (33.3%) dominated 18-37 age brackets while the general public had a higher age bracket for those between aged 58 and above. Educational qualification of the respondents shows that 38.1% had WAEC and equivalent, 29% had the first-degree certificate, 15.3% had NCE and equivalent, 11.2% had First School leaving certificate while 6.3% had others academic qualifications. Specifically, the police had more FSLC (16.1%) and First Degree (36.8%). The general public had more NCE (17.2%) and other certificates (8.8%) than others. Also, the crime suspect had WAEC and equivalent (41.2%) than others.

Table 3: Crime suspects' socio-economic conditions and police attitude towards them

| Items | SD | D | A | SA | Total |
|-------|----|---|---|----|-------|
|-------|----|---|---|----|-------|

| | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| The Nigeria Police are partial on the way they treat criminal suspects | 13(3.6) | 18(4.9) | 81(22.2) | 253(69.3) | 365(100.0) |
| Police detention of crime suspect varies according to their status in the society | 8(2.2) | 33(9.0) | 142(38.9) | 182(49.9) | 365(100.0) |
| The repressive attitude of the police to criminal suspects increases the frequency of crime commission | 12(3.3) | 36(9.9) | 76(20.8) | 241(66.0) | 365(100.0) |
| Those who can bribe the police receive lesser detention in the police custody | 10(2.7) | 25(6.8) | 153(41.9) | 177(48.5) | 365(100.0) |
| Nigeria Police does not do a proper and thorough investigation before they conduct arrest and label citizens suspects | 10(2.7) | 71(19.5) | 117(32.1) | 167(45.8) | 365(100.0) |
| Nigeria police are predisposed to arresting the less privileged complainants and witnesses at the crime scene event | 21(5.8) | 40(11.0) | 124(34.0) | 180(49.3) | 365(100.0) |

Table 3 shows the respondent's opinion on the influence of the crime suspects' socio-economic conditions on police attitude towards them. The result shows that respondents collectively agreed that police are partial on their treatment of criminal suspects in their custody (69.3%). The partiality in police treatment of crime suspect vary on the procedure for police detention i.e. they detain criminal suspect according to varying socio and economic conditions they face (49.9%). Crime suspects societal conditions promote police repressive attitude towards them and because they consider themselves in a disadvantaged position, the frequency of crime commission tend to increase among crime suspects (66%). Police differential attitude towards crime suspects is pronounced on the eagerness of most crime suspect being able to bribe their way through the criminal justice process as respondents claim that those who can pay bribe receives less detention and treatments from the police (48.5%). The police differential attitude discourages police proper and thorough investigation before they conduct arrest or prosecute criminal suspects (45.8%). This informs why respondents strongly claimed that Nigeria Police are predisposed to arresting the less privileged in the society because they see them favouring crime due to their economic deficiency (49.3%).

Table 4: Crime suspects education and police treatment

| Items | SD | D | A | SA | Total |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Criminal suspects should be treated according to their educational qualification | 14(3.8) | 85(23.3) | 97(26.6) | 169(46.3) | 365(100.0) |
| Most of the detainees in police custody are less educated | 12(3.3) | 17(4.7) | 109(29.9) | 227(62.2) | 365(100.0) |
| The Nigeria Police do not give preference to educated Nigerians when conducting an arrest. | 14(3.8) | 68(18.6) | 81(22.2) | 202(55.3) | 365(100.0) |
| There is usually a separate detaining cell block for the educated and the non-educated | 16(4.4) | 23(6.3) | 110(30.1) | 216(59.2) | 365(100.0) |
| Educated suspects are not detained and tried from the prisons | 15(4.1) | 38(10.4) | 79(21.6) | 233(63.8) | 365(100.0) |
| The non-educated are not granted immediate bail when they are suspected of committing a crime | 16(4.4) | 67(18.4) | 91(24.9) | 191(52.3) | 365(100.0) |

By implication, it can be summed up that the police differential attitude towards crime suspects is influenced by the prevailing socio-economic condition criminal suspects face in Nigeria. Table 4 shows the extent to which police treatment is influenced by the level of criminal suspect education. Questions raised in this section were all strongly agreed upon by the respondents. Specifically, 46.3% of the respondents strongly agreed that the level of educational attainment of criminal suspect influences how the police treat them when in police custody. Respondents strongly agreed (62.2%) that most of the police detainees are the less educated ones. This is true as the educated will seek the services of lawyers or inform the police of their right as citizens. Respondents agreed that the police give separate detaining blocks/cells to both the educated and less educated criminal suspects (59.2%) and more often the educated ones are never detained and tried by the police as it is will the less educated. By implication, the findings reveal that criminal suspect education strongly influences police differential attitude towards treating crime suspects.

Table 5: Variation in general awareness on police treatment of crime suspects

| Items | SD | D | A | SA | Total |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Police brutality on criminal suspects' results in public hostility of the police | 31(8.5) | 63(17.3) | 109(29.9) | 162(44.4) | 365(100.0) |
| Police sometimes take tips (bribe) and fail to effect arrest and prosecution | 18(4.9) | 39(10.7) | 84(23.0) | 224(61.4) | 365(100.0) |
| Because the criminal suspect is over tortured or under torture, the right and required guiltiness to prove them guilty may not necessarily be derived from them. | 94(25.8) | 99(27.1) | 63(17.3) | 109(29.9) | 365(100.0) |
| Criminal suspects refuse to give the required information because they see the police as corrupt in themselves. | 59(16.2) | 108(29.6) | 107(29.3) | 91(24.9) | 365(100.0) |
| The lack of confidence in the ability of the Police by the public has affected their performance. | 84(23.0) | 98(26.8) | 123(33.7) | 60(16.4) | 365(100.0) |
| The perception of corruption in the Police has sent the innocent to people to jail | 52(14.2) | 115(31.5) | 119(32.6) | 79(21.6) | 365(100.0) |

Table 5 shows the variation among respondents on their awareness of police differential attitude towards the treatment of crime suspects. Respondents vary on their awareness of police treatment of crime suspects. The result shows that less than 50% of respondents strongly agreed that the general public hostility on the police is caused by how they treat crime suspects. Respondents were indifferent on whether the police sometimes take bribe before they arrest or prosecute as 61.4% affirmed that they usually take a bribe to arrest and prosecute criminal suspects. On the question of whether the level of police treatment has helped to generate the required proof for pleading guilty, only 29.9% claimed that the over-torturing and under-torturing of crime suspects affect the extent police could generate proof of pleading guilty of crime suspects. Respondents

also collectively agreed that crime suspects always refuse to give the police information because they see the police as corrupt (54.2%) and they the public lack confidence in the ability of the police also affects the police performance (50.1%). By implication, the result reveals that Nigerians have a differential awareness on police treatment of crime suspects.

Test of hypothesis

Hypothesis one

Ho: There is no significant relationship between the socio-economic status of crime suspects and the police treatment of a criminal suspect

Table 7: Chi-square result on the socio-economic status of crime suspects and the police treatment of a criminal suspect

| Comparison | DF | Cal X^2 | Crit X^2 | P-Value | Remark |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-----------|------------|---------|-------------|
| socio-economic status of crime suspects and the police treatment of crime suspect | 15 | 130.800 | 24.99579 | 0.000 | Significant |

(P<0.05) Significant Level (P<0.01)*

The test of hypothesis one shows that the socio-economic status of crime suspects has a significant relationship with police treatment of crime suspects ($X^2 = 130.800$, $df = 15$, $p = 0.000$). This by implication means that the status of crime suspect affects how the police treat them when they are arrested.

Hypothesis two

Ho: There is no significant relationship between the educational level of crime suspects and police treatment of crime suspects

Table 8: Chi-square result on the educational level of crime suspects and police treatment of crime suspect

| Comparison | DF | Cal X^2 | Crit X^2 | P-Value | Remark |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-----------|------------|---------|-------------|
| the educational level of crime suspects and police treatment of crime suspects | 15 | 100.678 | 24.99579 | 0.0000 | Significant |

(P<0.05) Significant Level (P<0.01)*

Hypothesis two shows a test of significance between the educational level of crime suspects and police treatments of crime suspects. The result shows a not significant result ($X^2 = 100.678$, $df = 15$, $p = 0.000$) which is that there is a significant relationship between the educational level of crime suspects and police treatment of crime suspect. Thus, implies that the education of crime suspects does influence how police treat them when in their custody.

Hypothesis three

Ho: There is no significant relationship between public awareness level and the police treatment of crime suspect

Table 9: Chi-square result on public awareness level and the police treatment of crime suspect

| Comparison | DF | Cal X^2 | Crit X^2 | P-Value | Remark |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-----------|------------|---------|-------------|
| public awareness level and the police treatment of crime suspect | 15 | 308.872 | 24.99579 | 0.000 | Significant |

(P<0.05) Significant Level (P<0.01)*

The test of hypothesis on public awareness level and the police treatment of crime suspects reveals that there is a significant relationship between public awareness level and the police treatment of crime suspects ($X^2 = 308.872$, $df = 15$, $p = 0.000$). This implies that the public is critically aware of police treatment of crime suspects.

Hypothesis four

Ho: There is no significant relationship between police brutality of crime suspects and public hostility towards the police

Table 10: Chi-square result on police brutality of crime suspects and public hostility towards the police

| Comparison | DF | Cal X^2 | Crit X^2 | P-Value | Remark |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-----------|------------|---------|-------------|
| police brutality of crime suspects and public hostility towards the police | 12 | 43.758 | 24.99579 | 0.000 | Significant |

(P<0.05) Significant Level (P<0.01)*

The test of hypothesis four shows that the brutality of the police on crime suspects significantly relates to public hostility towards the police ($X^2 = 43.758$, $df = 15$, $p = 0.000$). This implies that the nature of police brutality on crime suspects significantly affects the level of public hostility towards the police. This prevents the co-operation between the police and the public.

Discussions

This study examined the attitude of the police towards criminal suspects and its effect on crime control in Nigeria. The data analyzed in the previous section of this paper indicates among many findings that the public exhibits negative reactions to the police because of their attitudes to criminal suspects.

Firstly, the study reveals that criminal suspects should not be tortured to get information from them if crime control could be more effective and police brutality on criminal suspect's results to public hostility to the police. Where Brutality is needed by the police, they should attend to the

medical needs of the criminal suspects in their custody to enable the criminal suspect to give useful information to assist in crime control and police taking of bribe prevents the effective crime control process. These findings concur with the previous studies as Alemika (1990), Dike, (2010), Alemika and Chukwuka (2000), and United Nations, (2017). However, this study made findings which challenged that of Omoroghomwan, (2018) which suggests that the public co-operates with the police except when the member of the public is the criminal suspect or his/her accomplice.

Another discovery made by this study was on the area of public hostility with the police on how they treat criminal suspects. The study reveals that the hostile nature of the police on criminal suspects hinders the effective operation of the police and grows the lack of confidence in the ability of the police by the public which affects police performance. This distrust in the police argues that corruption in the police system has caused the innocent to be jailed and the accused freed from jail and because criminal suspects are over tortured or under tortured the right and required quietness to prove them guilty does not drive them thus leading to the criminal suspects' refusal to give the required information becomes a problem. Police corruption has slowed down the criminal justice system and caused increased public discontentment and dis-credibility in the police operation. The police attitude on crime control is negative because the public sees the police as responsible for the problems of crime control in society. This finding again is in congruence with earlier findings such as Alemika (2000) and CLEEN, (2015)

The study further reveals that the pattern of police treatment of criminal suspects is critically not supported by the public. This was shown as the study supports the fact that criminal suspects are seriously tortured by the police to get information from them and the attitude of the police towards criminal suspects and convicts is bad revealing that criminal suspects and convicts are not given medical attention even after torturing to obtain relevant information. Irrespective of age, gender and educational level, the treatment police give to suspects does not change. This is why the public usually isolates and stigmatize police officers and their families due to poor attitude to criminal suspects and their low-performance level. This finding is not in congruence with earlier findings such as Alemika (2000) and CLEEN, (2015) which states that socioeconomic and demographic factors play significant roles in the police differential attitudes

to suspects and differential attitudes come in the form of failure to effect arrest and prosecution in the event of having collected tips from criminal suspects; in the area of detention. While some of the suspects are locked up in the police cells, some others who may have committed more serious crimes are set free.

Again, the study reveals that the police are criminally minded and corrupt which affects their ability to protect the citizens and due to the level of public hostility to the police, the public usually does not co-operate with the police through giving useful information. Dufka, (2010) found a similar situation and further found that the suspects kept behind pay some money. The study also found out that the rich and the powerful enjoy the benefit of bail and that some suspects are tortured and brutalized while others who committed a similar offence or more serious ones are not tortured or brutalized (Perry & Jonathan-Zamir, 2020; Merenda, Trent, & Rinke, 2020).

In the test of hypotheses, the study reveals that the socio-economic status of criminal suspects has a significant relationship with police treatment of criminal suspects. This by implication means that the status of criminal suspect affects how the police treat them when they are arrested. The repressive attitude of the police to criminal suspects not minding the age and sex of criminals increases the frequency of crime commission, just as found by Omoroghomwan, (2019). The educational level of criminal suspects does significantly influence police treatments of criminal suspects. Thus, this implies that the education of criminals does affect how police treat them when in their custody. Hypothesis on public awareness level and the police treatment of criminal suspects reveals that there is a significant relationship between public awareness level and the police treatment of criminal suspects. This implies that the public is critically aware of police treatment of criminal suspects. This finding concurs with many earlier studies (Alemika and Chukwuka, 2000; Omoroghomwan, 2019). The brutality of the police on criminal suspects significantly relates to public hostility towards the police. This implies that the nature of police brutality on criminal suspects significantly affects the level of public hostility towards the police. This prevents the co-operation between the police and the public. As earlier captured, (CLEEN, (2015) found a similar situation and further found out that the suspects kept behind pay some money. The study also found that the rich and the powerful enjoy the benefit of bail and that

some suspects are tortured and brutalized while others who committed a similar offence or more serious ones are not tortured or brutalized.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is true that Nigeria police is an important agent of the society for the maintenance and securing of public safety and order and their onerous duties of crime prevention, investigating and detecting of crimes and criminals, as well as the prosecution of criminals, is not doubtable. As a process of achieving these duties, a cordial relationship ought to exist between the police and the public to a large extent that will assist the police to discharge its duties efficiently and diligently. However, what we see and experience as the duties and responsibilities of the Nigeria Police is far from the aforementioned. The treatment given to criminal suspects is dehumanizing and provokes public discontentment of the police activities in the protection of all and restoring of order in the society. This study, therefore, concludes that the Nigeria Police Agency should rethink on mitigating the brutalizing means of coercing criminal suspects to confess and even when brutality is needed, suspects should be given medical attention to reduce the side effect on them.

The following recommendations are made:

- i. Prevention they say is better than a cure. In this regard, the police should adopt preventive measures rather than proactive systems where some innocent citizens are arrested, detained and treated as criminals without prosecution. To make the preventive measure work, the police should embark on effective foot and vehicular patrols to effectively deter and debar criminals from carrying out their nefarious activities.
- ii. Suspected criminals under police detention and custody should be decently treated. And in doing so, the mutual respect of the police will be reciprocated in as much as the police should be-courteous in dealing with the people. Moreover, it will be proper and just for the police to see and regard detention as last resort Monitoring people from their residences could be a better way of detention or possibly house arrest.
- iii. The idea of giving preferential treatments to some elites' criminal suspects and degrading others should be discouraged by the Nigeria Police Force. A suspect is a suspect irrespective of their sex, age and educational qualification as well as their economic status.

- iv. The police should recruit and train more competent hands to properly cover all nooks and crannies of the cities where criminal activities are more prevalent. Moreover, the police should recruit highly educated citizens who could develop ideas ahead of criminals. The force should get rid of those uneducated members of the force who hold tenaciously to the mode of operation that is not functional.
- v. The police should be organizing seminars, and workshops to discuss the current operational strategies as society is now in the computer age.
- vi. The police should also Launder their battered and negative image as well as become more efficient and effective to win back public confidence and trust.
- vii. The government should also pay compensation to those innocent victims of police detention and brutality who after their preliminary investigations, are cleared. The compensation will enable them to feel and realize that they have been unjustly treated and sense of belonging restored.

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