

Professionalism in the Nigeria Police and public trust in the fight against crime: Issues, challenges and the way forward

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ABSTRACT:- Central to any democratic and governance system is the strategic role of the police force. The police occupies a strategic position across tiers of government and how professional the Police carry out their constitutional role in securing the lives and properties of the citizens determine the level of trust and cooperation the public has in them. The perception of the public towards the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) has been a subject of debate and controversies. More so, there are myriads of challenges confronting the NPF in the discharge of their constitutional duties. Some of these challenges stem from public trusts, thoughts and perceptions. This paper examines the problem of professionalism in the NPF and how this impacts the level of public trust, support and cooperation in combating crime in Nigerian states. The study adopts explanatory approach which relied on secondary data from textbooks, newspapers, journals, government and agencies reports among others. The findings reveal that the level of professionalism in the NPF is consistently falling with attendant consequence on public trust in them; and that the Police will gain public trust and cooperation when their role is discharged professionally. Again, the study discovers the professionalism in the NPF is faced with some challenges such as lack of training, lack of modern equipment, political interference among others. The paper recommends, among other factors, that the Nigeria Police Force should develop a holistic national standard for policing, crisis intervention, crime prevention and management. The study emphasized de-escalation trainings for police officers to enable them acquire the professional and strategic skills to mitigate the abuse of power and unethical practice in the performance of their duty.

Keywords: Crime Prevention, Ethical Behaviour, Public Trust, Police Force, Professionalism.

I. INTRODUCTION

Within the framework of democratic policing, law enforcement agents have a distinct role in fighting crime guided by democratic principles, rule of law and high regard for human rights and dignity. The Police are the most visible and accessible security organization in fighting crime all over the world. In Nigeria, the Police Force is the core governmental institution saddled with the responsibility of internal security of the country which includes protecting lives and properties of the citizens. In Nigerian Police Act 2020, Part II Section 4, the Federal Government specified the primary functions of the Nigeria Police Force as: — protection of lives and property of every persons in Nigeria, maintain public safety, law and order; prevent and detect crimes and protect the rights and freedom of every person in Nigeria as provided in the constitution, facilitate free passage and movement on highways, roads and streets open to the public among others (FRN, 2020). In this vein, Arimie, Eghaghe and Omage (2021) argue that the police officers are expected to protect the citizens, respect human rights, and in a transparent approach and avoid the quest to be partial in dealing with individuals and communities to earn public trust and support. Yet, the Nigeria Police Force is the most challenged security organization in Nigeria having a vital role to play in the face of the prevailing insecurity across country (Alkali in Thewill, 2021).

Nigeria is bedeviled with increased criminality, Dambazau (in Onwuama, Ajah, Asadu, Ebimgbo, Odii & Okpara 2019) writes that Nigeria, one of the developing countries of the world is experiencing a high prevalence of rising crime waves, criminal tendencies and varying degree of delinquent activities. Consequently, the nation has been on the global crime map since 1980s. For about two decades now, crime is increasingly changing both in pattern and trend. Nigeria is presently grappling with an upsurge in criminal activities. The

complex nature of the operations of these criminals has become apprehensive and consequently, has brought about fear and agitation in the mind of the public.

The ability of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) to fight criminal activities is a function of many factors to include the application of professionalism in their approach viz-a-vis the level of public trust on the Police. This ranges from professional requirements to sociological requirement. The professional requirements are those qualities such as the skill, educational qualification, the technical knowhow needed by the Nigeria Police Force for the technical performance of their constitutional duties. The sociological requirement is the human relation skill needed by the Nigeria Police Force to relate with the public towards gaining the public trust in the performance of their (NPF) duties.

The level of public trust in the Police Force can determine the way the public respond to and support the Police towards fighting crime and criminals which ultimately will determine the effectiveness of the Police Force (Shoyode, 2021). Attesting to the need for the police to gain the trust and support in their fight against crime, Adegoke (2014) argues that without the support and cooperation of the public, the effort of the NPF cannot curb the rate of insecurity in Nigeria. However, Adebayo (in Onwuama, Ajah, Asadu, Ebimbo, Odii & Okpara 2019) argues that the performance of the NPF has been grossly unsatisfactory, thus creating confusion and question in the minds of the populace as to what police represents and what ought to be done to achieve efficiency in the Force. Considering the high rate of crime in Nigeria and the level of public trust towards the NPF, this study examines the role and challenges of professionalism in building public trust by the NPF towards the fight against crime.

II. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

The prevalence of crime and criminality continues to pose a great challenge to the people and government of Nigeria, especially the police, whose constitutional responsibility it is to tackle the menace of internal security. Despite the public outcry and government's effort, the scourge of crime seems increasingly insurmountable (Onwuama, Ajah, Asadu, Ebimbo, Odii & Okpara 2019). Effective approach to crime fighting has been linked to the level of public support given to the police in performance of their job. This public support according to Shoyode (2021) can be achieved through a well-built trust by the public on the performance of the police duties. The trust which the public placed on the NPF for some decades now, has depreciated tremendously. This has affected the relationship between the public and the NPF in the fight against crime. The NPF no longer enjoy a robust support services from the public especially in the area information sharing and logistic.

The government has made a lot of efforts to revive the weakened and poor relationship between the police and the public, yet situation keeps deteriorating. Scholars have also carried out studies towards building the public trust on the police. These include among others; Public perception and confidence in the Nigerian Police: Examining the nexus in crime prevention and control by Babatunde & Chiedozie (2021); Public perception of the role of the Nigeria Police Force in curbing the menace of kidnapping in Benin metropolis, Southern Nigeria: A criminological study by Obarisiagbon and Omagie (2018); The effect of professionalism on performance of procurement function in the public sector: Experience from the Tanzania public sector by Mrope (2017).

However, none of these extant studies seem to examine the role of professionalism in building a robust public trust on the conduct and competence of the NPF. This lacuna in the body of literature is what motivated the author to carry out this study by examining the role and challenges of professionalism in enhancing a robust public trust on the Police Force towards effecting fight against crime in Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this paper is to investigate the role of professionalism in improving public trust in the Police towards effective fight against crime in Nigeria. The specific objectives include the following:

1. To examine the relationship between specialized knowledge and competency in the NPF and public trust in police in the fight against crime in Nigeria.
2. To evaluate the relationship between honesty, integrity and politeness of the NPF personnel and public trust in police in the fight against crime Nigeria.
3. To examine the challenges hindering professionalism in the NPF and suggest the way forward.

III. METHODOLOGY

To investigate the role of professionalism in enhancing public trust in the Police towards effective fight against crime in Nigeria, the paper adopts exploratory research design. The paper utilised secondary data

derived from journal publications, textbooks, dairies, internet sources etc. The study employs content discuss analysis to examine issues and challenges hindering professionalism in NPF and how it influence public trust towards fighting crime in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Professionalism

According to Daniel (2015), the Merriam-Webster dictionary defines professionalism as "the conduct, aims, or qualities that characterize or mark a profession or a professional person" In the view of Davis (1988), professionalism means putting your profession first. He further asserts that professionalism means putting into the profession an acceptable and quality standard of training, skill, morals and conduct. The argument of the above scholars is that professionalism means the process of conducting oneself towards the achievement of the organization's goal. Professionalism here does not mean the actual work to be done, but the conduct and manner of doing the work. It is the consistency to achieve a high standard in the course of performing one's constituted duty. In other words, professionalism involves exhibiting a professional skill and morality in the execution of one's constitutional duties. In the public sector, professionalism is a process whereby public office holders uphold public interest as paramount in her services. In this regard, Fleishman (2007) argues that professionalism is a situation where the public office holders show the responsibility to work solely in the interest of the public ahead of other interests. He further states that public office holders are accountable for their deeds and should act and be seen to act in all fairness and not in self-interest.

Attributes of Professionalism: Professionalism is a trait that's highly valued in the workforce which has many attributes. Suttle (2018); Daniel (2015) identify seven (7) attributes of professionalism among which are the followings: 1. Specialized knowledge, 2. Competency, 3. Behaviour/attitude (Honesty and integrity), 4. Respect, 5. Accountability, 6. Self-regulation, 7. Politeness, 8. Physical appearance.

i. Specialized Knowledge According to Abdul, Ahmed, Khalid, Asmara, Sobia, Muhammad and Muhammad (2018), specialized knowledge is a key aspect of professionals. In support of this position, Daniel (2015) posits that professionals should be known for their expertise knowledge. The argument of these scholars is that for one to be called a professional in his/her chosen career, he/she must make a deep personal commitment to develop and improve his/her skills, both academically and technically. He further stated that not all profession have a stable core of knowledge (and the academic qualifications that go with it); meaning that many professions demand thoughtful and sustainable way to master the specialized knowledge needed to succeed in their operation in line with the dynamic nature of the society. Lord Benson (in Mawer, 2010) also argued that works are assigned to professional based on their qualification and competence guided by a governing body for the interest of the public. The argument here is that in a profession, workers are given a task that they are best qualified for. In this regard, an up-to-date knowledge is needed by all professionals so that they can continue to deliver the best service to the public in the changing nature of the society. True professionals are always prepared. This requires advance planning, timeliness, and attention. Focus on improving your time management and planning skills, so that you're always in control.

ii. Competency is another attribute of professionalism as identified by Daniel (2015). According to this scholar, professionals should be reliable, and always keep to their promises. If circumstances arise that prevent them from delivering on their promises, they manage expectations up front, and they do their best to make the situation right. Professionals should not make excuses, but focus on finding solutions to every situation. According to Akinyetu (2016), competency of an organization builds more confidence about the organization in the mind of the client (public). In this same vein, Abdul, Ahmed, Khalid, Asmara, Sobia, Muhammad and Muhammad (2018) professionalism requires a strong commitment of public managers to act according to the best of public interest. Professionals are expected to become a service ideal of juniors and ordinary servant by focusing on the common good of the public and show a strong commitment for high service quality. In this regard, it is argued that professionalism as a concept is in motion; this is because professional standard to be exhibited at a point in time is influenced inherently by the culture, value and tradition, the requirements and needs of the society in which it exists. The implicit of the above argument is that professionals need constant training and development to meet the changing needs of the public.

iii. Honesty and Integrity Closely related to competence as an attribute of professionalism are honesty and integrity. Professional should keep their word, and they can be trusted implicitly because of this. Professionals never compromise the organization's values, and will do the right thing, even when it means taking a harder road. More than this, true professionals are humble – if a project or job falls outside their scope of expertise, they're not afraid to admit it. They immediately ask for help when the need arises, and they're willing to learn from others so as to achieve the organization's goal (Abdul, Ahmed, Khalid, Asmara, Sobia, Muhammad & Muhammad, 2018).

iv. Accountability This is the process of a professional being accountable, responsible and answerable for an act he/she commits. This is closely related to honesty and integrity and a vital element in professionalism. Professionals hold themselves accountable for their thoughts, words, and actions, especially when they've made a mistake. This personal accountability is closely tied to honesty and integrity.

v. Self-Regulation This is the ability of an employee to remain professional under pressure. For instance, imagine a public officer who is faced with an enraged citizen. Instead of getting upset or angry in return, the public officer should exhibit true professionalism by maintaining a calm, service-like demeanor, and by doing everything that she can to make the situation right. Genuine professionals show respect for the people around them, no matter what situation looks like.

vi. Emotional intelligence (EI): This is the exhibition of high degree of emotional intelligence (EI) by considering the emotions and needs of others, and not letting a bad day or ugly pressure impact on how they interact with colleagues or public. Here, professionals are able to give members of the public and their colleagues what they need, because they know how to listen actively and observe what's happening. Enhancing professionalism involves focusing on the development of emotional intelligence.

vii. Politeness: As a public servant, being kind, courtesy, polite and good manners towards everyone that you come into contact with no matter your role, and no matter how you're feeling is an act of the social requirement of professionalism. This might sound unimportant, but it makes a significant impact in building a robust relationship between the public sector organization and the public itself.

viii. Physical Appearance: As simple as this might look; it is a very important component of professionalism. The public will always address you by the way you dress. To improve professionalism in an organization means focusing on improving in each of these attributes mentioned above. You can also exude professionalism by being kind and polite to everyone, presenting a professional image in your attitude and dress.

Trust

The concept of trust could be seen as an elusive quality, hard to define and measure. 'To say we trust someone means we believe the person has the right intentions toward us and that the person is competent to do what we trust him/her to do (Hardin in Jonathan & Ben, 2010). However, Mawer (2010) posits that trust involves a willingness to place confidence or faith in another person or organization to fulfill a course of action competently and ethically. A key point to underline in defining trust is that it is a quality that exists in a relationship between two or more people or organisations. Trust is also associated with implicit or apparent expectations that others act in ways that are expected.

Public Trust

This can be defined as the belief and confidence that those who have authority to make a critical decision pursue acceptable outcomes before the public. In this regard, public trust suggests that those in authority are reliable and valuable, and that they make and implement decisions based on the right information and motivation (Jones, 2002). In general, public trust can be described as "unquestioning belief in and reliance upon a group or organisation to which one belongs or a public institution established to protect and serve the citizens (Cao, 2015).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on the bottom-up processing theory propounded by Gibson in 1966. This theory according to Rousay (2021) involves information travelling up from stimuli via the senses to the brain which then interprets the information. She further posits that the theory is information driven processing because the processing of information starts from the environmental stimuli. The theory also suggests that perception involves innate mechanisms forged by evolution and that no learning is required (McLeod in Babatunde & Chiedozie, 2021). Gibson according to Rousay (2021) argues that perception in this case is direct from our immediate environment, and not subject to any prior knowledge or training. This implies that the senses perceived information are ecological based which can be best explained in terms of what the individual perceived or observed from the environment. Rousay (2021) argues that the bottom-up processing begins with the retrieval of sensory information from one's external environment to build up perception based on current input of sensory information. She however concludes that perception is how the brain chooses, organizes and interprets the sensations.

The argument here is that the sensations are raw materials towards building a perception. From the position of the above theory, as individuals are constantly in touch with their environment, whatever their sensory organs perceive are processed by their brain; and this form a perception about that particular social phenomenon or a social fact that set basis for assessment, acceptance and judgment as the case may be (Babatunde & Chiedozie, 2021).

The relevance of the “Bottom-Up processing” theory to this study is that in the course of building public trust in the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), what the public observed/perceived about the Police attitude, behavior and professionalism will be interpreted by their (public) brain towards forming a perception or opinion on the NPF. Whatever the perception the public has on the NPF will definitely influence the level of public trust built on the NPF. Therefore, steaming from professionalism view point, the professional attributes so exhibited by the NPF will form a raw material towards the trust on the NPF by the public. It is also believed that when the public trust the NPF, they are likely to assist the NPF in the fight against crime in different dimension. This argument supports the position of Moller (2006) when he observed that public trust is fundamental to the legitimacy of the NPF as well as important for recruiting the public in the fight to reduce crime.

Professionalism and Public Trust in the Police

Professionalism is widely accepted as the moral contract that exists between the professional and the public. It is an agreement that enables the public to place their trust in professionals during the time of vulnerability and need. The implication of this is that professionals put the interest of the public at the fore. Professionalism is an essential requirement to achieve the building blocks of public value (Daniel, 2005). Professionalism includes the competence, manner and institutional integrity put in place by professionals towards meeting the needs of the public that they serve.

In the police force, trust is of great importance because citizens generally have limited knowledge of police operations and tactics; and they also lack the expertise in evaluating police actions. The trust that a person has in police tends to be based on limited personal experience that conveys little information about police intentions and characteristics (Jackson et al., 2012). Specifically, public trust in police can be defined as the belief that police officers have the intentions and the right qualities to protect the citizens (Hardin, 2002). How the public build their trust on the police is based on professionalism, the competent and manner in which the police put into their operation towards the provision of security for the citizens. That is, public trust in the police refers to the citizens’ belief that police officers have appropriate motives and are competent in carrying out their duties as the public expects. In this vein, Tyler and Huo (2002) argue that public trust is related to public confidence that police officers would have the greatest interests in the community and would exercise their authority consistent with those interests. In line with this, Chang-Ho & Dae-Hoon (2022) argue police effectiveness, procedural justice, and social cohesion had significant positive effects on public trust in the police.

In crime control, the police play a central role to ensure that the people feel safe. In this regard, public trust in the police is associated with how effectively the police do their job. In situations where the police are seen as unable to achieve citizens’ expectation, the public perceive this as an indication that the police are ineffective in crime control. This may result in public distrust on the police. In another point of view, the citizens expect the police to take full responsibility for crime control and reducing the fear of crime in the society (Skogan, 2009). In the argument of Espinal et al (2006), public trust in the police is closely related with what the public perceived regarding to police performance. From the above argument, people tend to feel satisfied and comfortable with the police when police are seen to have performed their duties effectively. While the reverse is the case when people feel that the Police are not performing as expected or lack the capability of protecting the citizens.

It is an arguable fact that the public expect the act of professionalism from public servants. This is true because the act of professionalism has the public interest as a priority in the course of duty. Consequently, this act attracts public trust on the actions of the public servant. In corroboration of the above fact, Daniel (2005) earlier argued that professionalism is an essential requirement to achieve the building blocks of public value. Professionalism includes the competence, manner and institutional integrity put in place by professionals towards meeting the needs of the public that they serve.

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The nexus between public trust in the police and police performance in Nigeria

Public trust in the police is a sign that the police have the capability and the skill to perform their job in line with the public expectation. When the police fail to earn the public trust, their competency to maintain public order is likely to diminish, which may lead to negative consequences in society. Since trust in the police is an important precursor to a perception of legitimacy, public trust in the police is an indispensable factor in policing (Bradford, 2014). Thus it is argued that public trust in the police is a prerequisite for successful policing activities (Nix et al., 2015). Public trust has influence fight against crime in so many ways: One of the greatest attribute of public trust in the police is that it has promotes citizens' compliance with the law (Jackson & Bradford, 2010). In most cases, the police actions do restrict some citizens' rights and freedom due to the nature of their duties in fighting against crime, yet citizens who trust the police tend to voluntarily comply with such restrictions with the belief that it is for their own safety. It is assumed that citizens voluntarily abide by the law when they trust the police. Without trust, citizen compliance with law can only be obtained through threat or actual use of force; which consequently worsen the public trust on the police.

Another area where public trust in the police has influenced the fight against crime is that public trust in the police encourages citizens to cooperate with the police in information sharing. When citizens proactively cooperate with the police, they are more likely to provide information about criminals, and participate in crime prevention activities (Nix et al., 2015; Tyler, 1990). The police cannot be everywhere, they need to synergize with the public in the area of information sharing which is an imperative in the fight against crime. No police organization can perform effectively without information from the public. How the public divulge this information depends on the trust they have for the police. However, there is this fear about the Nigeria police that whatever information that is brought before them (NPF) are not kept in confident (Onwuama, Ajah, Asadu, Ebingbo, Odii & Okpara 2019).

More so, public trust in the police is needed for effective fight against crime in the area of reporting crime by victim. The extent to which a victim report crime depends on the trust they have for the police. In Nigeria, Sheriff Deputies (2016) argues the most crimes committed in Nigeria are not reported; and one of the reasons accounting for this poor reporting of criminal cases according to Hutchinson (2017) is the negative attitude of police officers which deter many victims of crime from reporting crime incidence.

Again, public trust in the police gives the police a level of legitimacy. The empowerment is associated with citizens' intentions to accept discretionary judgment by the police, thus enhancing the cooperation the public gives the police in the course of performing their duties. Trustworthy police are seen by citizens to be effective, fair, and have the shared value with, and strong commitment to the community (Tyler & Huo, 2002). When people believing that the police treat them fairly, they are more likely to trust and support the police (Murphy et al., 2014).

The falling Standard of Professionalism in the Nigeria Police Force

Afolabi, Lawanson and Oyilola, (2016) in a study observe that the NPF performance has considerably fallen which has manifested in the widespread of poor attitude of police personnel to members of the public (bullying and brutal on members of the public). In line with this, Oyemwinmina and Aibeye (2016) argue in his study that the NPF has not to live up to their expectation in providing security to the Nigeria citizens.

The confident level of the citizens towards the NPF according to Afolabi, Lawanson and Oyilola (2016) is very low; the citizens do not have confident in the NPF in the area of crime control. Ajayi and Longe (2015) observe that the police capacity in the performance of their responsibility of crime prevention and control is sub-optimal. This deficiency has continued to create a feeling of low quality staining the image of the NPF

before members of the public (Ajayi & Longe, 2015). In affirming the above assertion, Sheriff Deputies (2016) observes that one of the effects of lost of confidence on the police performance in Nigeria is the low level of reporting criminal cases by victims. In this regard also, Ayodele and Aderinto (2014) earlier argued that not up to 47% of crimes committed are reported to the authority while more than 53% of the cases are not reported. In support of the argument of the above scholars, Hutchinson (2017) posits that the reasons why people don't report criminal offenses include; fear of further victimization, feeling helplessly that the police are not capable of doing something about the case, and also the unfriendly attitude of the police towards the complainant when a case is being reported. Consequently this non-reporting or under-reporting of crime is one of the reasons why crime statistics is far less than the real crime situation; hence the dark figures (Onwuama, Ajah, Asadu, Ebimngbo, Odii & Okpara 2019). The implication of this statement is that the rate of crime in Nigeria has not actually been captured in the statistics given by the Police.

Nevertheless, majority of the Nigerian citizens have accused members of the NPF of being unfriendly with members of the public and in many instances do neglect the plight of the citizens who are in dire need of their security service. Fidelis (2016) observes that within the society even though crime has been reported as widely as possible, the Police attitude of being reckless in the exercise of their power has led many Nigerians never to report crime to the police. Hence, the public holds the Police in low regard and do not enjoy the habitual cooperation with the public. In this vein, Ajayi and Longe (2015) has argued that there have been a lot of cases of misuse of power vested on the police, and this has not allowed for smooth relationship between the police and the public at large, and caused a constant conflict and disagreement with the members of the public. The argument here is that the public perception of the Police is not shaped by the kind of job the personnel of the NPF are called to do, but by the attitude of the police personnel exhibited in the course of performing their duties. According to Afolabi, Lawason and Oyinlola (2016) the actions of the Nigeria Police Force in most cases denigrate the law, endangering the citizens and blotting the institutional reputation of the police that they represent.

Another area of falling standard of professionalism in the NPF is the response time. According to Onwuama, Ajah, Asadu, Ebimngbo, Odii, & Okpara (2019), the response time of the police in times of emergency is worrisome and nothing to write home about. This according to the scholars bothers on effectiveness and efficiency, which many other scholarly studies on the police have shown to be lacking.

IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

From the findings of the study, it revealed that a negative public perception of police cum low confidence in the police has unquantifiable ways of affecting the efficiency and effectiveness of the police which extensively inhibit crime prevention and control.....and as such, the public perception of the Nigeria police is at negative and low ebb. Also the work uncovered that the Nigerian public has little or no confidence in the Nigeria police. This is not just so but evident in the routine activities of the police and also the characteristic of the Nigeria police which include; Brutality, corruption, incivility, oppression, intimidation, bribery among others.

The role of the police as enshrined in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as it concerns crime prevention and control cannot be over-emphasized (Adebayo, 2013). The effectiveness of the police to discharge their role is anchored on various variables which are external and internal to the police. Public perception of the police cum confidence in the police which give the police the legitimacy required to effectively discharge its duties is an external factor that is dependent on the knowledge, skill and attitude of the police. Thus, the study shows that the public perception of the police is build up by citizens' experience obtained from the knowledge, skill and attitude of the police exhibited in the course of carrying out their constitutional duty. Furthermore, this build up public perception about police professionalism (the knowledge, skill and attitude put into their duty) influences the level of the public trust in the Police.

More so, the study discovers that when the public does not perceive the police doing their duty right, the level of public trust or confidence in the Police reduces, and consequently affects effective crime prevention and control. It was in realisation of this that the Nigeria Police Act 2020, provides among other specific objectives of the Act; to bring about a positive change in the public perception of the police Force by ensuring that its functions are performed in a manner sensitive to the needs and well-being of the general public, provide for a police force that is more responsive to the needs of the general public and has entrenched in its operations the values of fairness, justice and equity; reposition the police force to uphold and safeguard the fundamental rights of every person in Nigeria in its operations etcl (Nigerian Police Act, 2020 p. 5). In line with the above, suffice to say that the Nigerian police are awakening to the realization of the importance of the public perception and confidence in the effective performance of their constitutional duty.

Finally, the study concludes that professionalism in the NPF has not been upheld due to the lots of challenges confronting the force in Nigeria.

Challenges Hindering Professionalism in the Nigeria Police Force

The problem facing the police towards the actualizing professionalism is numerous. Many scholars have addressed this from different perspective. According to Babalola (2022) the problems facing the Nigeria police force ranges from poor welfare, poor salaries and remuneration, inadequate funding, inadequate equipment, corruption to political interference. The argument here is that the Nigeria Police Force has not been able to carry out its constitutional responsibilities professionally orchestrated by the above factors. In support of the above assertion, Adebayo and Ojo (2009) added that the police are under-funded meanwhile, state actors have being budgeting funds to white elephant and bogus projects. In line with the position of Babalola (2022), Enemo (2020) had earlier argued that in Nigeria, the attitude and action of the political class affects all kinds of organizations and individuals including the police. He further submits that some politicians use the Police as tugs to intimidate their political opponents or perceived enemies. In this vein, professionalism in the NPF cannot be seen among the personnel of the NPF. In line with this political interference, Osayande (2008) affirmed that the long stay of military regime (1983 – 1999) has erode the NPF of its professionalism.

Problem of attitudinal orientation of the serving members of the NPF is another problem hindering professionalism in the Nigeria Police Force. This poor attitude of the personnel of the NPF was wall captured in the concept of “Nigeria factor” by Enemo (2020). He posits that the various ways and phrase the Nigeria factor can be manifested include, “Nigeria time”, “gratification”, “use your brain – discretion”, “shine your eyes”, don’t carry government work for head” All these are attributes of poor orientation which breeds indiscipline and impunity of officers and personnel thereby not allowed professionalism to strive in the Nigeria Police Force. Lack of proper technical training – technical illiteracy and lack of competency, lack of modern technology in the fight against crime are also factors hindering professionalism in the Nigeria Police Force. Professionalism is application of technical knowledge, competency with the right equipment towards solving a social problem. Therefore, to display professionalism, the officer must first be knowledgeable of his/her duties and the professional tactics of performing the duties – this is acquired through effective training programs. However, scholars have observed that human capital development has not been given a serious attention in the Nigeria Police Force. As noted by Osayande (2008) and Omole (2020) training and re-training in line with appropriate technology and validation of existing workforce is not a wide spread practice within the police force. In corroboration with the above, Ogunlowo (2021) argues that the NPF lack the knowledge of new technology in the act of combating crime.

V. CONCLUSION

This study examines the impact of professionalism in building public interest in the Nigeria Police Force. The paper explains the component of professionalism, and how it can be achieved. It argues that professionalism is a requisite to achieve public trust. This was the position of Abdul, Ahmed, Khalid, Asmara, Sobia, Muhammad and Muhammad (2018) when they posit that professionalism is an essential requirement to achieve the building blocks of public value by providing organizational services to members of the public in a standardized and approved practice. It was also the summation of the paper that public trust is essential towards fighting crime by the Nigeria Police Force. In the study, the extant literature reviewed summed that the standard of professionalism in the NPF is low; and this has put the public trust of the police is on the negative side which consequently affects the effectiveness of the police in discharging its duty of fighting crime.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Having understood the importance of public trust in fighting crime in Nigeria the study recommends that the NPF should as a matter priority strive to put all institutional mechanisms in place towards improving the trust and confidence the public have in them. In line with the objectives and the findings of the study, the paper makes the following specific recommendations:

- i. Government needs to find a way to improve technical training and retraining of police personnel towards acquisition of the right technical/special knowledge, skill and attitude in line with the best global practice, provision of equipment, with a view to overcoming the challenges of ineffectiveness and inefficiency in the force. This will enhance the capacity, expertise, efficiency and professionalism in addressing the incidence of crime and criminality which consequently will improve the level of public in the Police in Nigeria; and also equip the NPF with a holistic national standard for policing approach in crisis intervention and emphasize more on de-escalation trainings to enable police officers acquire the professional and strategic skills to mitigate the abuse of power and unethical practice in the performance of their duty.
- ii. Also, in the quest to improve the competence of the NPF, recruitment into the police force should be thorough, objective, wholly based on education, strength of character and competence, and completely devoid

of any sentimental, ethnic or religious considerations towards reducing corruption and image problem in the force to the barest minimum.

iii. The Nigeria Police should regularly and consistently conduct attitudinal and behavioural check for its staff members. It also need to orientate its members towards being professional in their duties; upholding ethical conduct of honesty, integrity, accountability and politeness in the performance of their constitutional duties.

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