

Factors Influencing the Choice of Police as Prospective Career among Students of Criminology and Security Studies in Nigeria

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the effect of age, sex, employment status, and CGPA on the choice of joining the Nigerian Police force as a career path among undergraduate students of Criminology and Security Studies bachelor programme of Federal University Dutse, Nigeria. Survey method was used with 80 students selected as sample through proportionate stratified and random sampling. Self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data. It was found that unemployed respondents were most likely to choose police as prospective career due to the hope of contributing towards improving the services of the police organization; female undergraduates were not likely to join the police because of the negative perception or bad image of the organization. Age and sex had no relation with the choice of police as a career among the undergraduate students. It is therefore recommended that graduates of Criminology and Security studies should be considered during police recruitment, and that female students and their family members should be enlightened on the indispensability and importance of having woman in the police service. Furthermore, more efforts need to be put by the police and other relevant agencies to improve the image of the Nigerian police in the eyes of the public.

Keywords: *police career, criminology, security studies, police recruitment, Nigerian police*

INTRODUCTION

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Police is usually the major agency of government responsible for law enforcement within a society. Thus, it remains as one of the most important institutions a country should maintain in order to have and sustain the trust of the public as well as lasting peace and security. This fact has been recognised in Nigeria under Section 214(2) of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria which is provided for the establishment of the Nigerian police. Not only the need for establishing the agency, being problem of crime and insecurity dynamic (Barnett & Adger, 2007; Liu, 2005), there is always the need to continuously enquire and investigate on matters related to proper institutionalization of police and its

effectiveness. Police organisations, wherever they are, need young, vibrant, intelligent and formally educated individuals to man its workforce (Courtney, 2011; Weston et al., 2000). This could be obvious looking at the challenges the current trends of crime and the advancements in crime prevention and fighting strategies constantly bring. Therefore, the questions of who wants to join the services of the police agency, whom the agency should recruit, and who actually joined are very crucial in having and maintaining a strong, modern, and democratic police system. These questions could be more important as matters of empirical study in relation to the Nigerian police, which many people (e.g., Onoja, 2005; Igbinovia, 2000) believe lacks the pre-requisite capacity to tackle the problem of crime in Nigeria due to the improper recruitment of personnel to man its workforce.

Undergraduate students who are expected to finish their studies at universities by the end of a certain period, are seen as the most appropriate candidates to join the police. This may be related to the fact that this category of individuals is young and are more vibrant, intelligent and educated to fit in the dynamic police system. The role of college or university education to police in discharging their duty has been a topic of research for decades now (Paoline & Terrill, 2007; Roberg, 2004; Decker & Huckabee, 2002), as the research to evaluate the importance of personal intelligence in policing is even older. The influence of gender and age in relation to choosing an effective police career has also been variously studied (e.g., Baoteng, 2014; Decker & Huckabee, 2002). Be it as it may, university environment, education as well as gender are important factors that determine the prospects of undergraduate students' career path after completion of their studies.

In Nigeria, there is a common belief that a typical undergraduate and graduate student does not want to join the police as a career, unless he or she has no alternative career (Onoja, 2005; Igbinovia, 2000). This situation happens perhaps due to the reasons such as the unattractive image the police have earned overtime and the negative perception among the public on the agency. Women and the 'best brains' also do not like to join the Nigeria Police (Onoja, 2005; Igbinovia, 2000) due to culture, patriarchal system of family, and the fear of wasting their hard earned and 'precious' certificates respectively. Although these are beliefs which should not be taken lightly as they can affect efforts to build an efficient police organization in Nigeria, there is nonetheless inadequate research and knowledge about them being true or not. Indeed, there is a dearth of study about the factors which influence graduate students to join the Nigerian police. This study attempted to address and fill these research and knowledge gap. Specifically, the aim of the study is to find out the influence of age, gender, employment status, and CGPA on students' choice of police as a career. The students of Criminology and Security Studies (CSS) Bachelor of Science programme could

ordinarily be more expected to join the police and other law enforcement agencies as they are supposed to be better learned in theoretical and practical aspects of crime prevention and control. Hence, they are considered as more appropriate candidates to serve as the subject of this study. Structurally, this section includes perspectives of police organization, method, and results of the study. The results were discussed and conclusions and recommendations are made at the end of this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Perspectives of Police Organization

Police are seen as a group of people patrolling public places in uniforms with the mandate of crime control, order maintenance, and some negotiable social service functions (Reiner, 2010). As a model of bureaucratic system of organization, the police institution is a formal arrangement consisting of specific roles, hierarchy, span of control, and a system of reward and punishment. According to Reiner (2010), the police are not found in every society but are usually common in more complex societies where social relations are mechanically pursued. The overall philosophy of police anywhere is the maintenance of order and controlling crime (Bayley, 2001).

Depending on the society in which they exist, police organization has several departments and units with each responsible for specified functions (Reiner, 2010). Because of the specificity of task, the police require personnel with different educational background so as to ensure effectiveness in the delivery of its services (Newburn, 2012). Moreover, the sophistication of criminal behaviour of individuals and the development of new approaches of crime prevention and control where modern scientific and technological inventions are used, necessitate the police organizations to have personnel who are educated in different disciplines at university level (Onoja, 2005). Indeed, the police force must consist of individuals from both gender because the police are dealing with all individuals, male, and female; this helps to ensure convenience and practicality in the agency especially in cases involving sex like rape or some kind of rescue activities.

At the beginning of many police organizations in the world, deadly force was commonly used on individuals to ensure compliance to the laid down rules and regulation of a society (Fyfe, 2013). There was no specialization or 'division of duty' and women were rarely police officers. The objective was to simply enforce laws, which were not necessarily made through collective agreement of individuals, irrespective of whether citizens' rights have been violated or not. Later, particularly

with enlightenment and the popularization of democracy, various reform ideas of police organization were initiated and implemented by different societies (Green, 2007) with the view to ensure that the police operations are in line with the fundamental principles of human rights (Fichtelberg, 2013); this sets foundation to the hitherto police reform idea of democratic policing (OSCE, 2008), which is now becoming popular. Historically, the origin of modernization of police work has consistently been associated with Peelian model which was started in England (Reiner, 2010).

The theoretical and practice issues of police organization have then evolved over the years. Initial reform efforts stressed professional administration, structure, and control (Cordner & Scarborough, 2010; Green, 2007). Later, much attention was paid to improving police performance through inspired leadership and improving employee needs, that is the humanist approach to police management and administration. In recent years, however, the emphasis has been placed on improving the effectiveness of police tactics and strategies and, on their relations with its external environment, otherwise known as the strategic management and institutional approaches respectively (Green, 2007).

The idea behind strategic management approach is related with the objectives of the police and how tasks and resources can be organized to achieve the objectives (Green, 2007). It involves appropriate mobilization of needed personnel and facilities that could make police function of crime control and order maintenance possible. In other words, strategic management emphasizes the recruitment of the most qualified individuals to work as a police, and the provision of the needed facilities and constant training of the officers about how best to utilize the available working facilities.

METHODOLOGY

The Criminology and Security Studies Programme of the Federal University Dutse is one of the bachelor programmes that were started with the establishment of the university in 2011. Drawing from different social science disciplines, the programme applies a wide range of approaches to the study of crime, delinquency, crime prevention and general security in the society. Its contents are designed to enable students to develop a variety of theoretical knowledge and practical skills that are in demand from employers within contemporary Nigeria and outside (Department of Sociology FUD, 2015: iv). Like all Social Science bachelor degree programmes in Nigeria, the CSS programme has students in four different levels during every academic session. This study was a cross-sectional survey study and applying a proportionate stratified sampling. The respondents were randomly selected from the programme levels during

one of their Compulsory Courses session. With a total population of 278 students, 80 respondents were selected based on Dessel (2013). According to the table of sample size presented by Dessel and widely used for survey, 80 sample respondents are enough to survey a population of between 100-499 people with 95% confidence level. The sample selection was from three levels of the degree programme which include level 2, 3, and 4. Level 1 was excluded because as the time of conducting this study the students at that level were newly registered and might not have begun to feel a significant influence of the university environment like those in the rest of the levels. Information on respondents' socio-demographic characteristics as well as responses on the questions related to the objectives of the study was collected using close ended self-administered questionnaire of 16-items. Prior to the actual data collection, the face validity of the instrument was checked by two senior colleagues, then tested and retested using 30 respondents for reliability. In each case, similar results were obtained with moderate correlation. During analysis, SPSS version 20 was used to generate both the descriptive and inferential statistics from the data.

FINDINGS

Table 1 shows the summary of the data on socio-demographic characteristics and respondents' choice of police as a prospective career. It can be seen from the table that most of the respondents (65.0%) were aged between 21 and 26 years. Apparently, the data indicated that a higher number of students would have been at their youthful and productive age as public, private or self-employed individuals after graduation from the university. Accordingly, majority (75.0%) of this category said they could choose to join the police force after graduation. Furthermore, the majority of the respondents (87.5%) in the category were male, signifying the enrolment of more male than female in the CSS programme. Moreover, most (74.3%) of the male hoped to join the police after graduation, although on the contrary majority (80.0%) of the female said they will not join the police. Also, most of the respondents (68.8%) were unemployed and the majority (76.4%) of them stated that they could choose police as a career path. The mean CGPA of the respondents was 3.81 on the scale of 5.0 points, which indicates that they were performing averagely in their studies. Generally, more than half of the respondents with CGPA of 2.0 points and above said they could join the police force as their prospective career path.

Table 1: *Summary of the study data*

	Police as a Prospective Career		Total % Within Variable
	Yes % Within Category	No % Within Category	
Age			
15-20 years	2 (50.0%)	2 (50.0%)	4 (5.0%)
21-26 years	39 (75.0%)	13 (25.0%)	52 (65.0%)
27-32 years	9 (47.4%)	10 (52.6%)	19 (23.8%)
Above 32 years	4 (80.0%)	1 (20.0%)	5 (6.3%)
Total	54 (67.5%)	26 (32.5%)	80 (100.0%)
Gender			
Male	52 (74.3%)	18 (25.7%)	70 (87.5%)
Female	2 (20.0%)	8 (80.0%)	10 (12.5%)
Total	54 (67.5%)	26 (32.5%)	80 (100.0%)
Employment Status			
Employed	12 (48.0%)	13 (52.0%)	25 (31.3%)
Unemployed	42 (76.4%)	13 (23.6%)	55 (68.8%)
Total	54 (67.5%)	26 (32.5%)	80 (100.0%)
CGPA			
Below 1.0	1 (50.0%)	1(50.0%)	2 (2.5%)
1.01-2.0	1(50.0%)	1(50.0%)	2 (2.5%)
2.01-3.0	13 (61.9%)	8 (38.1%)	21 (26.3%)
3.01-4.0	29 (74.4%)	10 (25.6%)	39 (48.8%)
Above 4.0	10 (62.5%)	6 (37.5%)	16 (20.0%)
Total	54 (67.5%)	26 (32.5%)	80 (100.0%)

Table 2: *Employment status * reasons for choosing police as prospective career*

Employment Status	Reasons for Choosing Police as a Prospective Career					Total
	Love for my country	Likelihood of not getting better job	NP welfare	Hope of making the NP better	Others	
Employed	4 (28.6%)	0(0.0%)	2 (14.3%)	7 (50.0%)	1 (7.1%)	14 (100.0%)
Unemployed	8 (18.6%)	2 (4.7%)	0 (0.0%)	30 (69.8%)	3 (7.0%)	43 (100.0%)
Total	12 (21.1%)	2 (3.5%)	2 (3.5%)	37 (64.9%)	4 (7.0%)	57 (100.0%)

Note: a. missing values of 23, b. % is within category

Table 3: Gender * reasons for not choosing police as prospective career

Gender	Reasons for Not Choosing Police as a Prospective Career						Total
	Lack of welfare	Safety of life	Bad image of the NP	Inefficiency of the NP	Fear life after retirement	I am employed	
Male	7(26.9%)	1(3.8%)	8(30.8%)	3(11.5%)	2(7.7%)	5(19.2%)	26(100.0%)
Female	1(12.5%)	1(12.5%)	5(62.5%)	0(0.0%)	0(0.0%)	1(12.5%)	8(100.0%)
Total	8(23.5%)	2(5.9%)	13(38.2%)	3(8.8%)	2(5.9%)	6(17.6%)	34(100.0%)

Note: a. missing values of 46, b. % is within category

Table 4: Variables in the equation

	B	S.E	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Step 1^a						
Age	-.053	.407	0.17	1	.897	.948
Sex (1)	-3.187	.907	12.354	1	.000	.041
Employ status (1)	1.949	.640	9.275	1	.002	7.025
CGPA	.033	.301	.012	1	.912	1.034
Constant	1.265	1.601	.624	1	.429	3.541

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Age, Sex, employ status, CGPA. a

DISCUSSION

This study has found that female were less likely than male to join the Nigerian police as a career after the completion of their university education and the reason for most of them was the negative perception the general public has on the police (See Table 3). Related to this, Okunola et al. (2012) has found that most undergraduate students did not want to join the police because of corruption. Conversely, results from Todak (2012) indicated a slight difference between male and female police officers regarding choice of police as a career with the women were more likely to opt for pursuing law enforcement work because of their desire to help people. However, in a study conducted by Raganella and White (2004) on a sample of 278 police academy recruits in New York City Police Department, it was revealed that the motivations for choosing police as a career were similar among the respondents regardless of gender. Similarly, Chen (2015) has found that female officers have the same motivation male officers. Earlier, Meagher and Yentes (1986) has reported no difference in motivation to join police agency among male and female in the US; the motivation was the desire to assist people, as was reported by Todak (2012) and Seklecki and Paynich (2007), and the security associated with the job.

Undergraduates who were unemployed are found to be more likely to join the police than respondents who were employed. Surprisingly, the respondents in this study were not joining to simply get themselves engaged, but due to their desire to make the

police work more professional and better (See Table 2). This is in contrast with the common belief that unemployment is principally the motivator for job seeking in many organisations in Nigeria, including the Nigeria Police, as reported by Fabamise (2018), Abang (2017) and Kazeem (2016). However, many studies (e.g., Wu et al., 2009; Foley et al., 2008; Raganella & White, 2004; Tarnng et al., 2001; Meagher & Yentes, 1986) in different countries have found that factors such as job security and steady salary were among the most important considerations by individuals in deciding to join the police.

CONCLUSION

There can be many reasons for undergraduate students to choose a particular occupation as their future career path. In this study, undergraduates of CSS who were unemployed and not working with any organisation were most likely to choose police as a prospective career to improve the police service and make it better. Nonetheless, the female undergraduates would not opt for police as a career choice after graduation because of the negative perception the public have on the Nigeria Police. Age and student's performance in CGPA do not influence the students' decision to join the police after graduation. Therefore, it is recommended that consideration should be given to graduates of Criminology and Security Studies during police recruitment; and that female undergraduates of CSS and their family members should be enlightened on the importance of having women in the Nigerian police service. Moreover, the police force should put more efforts to redeem the unattractive image of the organisation. One of the limitations of this research, however, is the small sample size. Future research should therefore use a bigger sample size, and also investigate the choice of police as a prospective career among undergraduates of other programmes, especially the natural sciences, as the Nigerian police also need personnel to man its special duties units.

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