

Media Audience Awareness, Attitude and Use of Security Numbers in Exposing Crimes in Enugu State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This work set out to uncover the media audience awareness, attitudes and use of the frequently advertised security numbers for exposing crimes in Enugu state. The research was guided by two theories: technology determinism theory and partnership theory of crime prevention. The study employed survey method with 405 sample size, using cluster sampling technique to draw the sample. Questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. The study found that: Over 71% of the total respondents are aware of these security numbers for exposing crimes in the state but ironically, 86.4% of these respondents don't have these numbers saved in their phones and have never reported any crime to the police. Also, findings show that older respondents with higher socio-economic status report crimes more than younger respondents, low income earners, and rural dwellers who mostly relied on the services of the community's vigilante groups. Radio, TV, and friends rank high in the respondent's key sources of information about these security numbers. The research further show that the key factors that determine the respondent's attitude to crime reporting include: fear of retaliation; lack of faith in police force; concern about one's identity, etc. From these findings, the researchers recommend that the security force should strive and rebuild its public image in order to restore public faith in the agency which will enhance crime reporting. Also, the media as the molders of public opinion should continue to educate the general public on the need to report crimes to the police with these numbers. Finally, these security numbers should be displayed in billboards at strategic public positions where members of the public can easily see and save them in their mobile phones.

Keywords: media audience; security numbers; awareness; attitude; use; crime reporting

Introduction

Nigeria is currently caught in the web of crime dilemma, manifesting in the convulsive upsurge of both violent and non-violent crimes. Notable in this regard are the rising incidents of armed robbery, assassination, ransom-driven kidnapping, drug trafficking, cultism, corruption, murder, etc which are now ravaging the polity like a tsunami and spreading a climate of fears and anxieties about public safety Iyang and Ubang (2013). These problems have dragged the Nigeria's name into the global crime map and have been the major deterrent to foreign direct investment into the country. The recent upsurge in crimes in Nigeria is not only an indication of general insecurity but also a fundamental problem of ineffective policing (Obasi, 2008; Abimboye and Adzegeh, 2009).

However, armed with the knowledge of these numerous security problems, the security agents recently embark on media campaigns for police/public collaboration to facilitate crime reporting and investigations. This desired synergy between community and the security agents is built upon mobile technologies and contacts like mobile phones and computer system. Some of these security media programmes in Nigeria include the following: *If You See Something, Say something* (aired in NTA); *Know Your Neighbour Now* (in NTA) *Whistle Blowing* Policy (Federal government anti-corruption policy). Also, most of the thirty six states in Nigeria have their own security media campaigns. In Enugu state for instance, some of these media campaigns include: *Security is Everybody's Business* (broadcast in Radio Nigeria, Enugu; Solid FM; Dream FM; and Sunrise 96.1 FM); Security Point of View (aired in Enugu State Broadcasting Service ESBS: ETV station every Tuesdays and Thursdays).

Clarke (2009) observed that in the western world especially in America, Britain, Russia, etc effective police-public collaboration in the fight against crime is the chief corner stone of their security strategy and success. In America for instance, even a ten year old child knows the 911 security number and mostly use them to expose crimes and violence even in their family. According to him, this synergy between the people

and the security apparatus of the state is made possible due to the high confidence and faith which the general public has in their security agents. According to Imobighe (2005, p89) "...if properly harnessed, recent modern digital technologies make it easier for individuals, organizations and security personnel to trace and report crime cases effectively all over the world". He further observed that crime can happen anywhere at any given time and that security personnel can't be everywhere at all the time. With modern technologies, citizens have been empowered to take part in crime reporting, crime exposure and the fight against crime.

Without doubt, security is a crucial matter which requires co-operation and collaboration of all strategic stakeholders such as government, security agencies, and individual citizens of the community or public at large (Nwaubani, Anyikwa, and Azuh, 2014). Indeed, of all the stakeholders, the community or public is the most crucial to effective security. This is because without the co-operation of the community or public the police may be unable to perform optimally. This calls for police-community approach in crime detection and prevention. This co-operation is necessary because criminals are primarily members of the community and if detected early could be prevented from operating. Thus, this approach ensures that members of the community are educated on the need to provide information to the police about crimes and criminals and how to contact the police in emergency situations.

As rightly observed by Zumve (2012, p 132) "policing is a universal requirement of any social order which may be carried out by a variety of different processes and institutional arrangements". Within the traditional African society, policing was the responsibility of all bonafide adult members of the community. In essence, policing is an obligatory collaborative endeavour between the people (community) and the police. Community policing is therefore anchored on reciprocal relationship between the police and citizens. This position is now increasingly supported by the global practice which favours a shift from traditional policing to community policing. Accordingly, community-policing is a philosophy and practice which have some reform implications for the Nigerian police. It is a concept that inculcates all members of the society as members of the security agents (Okiro, 2007). Thus, from Nigerian police perspective, Community-policing should promote integrity, professionalism, cooperation and commitment which are aimed at achieving "quality service delivery, police and community empowerment, accountability, problem solving and partnership" (Nigerian Police Force, 2007: p5). These values are also in agreement with the five core elements of Community policing in south Africa namely service orientation (provision of a professional policing services responsive to community needs); partnership (facilitation of co-operative consultative process, problem-solving); problem-solving (joint identification and analysis of the causes of crime and conflicts with corresponding innovative remedial measures); empowerment (creation of joint responsibility and capacity to address crime), accountability (culture of accountability to address community needs and concern) (Republic of south Africa, 1993)

Statement of Problem

According to Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, apart from basic needs (food, shelter, and clothing), security of life and properties is the next most desired human need. However, gone are the days when the task of security of life and properties are left for the government and its security agents alone. This is because the modern nature of crime is such that it can be planned and executed at any given place and time. According to Nwankwo and Okolie (2016):

The task of security of life and property is now the business of everybody in the society... Even with all the security equipment and strengths, government and its security agents cannot arrest all security concerns in the state without the help of the general public. Recent technologies like mobile phones, computer systems, car trackers, etc have automatically given the general public the role of security detective in their respective societies. The general public is now the eye and ear of the security agents in the areas they live.... Without appropriate crime reporting by the community members to the security agents, crime prevention and control would be very difficult (p3).

Recently, due to the numerous security challenges facing Nigeria, the Nigerian security agents embarked on media campaigns for police/public collaboration for crime reporting and investigations. This desired synergy between community and the security agents is built upon the use of mobile technologies and mobile contacts like mobile phones and computer systems to expose crimes. Some of these security media programmes in Nigeria include the following: If You See Something, Say Something (in NTA); Know Your Neighbour Now (in NTA) Whistle Blowing (Federal government anti-corruption policy).

However, some of these security media campaigns in Enugu State include: Security is Everybody's Business (in Radio Nigeria, Enugu; Solid FM; Dream FM; and Sunrise 96.1 FM); Security Point of View (in

Enugu State Broadcasting Service ESBS <ETV>) These campaigns are accompanied with security numbers and email addresses soliciting the general public to use them to expose crimes in the state.

Meanwhile, even as these campaigns continues in Nigeria and especially in Enugu state, crimes of diverse natures ranging from kidnapping, burglary, armed robbery, cultism, murder, etc still persists in the country and in different states including Enugu state. This forces one to ponder on some burning issues like: are the general public really aware of these security numbers? Even if yes, to what extent? Is the general public in Enugu willing to expose crimes around them with these numbers? And lastly, what is the public's attitude to crime reporting in Nigeria and what are the factors that determine people's attitude to crime reporting. These are the vacuum which this work set out to fill.

Research questions

- i. To what extent is the media audience in Enugu aware of security numbers for exposing crimes?
- ii. What are the channels through which they obtain these security numbers?
- iii. To what extent does Enugu public use these security numbers for exposing crimes in the state?
- iv. What are the attitudes of Enugu public to crime reporting?
- v. What are the factors that determine media audience attitudes to crime reporting?

Literature Review

The focus of this review will come in three parts, namely: conceptual, empirical and theoretical.

Police/Public Synergy and the Fight against Crime

The police no doubt is the most statutory or constitutional body/organ responsible for the preservation of law and order as well as the protection of individual in their communities (Imobighe, 2005). However, gone are the days when the sole responsibility of security of life and properties is the sole responsibility of government and its security agents. In developed countries like America, Britain, Russia, Japan, etc police/public collaboration is very effective and this synergy has helped in the effective detection and exposure of crimes even before and after they have been committed. Crime reporting is key to modern security challenges in the world (Akin, 2008). Security is a crucial matter which requires co-operation and collaboration of all strategic stakeholders such as government, security agencies, and individual citizens of the community or public at large. Indeed, of all the stakeholders, the community or the general public is very crucial to effective security. According to (Njoku, 2012), this is because without the co-operation of the community or public will be handicapped in performing effectively. This calls for police-community approach in crime detection and prevention. This co-operation is necessary because criminals are primarily members of the community and if detected early could be prevented from operating. Thus, this approach ensures that members of the community are educated on the need to provide useful information to the police about crimes and criminals and how to contact the police in emergency situations.

According to the Nigerian 1999 constitution, the statutory functions of the police force are: the prevention and dictation of crime; apprehension of offenders; protection of life and property; maintenance of public order and safety; enforcement of all law and regulation; and performance of such military duties within and outside Nigeria as may be required of them (Federal Republic of Nigeria chapter (154, section 4). From the foregoing, it is crystal clear that the task of security is demanding and requires the help of the general public if they are to timely arrest crime situations in the modern day society.

Recent Police Media campaigns for effective collaboration with the general public to facilitate crime reporting in Nigeria and in Enugu State

Following the increasing security challenges facing Nigeria which are manifested in the areas of armed robbery, ransom driven kidnapping, murder, terrorism, cultism etc the security agents embarked on media campaigns for police/public collaboration to help the force in crime reporting and investigations. This desired synergy between community and the security agents is built upon the use of mobile technologies and mobile contacts like mobile phones and computer systems and networks. Some of these security media programmes in Nigeria include the following: If You See Something, Say Something (in NTA); Know Your Neighbour Now (in NTA) Whistle Blowing (Federal government anti-corruption policy).

However, some of the most security challenges witnessed in Enugu State include the following: armed robbery, kidnapping, cultism, and murder, (Nwankwo and Okolie, 2016). Some of the security media campaigns in Enugu State for combating these menaces include: *Security is Everybody's Business* (in Radio Nigeria, Enugu; Solid FM; Dream FM; and Sunrise 96.1 FM); *Security Point of View* (in Enugu State

Broadcasting Service ESBS <ETV>). These campaigns are accompanied with security numbers and email addresses soliciting the general public to use them to expose crimes in the state.

Factors that Influence Public Attitudes to Crime Reporting

Research works show that many factors influence the public's attitude to crime reporting (Miller, Davis, Henderson, Markovic, and Ortiz, 2004; Nwankwo and Okolie, 2016; IACP, 2012; and Unumeri, 2010). According to a research work by Miller, et.al, some of the key factors that determine the public's attitude to crime reporting in the United States of America include the following: perceived potential harm, previous encounter with the security agents and police image; the sex and age of individual, academic, economic and social status of an individual, fear of retaliation, fear of getting an innocent person into trouble. According to the findings, there appears to be a significant relationship between age of an individual and the tendency to report or not reporting suspicious activities. Respondents who were 65 or older (54 percent) were more likely than younger respondents, 18-34 (41 percent) to report suspicious activities to the police. Older respondents (42 percent) were less likely than younger respondents (28 percent) to feel they would be traced by the police after the arrest. Younger respondents (45 percent of those aged 18-34) mentioned they were more likely to be deterred from reporting suspicious activity due to fear of retaliation by the crime perpetrators. These younger respondents scored the highest of all age categories in the belief that the fear or mistrust of law enforcement could deter them from reporting suspicious activity. Overall, fear of law enforcement agents was mentioned less as respondents' age increased.

Nwankwo and Okolie (2016) in their research work; *Crime Reporting in Nigeria* found that most of the key factors that inhibit effective crime reporting in Nigeria include the following: lack of faith in Nigerian police force, fear of retaliation, closeness with perpetrators of crime, illiteracy and poverty. The research reveals that the more economically and financially stable individuals are more likely to have security numbers and will use them to contact the police when crime occur than the poorer ones who may not even have these security numbers at hand and who will be very reluctant to contact the police in crime incidence. This research findings agree with the findings of (Unumeri, 2010; IACP, 2012; Balogun, Okeke, and Chukwukere, 2014).

Related National and International Empirical Works on Impacts of Police/Public Collaborations in Fighting Crime

Clarke (2009) in his work, *Technology and Situational Crime Prevention* in South Africa, found that technologies especially mobile phones, CCTV camera, computer system, etc have totally changed policing. According to him, with the massive growth in security technology, policing of this modern day are now more efficient and accurate in crime detection and fighting especially if there is an effective police/public collaboration in the fight against crime. Also, Akin (2008) observed that computer and mobile telephones have empowered the general public to effectively partner with the security agents in the fight against crime. The partnership which is also known as community/police collaboration is very crucial and is yielding many good results especially in the western countries where there is high confidence in the security apparatus of the state. He further noted that technology has made every citizen a potential crime detective in his/her local community. In 2011, Byrne and Marx conducted a police/public relations research in USA to ascertain the rate at which the US citizens use security numbers like 911 between 2007 and 2010 for reporting crimes in the state. The findings show that out of the whole crimes that took place within this period, over 70 percent of them were reported to the police by the American citizens. This also concurs with the findings of Kibet (2015) carried out in Kenya.

According to Aremu (2009) in his work *Understanding Nigeria Police; lessons from psychological researches*, there is a very poor police public collaboration in crime detection and prevention in Nigeria. This bad relationship is predicated on the citizens' bad perception of the police as a corrupt body and an agent of the ruling government for the suppression of the masses. When queried on whether they would actually contact the police when they detect the possibility of a crime, most of the respondents said NO citing their personal identity and lack of trust in police as the major reasons for not divulging the information.

Public Perception of the Nigerian Police Force

In Nigeria, the police force is facing many challenges ranging from negative public image engineered by its bribery and corruption, insincerity, unlawful killings of defenseless citizens, etc (Aremu, 2009; Effiong, 2004). The current bad public image of the Nigerian police as rightly observed by Akintunde (2009) could be attributed to the engagement of some of the officers and men of the force in extra-judicial killings of innocent and defenseless citizens, corrupt practices and even connivance with criminals against citizens they are expected to protect. This state of affair could further be attributed to the colonial origin of the force which

made it para-military in nature and repressive in character. Imobighe (2005) observed that the Nigerian Police has over the years become an oppressive instrument used by the state to promote certain selfish interests. And for this reason the general public lost faith in the force and would even hide any vital information from the security agents since they can't be trusted.

Theoretical Framework

To properly situate this work, two theories will form its basic frame work, and these theories are: partnership theory of crime prevention and technological determinism theory.

Partnership Theory of Crime Prevention

Partnership theory of crime prevention was propounded by Dennis Rosenbaum in 1972. Rosenbaum noted that the criminal justice system and the state security agents cannot solve the complex problems of crime and disorder in a society alone (Effiong, 2004). He observed that resources from outside the system are desperately needed, as well as new ways of thinking about diverse problems from the inside. To achieve this, he advocates for the creation of 'partnerships' – a group of organizations, networks and systems that can bring distinctive but complementary skills and resources to the table and can produce timely coordinated and targeted responses to public fears and skepticisms (Rosenbaum, 2003). He advocates for effective police public collaboration for crime reporting and prevention.

Technological determinism theory

This theory was formulated by Marshall McLuhan in 1964. The theory states that technology, especially the media, decisively shape the way individuals think, feel and act and how societies organize themselves and operate. The theory holds that the media are the extension of human body. Hence, the wheel is the extension of human foot; car trafficator, the extension of human brain, telephone, the extension of human voice and ear; radio set, the extension of human voice and ear, etc.

Technology determinism theory tries to show the relationships among the technology in vogue, the media and the social change in that society. The idea is that technology development and innovations brings about an inevitable social change. The theory holds that we humans shape out tools to help us in the society and the tools in turn shape us.

This theory is very important in this work considering the fact that the modern means of tracing and exposing crimes in Nigeria and in other part of the world are highly embedded on new technological innovations and inventions like mobile telephones, computer system and network, CCTV camera, etc.

Methodology

To generate relevant data for this study, survey method was adopted. This method involves the use of questionnaire or in depth interview or both. This work employed questionnaire. The population of this study constitutes all the people in Enugu State. According to the 2006 National Population Census Statistics, there are 3,267,837 (three million, two hundred and sixty seven thousand, eight hundred and seven) people in Enugu State. The basic sample size for this study is 385. This was gotten using the Australian Sample size calculator of the National Statistical Service (NSS). This was done using a confidence level of 95%, precision level of 0.05 and an estimated variance proportion of 5%. However, in other to make up for the anticipated unreturned questionnaires, NSS recommended a calculation for oversampling. Meanwhile, after the calculation using the formula ($N_2 = \text{Minimum sample size} \div \text{the anticipated response rate}$); the new sample size became 405. This work employed cluster sampling technique in distributing the questionnaire in Enugu. The researchers stratified Enugu State into three stages, which include: the senatorial zones, local governments, towns and communities where copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the members of the public. The three communities randomly chosen from the three local governments areas under the three senatorial districts in the state include the following: Ede-Oballa in Nsukka L.G.A; Amokwe in Udi L.G.A; and Nike in Enugu East L.G.A. of Enugu State. To ensure the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire and interview questions were carefully crafted to generate the appropriate answers. A pre-test and post test was conducted in order to ensure the reliability. The test shows a high level of reliability. The work employed quantitative method of data presentation in its data presentation and analyses.

Discussion of Findings

With respect to research question one; which sought to uncover *the extent to which the Enugu media audience are aware of the frequently advertised security numbers in the state for crime reporting*, the data in table 3

show that there is high level of awareness of these security numbers as 272 respondents representing 71% of the total respondents affirmed their awareness of the numbers while the rest 111 constituting 29% said they are unaware of the numbers. Most of the respondents who claim to be unaware of these numbers constitute mostly the rural dwellers who often depended on the services of their community vigilante groups. However, the data further show that the high level of awareness among the public on the existence of these security numbers does not translate into high level of their possession of the numbers in their phone contacts. Only 82 respondents representing (21.4%) have these numbers saved in their phones, others don't, even though they are aware of them. Also, majority of the respondents who have these numbers saved on their phone constitute mostly high income earners, with higher social status and people of older age. This agrees with the research findings of the International Association of Chief of Police (IACP) in US cited in my literature review.

Furthermore, in answering **Research Question Two** which set out to ascertain the *channels through which the media audience obtained these security numbers?* The findings show that more than half of those who are aware of these security numbers (117 respondents) became aware of the numbers through Radio. This is followed by close friend, television, internet, etc.

In answering research question three on *the extent of the public usage of these security numbers for exposing crimes in the state*, the findings in table 4 shows that 331 representing 86.4% of the total respondents affirmed that they have never reported any crime to the security agents even when majority of them know about these numbers. However, most of these respondents who have never reported any crime to the police constitute: younger people, low income earners, and mainly less educated and rural dwellers who affirmed that they did rather report crimes to their Vigilante Groups rather than to the police. However, 52 representing (13.6%) of the total respondents confirmed that they had once used these numbers to expose crimes to the police. Most of the respondents in this category constitute older respondent especially those with higher academic, economic and social status. The result also show that 52% of those who report these crimes to the police do it occasionally; 26% said regularly; while 22% said very rarely. This finding concurs with that of IACP in America which show that older people and those of higher social status are more likely to report crimes more than the younger and low income people in the society.

With respect to research question four which sought to know the *public attitude to crime reporting*, the data in figure 2 reveals that 182 respondents representing 47.6% of the total respondents see crime reporting as a good way of arresting crime situation in any society even though majority of those in this category have never engaged in the practice. Also, many of the respondents 125 (32.6%) are indifferent about the issue while 76 respondents representing 19.8% have a negative view about the practice. The findings further show that most of the respondent 386 amounting to 96% of the whole respondents will report any crime that has the tendency of affecting them or their relative while 82.5% said they will not report it if it does not have the tendency of affecting them or their relatives.

Finally, in answering research question five which sought to know the *factors that determine the public attitude to crime reporting*, the respondents identified most of the factors to include the following: fear of retaliation 209 (32.5%); lack of faith in the Nigerian police force 184 (28.6%); concern about one's identity 184 (28.6%). Other factors include: another person should report it, not me 35 (5%); it is none of my business 22 respondents (3.4%); closely related to the perpetrators of the crime 14 respondents. This finding agrees with the findings of Nwankwo and Okolie which highlighted: fear of retaliation, concern about one's identity, public image of the police force as the key factors that influence people's attitude to crime reporting in Nigeria. The finding also throws weight to the findings of IACP in America. Finally, this work reveals that those who had previous encounter with the police force and who think that they were treated unfairly by the security force constitute most of the respondents that said they will never report any crime tendency to the police even when it may affect them.

Summary and Conclusion

This work set out to uncover the media audience awareness, attitude, and use of the frequently advertised security numbers in exposing and fighting crimes in Enugu state. The findings show that majority of the Enugu public are aware of these security numbers but most of them don't have these numbers saved in their personal phones and therefore can't report crime if it happens around them. Majority of the few people that have these security numbers saved in their mobile phones and who have been using the numbers to expose crime constitute those who are of higher academic, social and economic status. Most of the respondents who affirmed their knowledge of the security numbers got it mostly through radio, close friends, television, police office, and the internet. Radio ranks highest as their source of the information.

The findings show a low level of usage of these security numbers in exposing crimes in Enugu state. Over 78% of those who use these numbers to contact the police are mostly the elderly and people of higher economic

status. Rural dwellers, low income earners, people with lower academic qualifications, and younger respondents constitute majority of those who have never reported crime to the police; they prefer the services of their community vigilante groups. The findings further show that over 90% of the total respondents view crime reporting as a welcome initiative by the security force even though majority of these respondents think that other people should do the reporting and not them. Finally, the four key factors that determine the audience attitude to crime reporting in Enugu state include: fear of retaliation, lack of trust in the police force, concern about an individual's identity, and the tendency of the crime affecting the individual or his relative.

Recommendations

After an in depth investigation of this kind, we deemed it fit to offer the following recommendations to the security agents in their media campaign efforts for public synergy; the media outfits; government; further researchers, and the general public.

1. The security personnel should strive and improve their public image as this work reveals that good image is the key to public confidence in the force and which will encourage effective security/public synergy in the fight against crime in any society. The agency should also collaborate with community vigilante groups for intelligence gathering. Also, the force should also make use of billboards in displaying these security numbers in strategic public places like community centres, market places, churches, etc.
2. The mass media as key molders of public opinion should continue to feed the general public with the information on the important need to expose crimes to the police. Also, the speed and duration at which these security numbers are called and displayed on radio and television respectively should be reduced so that individuals can grasp the message.
3. The general public should move from the stage of awareness about these security numbers into saving these numbers into their mobile phone and using them to expose crimes in their locality.
4. Further researchers will find this work very useful and should gear towards a wider scope of studying the whole south east or Nigeria in general.

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