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INFORMATION USE AND QUALITY SERVICE OF THE NIGERIAN POLICE

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Abstract

Information use of police force occurs when information acquired by the police to satisfy an information need based on task assigned to them is actually put to use. Information is therefore useful and valuable if after receiving it, it changes things, decisions, behaviour or one's character and solves the problem for which the information is sought.

Survey research design was adopted for the study. The study population comprised 2,305 police officers in Alimosho Local Government Police Division. Stratified random sampling method was used to select 227 police officers. Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. Data collected was analyzed using frequency distribution, mean, standard deviation; and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used for the test of hypotheses.

The study established that the police officers use information for three major situations; victims and suspects, unusual circumstances and actualities and quotes (mean=3.72) for all. The result of the quality of service showed that the police ensured that clients' voices count in all cases (mean=2.98). There was positive significant relationship between the information use and quality service of Nigeria police ($r = .117, p > .05$).

A large proportion of use of relevant and adequate information has helped the police to solve problems needed on security and protection of individual citizens and also improve their services. This has helped in the delivery of quality service to the citizens.

The study therefore recommended that the Government should create a policy that will enable free flow of information between the citizens and the police force, and make available access to internet facilities in their various stations for relevant information needed for their effective use on tasks as this will lead to achieving quality of their services to the citizen, and increase the achievement of their goals and objectives.

Keywords: Information Use, Service Quality Police Service, Nigerian Police

Introduction

The quality of service rendered by the police has been and continues to draw attention from the internal and external environment. The Police are expected to perform the following responsibilities or duties: prevention of crime, protection of lives and properties, enforcing law, maintenance of peace and public order, and providing a wide range of services to the citizens.

According to Yecho (2004), the Nigeria Police is statutorily required to fight crime through detection, investigation, apprehension and prosecution of offenders in law court and the protection of lives and property through proactive policing to ensure the citizens are comfortable at all times. However, there are various factors that affect quality service of the Nigeria police, they include remuneration of its workforce, training and availability of resources, the use of information and communication technology (ICT), promotion procedures, culture of the system, and lack of access to timely information among other factors (Ngugi, Ngugi, Were & Titany, 2012).

Quality service may be achieved by the police force by understanding and improving operational processes; identifying problems quickly and systematically; establishing valid and reliable service performance measures and measuring client satisfaction and other performance outcomes. These cannot be achieved without access to reliable and timely information.

Quality service in the Nigeria police involves a comparison of expectations with performance. Quality service is perceived as a set of activities performed by an organization that aims at creating value, which includes specific services or economic activities, acts or performance to customers/clientele as well as other organizational activities that are part of the value creation process. These include leadership and management styles, structure of operations, customer relationship initiatives, etc. and not services as market offerings only (Edvardsson, 2005).

In 2009, the Nigerian government appointed a taskforce as an important step towards drawing a road map for police reforms. The police authority is committed to police quality service whose

members are to be motivated, people friendly, open, relaxed and honest with one another and knows their role and mandate and are proud of their job; appreciated by the public etc. (Ransley Report, 2009). Because police officers are responsible for public safety, and therefore need information to perform their job effectively, research examining their information use and quality service is valuable and necessary.

Information use varies with age, occupation, expertise, environment, demand, frequency, and task level. Moreover, because the strength of these factors varies, different roles require differing amounts of information to complete the involved tasks of the police officers. The information use of the Nigerian police officers are presumably based on needs of their criminal investigations because collecting evidence of criminal activities and making use of such information can fulfill the requirements of an investigation and the quality of service they provide. Hence, accessibility of information sources has been identified as one of the prerequisite for the Police to arrive at the best result, because when they have access to information their cases can be easily solved and this will make the clients satisfied.

Information accessibility implies the ease with which the required information is reachable at the right place, to the right users. Thus, in the context of this study this refers to the ease with which police acquire the right information from available sources to meet their various information needs.

Aguolu and Aguolu (2002), however noted that resources may be available in the library and even identified bibliographically as relevant to one's subject of interest, but the user may not be able to lay hands on them. One may identify citations in indexes, but may not have access to the sources containing the relevant articles. The more accessible information sources are, the more likely they are to be used.

Information use involves incorporating information into individual's existing knowledge base (Spink & Cole, 2005). In information use, the usefulness of information source is assessed in terms of the information that is deemed valuable and is absorbed, in order to solve a problem or make sense of a situation (Savolainen, 2008).

Information use occurs when information acquired by an individual to satisfy an information need is actually put to use. Information is therefore useful and valuable if after receiving it, it changes things, decisions, behaviour or one's character. Police force could use information to satisfy professional needs such as needs relating to crime, suspects, and substantial evidence on cases being assigned to them, general operation and administrative duties.

Since the police profession is a time-critical and knowledge-intensive profession, understanding the information use of police officers is of vital importance to their quality of service given to the citizens. Police officers who work in police stations need to deal with a continuous information flow. The use of relevant information is vital and necessary to keep up with the requirements of their job in every aspect to satisfy their clientele and offer them good services at all times to make the citizens satisfied with their services, i.e. offering reliable, responsive attitude, giving assurance to clients, caring and paying attention to their complains, and ensuring good physical appearance to the populace. Because the primary functions of the police to the citizens are detection and prevention of crime as well as preservation of law and order, the police therefore have constitutional powers of ensuring the prevalence of law and order and the preservation of public peace. However, recent studies indicate that police officers experience difficulty reaching information sources and disseminating information pertinent to their job (Demircioglu, 2010; Kilic, 2010).

The result of insufficient information may cause the police to be less effective at preventing crime and providing justice and therefore make services rendered to the citizens not of quality. This study therefore investigates information use and quality service of the Nigeria Police in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

Literature has established various benefits acquired through the use of relevant information to provide quality service to the citizens. Decades after the creation of the police force, the goal of realising peace has not been fully achieved due to continuous growth in crime. This could be due to lack of adequate information, knowledge of what information is needed, how it can be used to solve various cases/problems. Therefore there is need for relevant and adequate information in

areas such as security and preservation of lives and property so as to carry out their functions of quality service that the citizens expect of them.

However, the study queries how the police offer satisfied services to the people and, it also focuses on how the police in Nigeria can improve their responsiveness to citizens and their needs. This study therefore, investigates the information use and quality service (responsiveness, competence, consultative service, reliability, accessibility, interpersonal skills, service offering, credibility, geographical presence, and tangibles.) of the Nigerian police in Lagos State.

Objectives of the study

The study tries to address the following objectives which seek to:

1. Find out the purpose of information use by the police officers in Lagos State, Nigeria;
2. Assess the level of quality service of the police to the citizens; and
3. Establish the relationship between information use and quality service of police officers.

Brief Literature Review

Information Use of the Nigeria Police

Spink & Cole (2005), explained that Information use involves incorporating information into individual's existing knowledge base. In information use, the usefulness of information source is assessed in terms of the information that is deemed valuable and is absorbed, in order to solve a problem or make sense of a situation (Savolainen, 2008).

Information use of police force occurs when information acquired by the police to satisfy an information need based on task assigned to them is actually put to use. Information is therefore useful and valuable if after receiving it, it changes things, decisions, behaviour or one's character and solves the problem for which the information is sought. Police force could use information to satisfy professional needs such as needs relating to crime, suspects, and substantial evidence on

cases being assigned to them, general operation and administrative duties. The use of information is quite vital to police force in order to provide quality service to the citizens and community it is provided to serve.

Quality Service and the Police

Quality service is an assessment of how well a service is delivered to the citizens to conform to their expectations. Business operators often assess the service quality rendered to the customers in order to improve their service, to quickly identify the problems, and to know if the clients are satisfied. With this, quality service is an important component in any service related activity. Research takes quality and productivity as separate concepts (Heskett, Jones, Loveman, Sasser, & Schlesinger, 1994).

Gronroos (2000) believes that quality and productivity cannot be dealt with separately especially when looking at service point. Therefore, there seems to be a growing need for a thorough analysis of the quality component of the service concept.

The labour intensiveness of service operations in all organisation, however, represents a proportionally larger input to productivity as salaries, benefits and social expenses can account for a high operating costs (van Ree, 2002), and the quantitative output factor for service operations can be based on service rendered. In the case of product manufacturing, the qualitative output dimension has usually been operationalized as conformance to specifications or as actual product performance.

However, this notion of output quality has been regarded as inadequate in the case of services. The qualitative output dimension of service operations can only be based on customer perceptions. The qualitative input factor for both product manufacturing and service operations are again the same, namely the expertise and skills of the people employed (professionalism). Furthermore, it is important to recognise that the way customers perceive a product or service outcome and how the delivery process is organised are different from the providers' point of view because the service providers do have a quality manual to be followed.

Heskett, Jones, Loveman, Sasser, and Schlesinger, (1994, 1997 ; 2003) explain that the model that recognized and conceptualized the quality service evaluations are not made solely based on

the outcome of the services they render, but also involve evaluations of the process of delivery in the value profit chain.

The police commission is to provide quality service, and must also ensure it has well trained personnel with access to the most advanced technique to assist in the effort to combat crime. Therefore the quality of police service is measured by: making their contacts easy in other to be responsive to the individual and the community, provide professional service, deal with enquiry expressly, keeping clients informed on cases that are brought to them, ensure that the citizens voice count by getting feedbacks from the citizens, protect victims of crime by identifying and supporting both adult and children in all circumstances, listening and responding to concerns and complaints by records, investigation, and transparency, freedom of information act according to the data protection Act and freedom of information legislation.

Information use and Quality Service of Police Officers in Nigeria.

The use of information is an observable fact which appears all over the world in the contexts of everyday life and activity to satisfy our needs. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, Valerie & Berry, Leonard (1988) defined service quality as an overall judgment similar to attitude towards the service and generally accepted as an antecedent of overall customer satisfaction. It is the difference between customer expectations of service and perceived service according to Zeithaml, Parasuraman.

Berry and Leonard, (1990). Perceived service quality results from comparisons by customers of expectations with their perceptions of service delivered by the suppliers (Zeithaml et al, 1990). According to Parasuraman et al. (1985), Lewis and Mitchell (1990), when expectations are greater than performance, and quality service is less than satisfactory customer dissatisfaction occurs.

Service quality in all service organisations is thus intrinsically affected by the perspectives of both the service provider and the service receiver. Similarly, Czepiel (1990) explained that research on service quality must always include the perspectives of both the provider and the receiver, i.e. the police and the citizens in this instance. However, most research on the service quality construct has been restricted to one perspective: that of the service receiver (Parasuraman et al, 1988; Guerrier & Deery, 1998).

Few researches have applied dual perspectives and considered interactive features of service quality in service encounters (Tam & Wong, 2001; Chow-Chua & Komaran, 2002; Dedeke, 2003; Svensson, 2004, 2006). Moreover, Beatson et al. (2008) found that perceived employee satisfaction, perceived employee loyalty, and perceived employee commitment had a sizable impact on perceived product quality and on perceived service quality. According to Zeithaml and Bitner (1996), the study explained that contact employees represent the organization and can directly influence customer satisfaction. Hence, the information use of police force should be perceived commitment, responsiveness, competence, consultative selling, reliability, accessibility, interpersonal skills, credibility, geographical presence, tangibles and a good understanding of task or situation that arises from the citizens and ensure quality service delivery to clients.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Eleven (11) police stations and a total number of Two Thousand Three Hundred and Five (2,305) police officers in Lagos State formed the population of the study. Stratified random sampling technique was employed to select 227 officers who participated in study. Structured questionnaire was the instrument employed for data collection. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency count, mean and standard deviation.

Data Analysis, Results, and Discussion of Findings

Objective 1: Find out the purpose of information use by the police force

Table 1: Information use by police officers

Information use of police officers.	Strongly Agree No (%)	Agree No (%)	Strongly Disagree No (%)	Disagree No (%)	Mean	SD
Information on Victims and suspects	146 (72.6)	54 (26.9)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.5)	3.72	.482
Information on Unusual circumstances (appeal for help)	146 (72.6)	54 (26.9)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.5)	3.72	.484
Information on Actuality / quotes	146 (72.6)	54 (26.9)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.5)	3.72	.484

Information for protection of live and property	146 (72.6)	51 (25.4)	2 (1.0)	2 (1.0)	3.70	.541
Information on appeal for crime and arrest	141 (70.1)	59 (29.4)	0 (0.0)	1 (0.5)	3.69	.494

Table 1 revealed that the police officers use information to get facts on victims and suspects, information on unusual circumstances (appeal for help) and information on actuality / quotes while information on appeal for crime, (mean=3.72), protection of live and property had (mean=3.70), and arrest was the least information used by police force with (mean=3.69). Going by the mean values in table 1, it is evident that the police agreed to make use of information on the items listed. This means that the police make use of information on all the listed items in the table.

Objective 2: Assess the level of quality service of the police to citizens.

Table 2: Extent of service provision to the citizens

To what extent do you provide the following services	VGE No (%)	GE No (%)	LE No (%)	VLE No (%)	Mean	SD
Police ensures that clients' voice count in all cases	42 (20.9)	113 (56.2)	0 (0.0)	46(22.9)	2.98	.663
Police listens and responds to clients' concern and complaints	43 (21.4)	119 (59.2)	26 (12.9)	13 (6.5)	2.96	.777
Police deals with enquiries/complains expressly within a short timeslot	38 (18.9)	126 (62.7)	24 (11.9)	13 (6.5)	2.94	.753
Police always makes contact easy and accessible (being present at all times/through mail/telephone, etc.)	15 (7.5)	30 (14.9)	115 (57.2)	41(20.4)	2.91	.804
Police exhibits professionalism by not accepting any form of financial charge when complaint is being made	38 (18.9)	119 (59.2)	27 (13.4)	17 (8.5)	2.89	.807
Police quickly response to rescue operations (fire, accidents, robbery, hijacks, etc.)	39 (19.4)	116 (57.7)	28 (13.9)	18 (9.0)	2.88	.824
Freedom of information (Respond to any request for personal and any other	38 (18.9)	118 (58.7)	25 (12.4)	20(10.0)	2.87	.835

information within legal time frame)						
Police does ensure that Victims of crime are adequately protected and taken care of	38 (18.9)	114 (56.7)	29 (14.4)	20(10.0)	2.85	.843
Police keeps their clients informed on the progress of the cases	38 (18.9)	116 (57.7)	25 (12.4)	22(10.9)	2.85	.855

Police officers were asked to state the extent of their quality service to the citizens with four options very great extent, great extent, little extent and very little extent. Table 2 revealed that majority of the respondents (mean=2.98) agreed that the police ensures that clients voice counts in all cases to a greater extent. Over half (mean=2.96) of the respondent agreed that to great extent police deals with enquiries/complaints expressly within a short timeslot as well as listens and responds to clients concern and complaints (mean=2.94), which are the three highest mean value. While the lowest mean value are of the respondents who agreed to the statement that to a little extent police always keep their clients informed and ensures that victims of crimes are adequately protected and taken care of (mean=2.85). The values of the standard deviation revealed that there was a fair concentration of the distribution around the means. However, protection of victims had the highest level of variability. In all, the responses of the police officers revolved around little extent and great extent for all the statements.

Objective 3. Establish the relationship between information use and quality service of police officers.

Table 3. Relationship between information use of police force and quality service of the police officers

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	R	P	Remark
Police Service	26.0995	6.48846	201	.117*	.050	. Sig.
Information use	18.5423	2.36632				

** Sig. at 0.05 level

From the Table 3, there was a positive significant relationship between information use of police force and quality service ($r = .117^*$, $N = 201$, $P < .05$). It is noted that information use of Nigeria police and quality service are adequately met at all time. The null hypothesis is rejected.

This therefore shows a positive correlation and significant relationship between the two variables.

Discussion of findings

Police officers in Alimosho Local Government area of Lagos State use information for protection of live and property, for victims and suspects, unusual circumstances, actuality / quotes, appeal for crime and arrest. The outcome of the study agreed with the work of Olayinka (2007) that reported that gaps exist between the security information needs, sources and use. This was also in line with Miranda and Tarapanoff (2008) that states that information need is a state or process started when one perceives that there is a gap between the information and knowledge available to solve a problem and the actual solution of the problem.

The police officers in Alimosho Local Government area of Lagos State to the greater level exhibits professionalism by not accepting any form of financial charge when complain is being made. Police dealt with enquiries/complains expressly within a short timeslot as well as listened and responds to clients concern and complaints.

To the great extent the freedom of information was respected, police respond to any request for personal and any other information within legal time frame. To the great extent police does ensure that victims of crime are adequately protected and taken care of while. To little extent police always makes contact easy and accessible such as being present at all times/through mail/telephone, etc.

The outcome of these findings corroborates with Parasuraman et al. (1988) who argued that service quality is overall judgment similar to attitude towards the service and generally accepted as an antecedent of overall customer satisfaction. Service quality is the ability of the police officers to meet or exceed customer expectations.

Relationship between information use and quality service of police officers

The results of the hypothesis indicated that there was a positive significant relationship between information use and quality service of police officers. It was noted that information use of police

had quality service in the study. This implies that as information use of police officers increases, the quality service will increase.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This study made effort to investigate the information use and quality service of the Nigeria police. Based on the findings, it is seen that a large proportion of use of relevant and adequate information has helped the police to solve problems needed on security and protection of individual citizens. Informants and agents are the major sources of information because this source (Informants and agents) is available almost in all cities and most people also stand to witness cases and are ready to give relevant information to the police and the use of this information will help in the delivery of quality service to the citizens.

The study therefore recommended that the Government should create a policy that will enable free flow of information between the citizens and the police force, and make available access to internet facilities in their various stations. The Government should also ensure that the Police officers are aware of the services meant to be provided to the citizens when complaints are laid before the commencement of the investigations because, based on the findings, some of the police are not aware to what extent the services should be provided.

Also this finding of this study will help the Nigeria Police to know how to satisfy and evaluate the different information sources and the appropriate use of information by the police. This study will also provide a foundation for the Nigeria Government to establish policy for disseminating information to police officers in order to carry out their duties.

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