

# **THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION/INFORMATION MANAGEMENT IN CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIME DETECTION IN NIGERIA**

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## **Abstract**

Information and communication are very fundamental to human beings as *homo sapiens* and then *homo loquens* that is *speaking man*. Hence, effective management of information through proper channels of communication is very basic to human interactive existence especially with regard to exposing and avoiding vagaries of societal misdemeanor. Using the method of critical evaluation and analysis the researchers find out that right information and proper management play great role in dealing positively with crime in our society.

**Keywords:** Information. Communication, management, crime

## **INTRODUCTION**

The world around us is a network of communication. Communication plays a central role in our lives. It is communication that makes human existence, co-existence and cooperation possible.

Communication is central to every human activity and is the backbone of existence of man in any society. Because it is the driving force behind society, communication has been defined as the exchange of information, ideas, experiences and data of all sorts that ensure the normal and organized existence of people in the society.

According to Nwabueze (2014), it is through communication that the society is informed, entertained, educated, socialized, mobilized, motivated, integrated and sensitized.

Communication takes place in various ways: it could be within an entity (intrapersonal communication) between two entities (inter personal), between and among groups (group communication) between two or more entities made possible through Information and Communication Technology (ICTs) mass communication.

Technological developments have enhanced and simplified the communication process in modern society. The advent of ICT's such as computers, digital broadcasting, satellite and cable television, the internet and world wide web have contributely immensely in ensuring the sophistication of the communication process and also bridging the gap between the sender and the receiver. So communication can be defined as every activity involving the transfer, transmission and sharing of ideas, experiences, information and data of all kinds between a

sender and a receiver. It is the sharing of meanings, messages, opinions and facts between two entities.

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNICATION**

It is a process

- It involves a sender or source and receiver
- The sender could be different from the receiver (inter personal) or the sender could be the same as the receiver (intra personal)
- The process could be verbal (spoken communication or non verbal (use of signs, gestures and expressions to communicate)
- A medium or channel is used to convey the message to the receiver.
- The essence of communication is to pass a message across
- There is a feedback
- The process is made meaningful with a common frame of reference.

### **FUNCTIONS OF COMMUNICATION**

Communication fulfills several very important functions:

- A) **Social Function:** Psychologist William Schutz describes three types of social needs, communication fulfills for us:
- 1) Inclusion – the need to feel a sense of belonging to clubs, meetings, job etc.
  - 2) Control – the desire to influence others and have some control over our world.
  - 3) Affection – the desire to care and love others and know that they care and love us.
- (B) **Ego Function** – Communication helps us know who we are. It answers the questions who and how am I in relation to others? Are my smart or stupid attractive or ugly, kind or wicked, active or passive, skillful or inept is decided based on how others react to us.
- (C) **Information Exchange Function** – Communication is the basic tool that enables us to learn in schools, sell ourselves to prospective employers, explain ourselves, etc
- (D) **Changing Attitudes & Behaviour Function** – It is believed that the primary purpose of communication is to influence the behaviour of others. Through the power of communication, we discuss, lecture, teach and learn from one another.

### **CRIME**

Crime is a natural phenomenon and it is as old as the human race. It is defined as an act inconsistent with the accepted norms of any given society. Since crime is a natural phenomenon, it cannot be eradicated but those charged with the responsibility of crime management (crime prevention and detection) are only to reduce crime to a tolerable level.

Crime has been defined in many ways: some scholars define crime as an act or omission which renders the person doing the act or making the omission liable to punishment. Others view it as an illegal act; an act punishable by law. While others believe that crime is an act, default or conduct prejudicial to the community, the commission of which by law renders the person liable to punishment.

### **CHARACTERISTICS OF CRIME**

- (a) Crime is an act inconsistent with the norms acceptable in any society.

- (b) The meaning of crime differs from society to society. For instance what is crime in USA may not be a crime in Nigeria and vice versa.
- (c) Crime affects the community as a whole and is different from civil wrong which affects only the parties involved.
- (d) In Nigeria, crime is a wrong against the state and that is why a victim of a crime is only a prosecution witness.
- (e) Crime is time based. What is crime today might not be crime tomorrow.

## **THEORETICAL POSTULATIONS ON CRIME**

### **1) Theory of Heredity**

This theory associated with Cesare Lombroso an Italian, a social scientist holds the view that criminal behaviour is an inherited trait. This theory is of the opinion that criminals possess special features such as big heads, thick lips, oversize feet, rugged built, etc. Lombroso classified these features as STAVISTIC STIGMATA.

### **2) Relative Deprivation Theory**

This theory is predicated on the feeling of deprivation that develops in comparison with another person. It propounds that crime rate is lower in rural areas where very little economic disparity exist between its members than in urban societies where opulence exists side by side with extreme poverty.

### **3) Merton's Theory of Anomic**

Developed by Robert Merton in 1859, this theory holds that environmental and other pressures cause high crime rate. He postulated that societies that place high premium on material success creates room for deviant behaviour.

### **4) The Theory of Differential Association**

Propounded by Edwin Sutherland, the theory states that crime and deviant behaviour can be understood, if emphasis is placed on attitudes acquired through differential association. Implying that the influence of group interaction in deviant behaviour and criminal behaviour depends on attitude, learning, opportunities and group influence.

### **5) The Theory of Social Class & Crime**

Cohen Albert believe that lower class are characterized by malicious tendencies. Insisting that deviants of this type are very angry with the society in general – the police, school system, employers, government, etc and show – their resentment and frustration by engaging on deviant activities such as vandalism, robbery, rape, arson etc. They see themselves as oppressed.

### **6) The Labelling Theory**

This theory states that if a person is labeled as a deviant, there is the tendency for him to live up to that label. For example, if an undergraduate is labeled a “tough guy”, he tries to live up to that label and may end up as a bully or form a society of bullies.

## **CLASSIFICATION OF CRIMES**

Crimes are classified into ways, especially based on the seriousness of the offence. These classes are:

- a) Crime against persons – assault, murder, kidnapping, sexual attacks, etc.
- b) Crime against property – arson, burglary, automobile theft, willful damage, embezzlement, forgery, fraud, vandalism, etc.

- c) Crimes against private and public morality – disorderly conduct, gambling, prostitution, public drunkenness, vagrancy, having no permanent residence, no visible means of subsistence etc.
- d) Organized crime – gangsterism, racketeering, advanced fee fraud, etc.
- e) White collar crimes – stock market swindlers, cheating in payment of taxes
- f) Crime against the state etc.

### **CRIME DETECTION AND PREVENTION**

From the perspective of society, the best and most useful activity law enforcement agencies can carry out is crime prevention. If crimes are successfully prevented before they occur, the societal costs and suffering associated with the effects of crime are completely avoided.

Crime prevention and detection are closely interwoven but the two concepts are not the same. It is true that you can prevent the commission of crime, if you detect its anticipatory steps early enough before commission of the crime.

However, crime prevention as used under the police Act refers to situation where crimes are discovered and thus prevented before commission. According to Australian Institute of Criminology, crime prevention refers to the range of strategies that are implemented by individuals, communities, businesses, nongovernmental organizations and all levels of government to target the various social and environmental factors that increase the risk of crime, disorder and victimization.

On the other hand, crime detection refers to the investigatory power of the law enforcement agents to discover the commission of crime at any point in time and to be able to identify the *personae criminis* involved in the commission of crime. Crime detection involves collecting and assembling various information that are related to the crime in question. For example, evidence from eye-witness, victims testimony, interviewed person, observation etc. which highly correlate to ensure reliability or accuracy of evidence. According to Nweke (2006), it should however be noted that both concepts operate together for good as envisaged in section 4 of the police Act. This conclusion is unavoidable because, you can only, prevent a crime if you know of its existence and anticipate it; and you know of the existence of a crime without being a party to it, if you detect it. Thus prevention of a crime can and is usually preceded by detection of acts to commit a crime.

It will equally be reasonable at this juncture to note the general duties of the law enforcement agencies as listed in section 4 of the police Act.

- 1) The prevention and detection of crime
- 2) The apprehension of offenders
- 3) The preservation of law and order
- 4) The protection of property
- 5) The due enforcement of all laws and regulations with which they are directly charged.

In crime prevention which is hazardous and tedious, the law enforcement officer is expected to be intelligent, brave and assiduous to duty. While his organization must provide the wherewithal with which the officer must accomplish the task, it is suggested that criminals must be assessed in terms of their criminal attributes which include: (SKRAM)

- 1) Skills
- 2) Knowledge
- 3) Resources
- 4) Access

5) **Motives**

Crime prevention activities are one of the most controversial parts of the police work because of the interdependence of all institutions involved. But in spite of the difficulty in rigorously determining what prevents crime, several police activities are partially justified by the assumption that they contribute to crime prevention through the three functions of surveillance, crime analysis and offender tracking.

**SURVEILLANCE**

Surveillance is one activity justified by its potential effect on crime prevention

- 1) Proponents of surveillance claim that it prevents crime by deterrence
- 2) Overt surveillance activities remind potential criminals of police presence and observation.
- 3) However, critics contend that surveillance simply displace crime to unobserved locations, rather than prevent it.
- 4) If an area under surveillance becomes a crime scene, the surveillance can both alert police for an operational response and or provide evidence for subsequent criminal investigation and prosecution.

It must be acknowledged here that due to the many factors involved in contact between law enforcement agents and private citizens, surveillance technology like video cameras in patrol vans, fixed site and mobile video surveillance and night vision/electro-optical surveillance, CCTV, etc that transmit information to police may have significant advantages over eye witness surveillance.

**CRIME ANALYSIS**

Analysis of crime data reveal patterns that are helpful not only in preventing and operationally responding to crime but also in increasing accountability to police leadership and public. However, the standard model of policing generally applies various tactics such as patrol, arrests and investigation, so there is little use for crime analysis beyond determining the level of staffing in particular areas, providing statistics of police performance, e.g emergency response time, number of crime reports, number of cases investigated and solved, number of arrests etc.

When broken window policing is applied vigorously the role of crime analysis is limited but crime analysis plays the most integral role in problem oriented policing and problem solving process – (1) identifying and specifying the problem at hand (2) analyzing data to understand why the problem is occurring (3) helping to develop when and where responses would be best implemented (4) and helping to assess the impact of the response on the problem.

**OFFENDER TRACKING**

Better technology for offender tracking has the potential to increase public safety by making information on offenders easier to share and utilize. However, the use of the technology by law enforcement agencies must be balanced against individual rights and the resulting public perception of the activity.

**CRIME POLICING MECHANISMS**

In carrying out the crime prevention task, the police could avail itself of any or all of the following mechanisms

- A) **Beat Patrol:**

A beat is the area which a particular officer or group of officers are detailed to patrol during a single tour of duty. Beats are dependent on the density of population, known crime rates and the economic or administrative importance. The beat system offers a close circuit monitoring of the area covered by the officer and provides a good, reliable and first hand information and data on the criminal activities in the area.

A good beat officer is more likely to know dark spots, criminals, potential criminals and new entrants.

Beat patrol can only be efficient where there is prompt, efficient and effective communication network, good roads, reliable communication and efficient energy back-up. This system however is struggling here because of the Nigerian factor, where distrust, ethnic bias, nepotism and corruption thrive. A corollary of the beat system was the moribund policy of posting DPO to their locality.

**(B) Anti Vice Squads:**

This is a surveillance squad in disguise carrying out intelligent works in special zones like motor parks where theft and affray are rampant. Their basic work is to gather information, provide proactive measures to prevent crime and apprehend criminals at the point of commission of the crime. However, this system is not only expensive but impacts negatively on the public image posture of the police. It implies a fire brigade approach to crime prevention and management and can easily be abused by overzealous police officers.

**(C) Stop, Detain and Search**

Section 25 of the Police Act, detailed that a police officer on beat is expected to be vigilant and on suspicion, should stop, detain and search any person whom he reasonably suspects of having in his possession, or conveying anything he has stolen, unlawfully obtained... in his possession.

This mechanism when handled assiduously yields tremendous results for detecting and preventing crimes.

**(D) Specie Escorts**

Ordinarily, this service is rendered free of charge to governmental and quasi-governmental agencies but on payment of fees to private organizations and individuals. This mechanism have been abused by police officers as illegal, contraband and even known criminals are now having police escorts.

**(E) Static Guards**

Through this crime prevention model, police guards are stationed at public institutions and places to monitor the movement of customers and clients so as to detect and prevent crimes. However, this prevention model has been over shadowed by close circuit monitors but, do not forget that NNPC installations are still guarded by armed guards.

**(F) National (Internal) Security**

The law enforcement agencies provide surveillance network on the activities of persons considered security risks in order to prevent sabotage and sustain the sovereignty of the nation.

**POLICE STRATEGIES IN PREVENTING AND DETECTING CRIMES**

- 1) **Standard Model of Policing:** The central element of standard model of policing involves enforcing the law in a broad and reactive way, primarily using police resources. This model includes:

- a) Increased number of police officers to increase the ability to detect crime and arrest offenders
- b) Unfocused, random motorized patrol – to create a perception of police presence so as to deter crime in public places.
- c) Rapid response to calls for service – to increase the likelihood of catching offenders
- d) Follow-up investigations by detectives – to increase the solving ability of the crimes
- e) General reactive arrest policies (to deter people from committing crimes and punish offenders).

## **2) Community Policing**

Community policing is a strategy of policing that focuses on building ties and working closely with members of the communities. It is the police working in a proactive partnership with members of the community to identify and solve problems. Community policing is more or less like a philosophy. One of its programs is neighbourhood watch or block watch. Its strategies include:

- (a) Increasing surveillance by residents and community members of their own neighbourhood.
- (b) Increasing the flow of information from the community to the police through community meetings
- (c) Officers walking the “beat” and talking to residents
- (d) And providing crime information to the public through the media, crime maps, letters, etc.

The philosophy that police should partner communities to handle crime problems is a welcome development.

## **Features of Community Policing**

- 1) Encouraging the community to help prevent crime by providing advice, giving talks at schools etc, encouraging neighbourhood watch groups and a variety of other techniques.
- 2) Increased use of foot or cycle patrols.
- 3) Increased officer accountability to the communities they are supposed to serve.
- 4) Creating teams of officers to carryout community policing in designated neighbourhood.
- 5) Partnership with other organizations such as government agencies community members, nonprofit service providers, private businesses and the media.
- 6) Decentralization of police authority, allowing more discretion amongst lower ranking officers and more initiative expected from them.

## **3) Broken Window Policing or Zero Tolerance**

Policing focuses on the strict enforcement of laws against disorderly behaviour and minor offenses. The intent is to prevent more serious crimes from taking place.

## **4) Hot Spots Policing**

This is a strategy in which police systematically identify areas within a city that have disproportionate amount of crimes and employ responses to those specific areas.

## **5) Compstat Policing**

Described as the single most important organizational innovation in policing in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, CompSTAT policing is important for two reasons:

- a) It takes the analysis of up-to-date computerized crime, arrest and data to produce statistics and maps.
- b) It uses this information in regularized, interactive crime prevention implementation.

### **PROBLEM ORIENTED POLICING (POP)**

POP is of the idea that police should take a proactive role in identifying understanding and responding to problems in the communities.

John Eck and William Spelman gave the approach a specific method when they developed the SARA model: -

Scanning and defining specific problems,

Analyzing data to understand what created the problem.

Responding to the problem using police and non police methods and

Assessing whether the response has worked

### **COMMUNITY ROLE IN CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIME DETECTION**

It must be observed that without the cooperation and support of the public, the efforts of the police in curbing crime will yield no dividend. The citizens fail to understand that they are equally responsible for law enforcement and they have powers and obligations under the law to accomplish this task. For instance, an eye witness to a crime would rather decide to look the other way other than perform what one might regard as his civic, if not his legal duty to come forward to give police the necessary information in his possession.

Individuals and communities owe the singular responsibility to themselves and to the state to be conscious of their preservative rights. This right exemplified when you anticipate and prevent yourself from being harmed by action of others. This is their civil and legal duty of crime prevention.

It must be noted also that crime prevention is not achieved through retaliatory actions or pre-emptive violence but by prompt reporting to law enforcement agents.

Beyond the self preservative duty of members of the community to prevent the commission of crime by reporting to the police, the law imposes a duty on members of the community to assist the police in their crime prevention function.

Section 34 (B) of the criminal procedure Act states:

Every person is bound to assist... a police officer reasonably demanding his aid in the preventive or suppression of a breach of peace.

Finally members of the community are expected to assist a police officer in the course of his duty. The law provides that if any person is called upon to aid and assist a police officer, who is, while in the execution of his duty, assaulted or resisted, or in danger of being assaulted or resisted, and such a person refuses or neglects to aid and assist accordingly, he shall be guilty of an offence..."

### **INTELLIGENCE GATHERING**

According to Nweke (2006), intelligence gathering in crime prevention and detection means the collecting, collating, assembling, processing, evaluating and disseminating information in respect of a crime committed or about to be committed with a view to detecting it or preventing its commission. It is a secret collection of information, after a sustained surveillance concerning the plans and activities of criminals and subversive elements in the society.



Intelligence gathering is very important in crime prevention and detection world-over. It is in recognition of this special function that agencies such as CIA, FIB, KGB were established. In Nigeria, we have State Security Services (SSS), National Intelligence Agency (NIA), Criminal Intelligence Bureau (CIB), Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

#### **SOURCES OF INTELLIGENCE (INFORMATION)**

- a) A detailed study of newspapers and broadcast could indicate criminal trends and intentions. Officers and men are therefore reminded of the importance of the media.
- b) **Informant:** Informants are very important to security agencies whether they are temporary informant, permanent informant or informant within the target.
- c) **Surveillance:** Many of the intelligence gatherings that assist in the prevention and detection of crime are acquired through surveillance. Information received in continuous watching of persons, vehicles, places or objects are developed into intelligent reports which serves as a guide.
- d) **Observation and Description Techniques:** Observation is the ability to pick up the reflection of the senses (what is seen, heard, smelt, touched or tested) while description is the ability to explain in details from the memory, what has been observed. Both help in crime detection and prevention.
- e) **Investigation:** This is the systematic procedure which is taken to collect or obtain information of events that happened or about to happen in order to ascertain the truth. The steps include:
  - a) Search for information
  - b) Use of available information to get evidence
  - c) Interpretation of available information
  - d) Use of a set methods to achieve a desired objective
  - e) Conclusion reached after evaluating the information.

#### **INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND CRIME DETECTION**

The mosaic theory of information states that pieces of information lying here and then, when properly harnessed can be utilized to achieve a reality. Granted the information is power, information gathering is quite different from information management.

Information management is therefore the planning, coordination and utilization of information aimed at achieving a desired result.

The principle guiding the management of information include –

- a) Speed – Speed is essential to ensure that the information is received in time for planning or decision making.
- b) Accuracy of information is equally important as facts must be carefully assessed.
- c) Brevity – Information must be kept as brief as possible to avoid confusion.
- d) Interpretation – All facts must be correctly evaluated and their implication and significance interpreted.
- e) A clear distinction must be made between facts and deductions
- f) Reports and information are understood quickly, if they are presented in logical sequence and under standard headings.
- g) In crime prevention and detection information is classified (security)
- h) Information must be assessed thoroughly to ascertain its authenticity before acting on it.
- i) The social status and the personality of the person giving the information should be considered and the motive for giving the information analyzed.

- j) The credibility of the persons and past information (if any) should also be considered.

### **CONCLUSION**

Information is the life blood of crime prevention and detection. Information management capabilities play a vital role in supporting all crime prevention and crime detecting processes and enabling the delivery of policing services.

Effective information management enables “crime bursters” to unlock the criminal plans and improve their efficiency and effectiveness by

- (a) Reducing the cost in time and resources of data collection and entry
- (b) Providing timely access to high quality information held by different organizations
- (c) Enabling police forces to share high quality information securely and effectively with partners.
- (d) Feeding business and performance analytics that deliver insight to enable improved decision making and resources allocation.
- (e) Supporting data aggregation and intelligence analysis that turns information into actionable intelligence, thereby enabling the identification of links, between people, objects, locations and events and a single view of an individual, group or network.

All crime preventing and detecting activities should be underpinned by robust information management.

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