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# **Police Officers Information Needs and Seeking Behaviour in the Three Geopolitical Zones of Imo State, Nigeria**

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## **Abstract**

The police profession largely utilizes timely and comprehensive information in work performance without which its duty of safeguarding human lives and property is highly jeopardized. To this end, vital information needs to be sought and obtained for effective and efficient policing in Nigeria. This study assessed the kinds of information needed by police officers in the performance of their duties, the means used to obtain such information and barriers encountered while seeking information. Using the descriptive statistics of close-ended questionnaire structure, analyzed with one sample proportion right-tailed test for quantitative data and interview for qualitative data, the study found that all options specified as kinds of information needed by officers such as information on crises and crime areas within the state, information on the location of criminals and information on the arrest of culprits are essential and needed except information on games and social life. On the barriers encountered while seeking for information, calculated using frequencies and percentages and obtained from the interview responses, the study found that uncooperative members of the public and bad road condition were major barriers. The study made recommendations based on barriers affecting information seeking among police officers in Imo State.

**Keywords:** Police officers, information needs, seeking behaviour, barriers.

## **1.0 Introduction**

The police profession is a time-critical and knowledge-intensive profession that needs a steady flow of information. The *raison d'être* of the police profession is the fundamental duty to serve mankind, safeguard lives and property, protect the innocent against deception, the weak against oppression or intimidation and the peaceful against violence/ disorder and to respect constitutional rights of all the men to liberty, equity and justice (Qadri & Siddique, 2007). Policing in the modern era is complex, costly, time-consuming and pluralistic. Police do not merely enforce the law or maintain the peace within the communities they serve, there is an expectation that they will reduce crime and disorder, reduce the fear of crime, solve community issues, and encourage cooperation within the communities (Abrahamson & Goodman-

Delahunty, 2014). Other major functions of the police in Nigeria are to preserve public peace, combat and prevent crime, prosecute offenders, traffic duties and other duties that may be assigned to them by the government (Karimu, 2015). Adding to this complexity is the fact that organized crime, technological crime and terrorism know no boundaries, and as such, constitute both global and local concerns (Murphy, 2007; Sansfaçon, 2006). It is within this volatile and ambiguous context that organizations and their agents wrestle with the discontinuous nature of reality and attempt to make sense of and manage the gaps between what was once known, where they are now, and an unpredictable future through the search for and use of information (Abrahamson & Goodman-Delahunty, 2014). Choo (1996) gave an insight into an organization-focused and pragmatic information use in the submission that an organization uses the information to make sense of change in its environment, to create new knowledge for innovation; and to make decisions about courses of action. This directly applies to knowledge-intensive organizations such as police agencies, because there's a connection between an organization's information management, behaviours, values and beliefs on one hand, and the organization's information use outcomes and performance on the other (Abrahamson & Goodman-Delahunty, 2014; Choo et al., 2008; Marchand et al., 2002).

For goals of the police profession to be achieved, police officers must have all vital and comprehensive information about their territorial landmarks (Guclu & Can, 2015). As a result, vital information in a readily comprehensible form to which meaning has been attributed within the context of its use are needful for effective and efficient policing of any territory (Reitz, 2004). Hence, the vital, comprehensive and right information is indispensable as it facilitates and ensures the optimum performance of police officers while discharging their duty. If there is no steady flow or outright unavailability of information about lives, properties and crimes in any territory, effective policing becomes tedious and almost impossible. The non-steady flow and unavailability of vital information may arise from neglect of police officers to adequately investigate any anomalies noticed in their territorial landmarks of jurisdiction, the inability of persons residing in the society to report a crime, unavailability of data of all persons residing in any delineated territory, fear of exposure if crimes are reported by police officers to criminals etc. Also, the non-steady flow and unavailability of vital information about lives, properties and crimes in any territory have enormous consequences. Such consequences include police officers abandoning and/or avoiding the lawful discharge of their legitimate duties, the vulnerability of the society to insecurity, crimes, brutality (Onyeozili, 2005) and more crimes being recorded in the territory, for instance, there is a high rate of stealing, assault, armed

robbery, fraud, drug trafficking and rape in Owerri, Imo State (Uzodinma Emmanuel Ezenwa & Nnadozie, 2019).

Similar to natural disasters, crimes are a predictable phenomenon variably affecting all cities across the globe. Schmallegger (2006) in his neighbourhood studies observed that in recent years, crime rates have gone up dramatically in big cities all around the world. Fighting crimes and criminality, therefore, is a herculean task that the police and other law enforcement agencies alone cannot perform and achieve maximum positive results without relying on vital information from the public (Ordu & Nnam, 2017). There have been several efforts in the past aimed to combat crime such as street-lighting and closed-circuit television (CCTV) (Fyfe & Bannister, 1996; Herbert & Davidson, 1994; Short & Ditton, 1998); policies for safe feelings in the public for certain groups especially women (Whitzman & Research, 1992), red alert warnings for the public to avoid certain locations (Uzodinma Emmanuel Ezenwa & Nnadozie, 2019), however, factual and timely information availability especially when accompanied with prompt action will go a long way to reduce the occurrence of crime in the society.

The release of vital information to the police can only be achieved if the police come closer to the public to regain the people's goodwill. But, presently every effort to bring the police closer to the public and for the community to see the police as their friends who require their assistance in policing the society that belongs to them ends up futility (Ordu & Nnam, 2017). In a bid to curb this trend and improve efficiency, community policing where citizens would be incorporated as agents to work for crime reduction and problem-oriented policing where potential problems would be anticipated and solved before occurrence had been advocated (Siegel & Worrall, 2013). Yet neither strategy can succeed without the assistance and cooperation of the public (Ordu & Nnam, 2017). This indicates the need to identify and utilize other credible sources of vital information to enhance the efficiency of operations in the police profession.

The importance of information, utilization of some sources of information and information-seeking behaviour have been explored and reported by some researchers. Majid and Kassim (2000) decades ago, opined that information provides the core for the development of knowledge, the basis for innovations, the resources for an informed citizenry, and as a result, becomes a key commodity for the progress of a society. This indicates that information is not just needed and acquired, but utilized for its role in attaining set goals and objectives. Aina (2004) stressed that every individual, whether literate or not needs information which may be

for recreation and leisure to complete tasks that are considered critical for survival, or for information that could meet day-to-day activities. Information needs are varied and dynamic and not amenable to generalization. Mnkeni-Saurombe (2010) in the same vein, added that “needs are prioritized, and products and services are usually tailored towards satisfying those needs. Bothma and Bergenholtz (2013) remarked that information needs change from time to time and that in as much as there are stable information needs which are needed for normal work performance; there are also unstable information needs that must be determined by libraries, librarians and library & information science (LIS) researchers. In the words of Bopape et al. (2017) noted that a need for information arises when a person experiences a problem or wants to accomplish a particular task and does not know how to tackle it to accomplish the task. Therefore, Ozioko (2007) stressed that information need means an imbalance existing between what a person knows and what the person is supposed to know.

Because of its value, information users express their need and/or desire for it by adopting different means and sources to acquire it. Hence, Onyewuchi and Eke (2015) emphasized that computers in today’s modern age have become a necessary tool for information gathering, storage and dissemination. The Nigerian police must adopt such technological-fused information system to combat crimes and criminality through crime mapping, crime hotspots identification and GIS analysis of crime within a territory.

The way people source and obtain information to meet their needs has been variously termed information seeking (Cogdill, 2003); information behaviour (Case, 2006; Chen & Shaw, 2015); information-seeking behaviour (Baro & Ebhomeya, 2013; Owolabi et al., 2010). However, all terms can be used interchangeably and refer to the way people source for needed information or the way people respond to their known knowledge gap (Chen & Shaw, 2015). As a result, when a need is felt for something more often than not, people take action and employ different strategies or modes of actions known as information-seeking behaviour, all in a bid to satisfy such needed information(Okpala, 2010). Information seeking behaviour includes purposive information seeking, the serendipitous encountering of information and the giving, sharing and use of information (Case, 2006). Information behaviours involve the identification of an information needs, seeking information to satisfy the needs and information-seeking behaviours that are manifested during the process of information seeking and use, and channels used in the process of information seeking (Ferran-Ferrer et al., 2013; Shyu et al., 2013). Information behaviour focuses on peoples’ information needs, on how they seek, manage, give and use information both purposefully and passively in their varied roles

that comprise their everyday lives. Not only does an individual seek information to achieve his goals, different groups, organizations and parastatals equally engage in information seeking to accomplish some defined goals (Fisher & Julien, 2009). Therefore, the need to study the info needs and seeking behaviour of Nigerian police officers whose major objectives and wages hinge on the protection of lives and property.

### **1.1 Problem of the Study**

Information needs arises out of social functions like work roles or sets of activities and responsibilities which an individual in an organizational setting performs in pursuit of earnings and other satisfaction (Okpala, 2010). Police officers are reported to experience difficulty in gathering vital information pertinent to their job (Baker, 2004; Demircioglu, 2010). As lack of adequate information is the most significant cause of constraint and inefficiency witnessed among the Nigeria police force while discharging their duties, it is pertinent to discover the actual information needs and seeking behaviour necessary to enhance optimum work performance in the Nigeria police force.

### **1.2 Research Objectives**

The objectives of this study are:

- i. To ascertain the information needs of police officers in Imo State
- ii. To determine the information-seeking behaviour of police officers in Imo State
- iii. To identify barriers experienced in seeking and obtaining information

### **1.3 Research Questions**

- i. What are the information needs of police officers in Imo State?
- ii. What means do the police officers employ to seek and obtain needed information?
- iii. What barriers do the police officers experience in seeking and obtaining needed information?

### **1.4 Research Hypothesis**

There is no significance in the proportion of responses of officers who are in support (both agree and strongly agree in response opinion) and those not in support (neutral, disagree and strongly disagree).

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Information Needs and Seeking Behaviour of Police Officers**

Information needs of police officers are viewed within the model created by Leckie et al. (1996) on the information seeking of professionals. The model shows that the information needs of professionals are usually borne out of various tasks contained in work roles. Every person, profession, organization and the governmental agency has some type of need that can only be satisfied by seeking information needed by the organization and the behaviours entailed in finding that information (Guclu & Can, 2015). By the charge to perform functions to achieve certain goals, professionals exhibit a certain need for such information as would enable them to carry out tasks. Igbeka and Atinmo (2002) thought that information is an important tool and a valuable resource required for the realization of any objective or goal set by individuals. Therefore, Olayinka (2009) summed that acquiring and utilizing information are critical and important activities and a *sine qua non* to perform and excel in one's responsibilities. By its mandate of rendering safety services over lives and properties, the police as draw from the model need information that would enable them carry out these service-oriented roles.

Information behaviour arises from the complexity and multiplicity of needs to be met in work roles. Vakkari (2001) showed that a more complex task prompts people to consult more information sources. Leckie et al. (1996) argued that information behaviour is either affected by an information source or information cognition. In other words, the availability or otherwise of sources determines how people choose what source to use in obtaining information. Similarly, knowledge of what is contained in each source enables the seeker to choose a course of action regarding such information. Consequently, information behaviour brings about needs satisfaction and completion of tasks (Chen & Shaw, 2015). Police tasks comprise a collection of specific control processes aimed at safeguarding and protecting people's security and maintaining social order. Baker (2004) in the study of the information needs and seeking behaviour of female police officers and female prostitutes discovered that when gathering information on a suspect, the officers focused on the surrounding environment to obtain information quickly, make an immediate judgment and take appropriate actions. The officers in order not to arouse suspicion of their prey adjusted their language to that spoken by the people they are investigating. Baker (2004) and (Demircioglu, 2010) insisted that the model by Leckie et al. (1996) did not capture the task-related information behaviours of police officers as it centred mainly on professionals in health and engineering. Their study revealed that a more specific model for the police professional's information need is required.

In Chen and Shaw (2015), findings show that relevant information is obtained through informants, interview notes and records of investigation case. This they then use to carry out internet searches to establish facts and obtain relevant public information and applying for

access to personal information such as personal records, census data and bank accounts. Surveillance was also found to be useful in obtaining information through observation, monitoring and transcribing conversations. Chen and Shaw (2015) revealed that despite being time-consuming, observing, monitoring and recording conversations are indispensable sources in criminal investigations.

## **2.2 Barriers to Effective Information Seeking**

Studies in information behaviour and information seeking help in identifying information needs, understanding of factors that influence the use of information and challenges that users face when seeking information (Adio & Arinola, 2012; Singh et al., 2013; Thindwa et al., 2019). This aids design of better means of obtaining and using information for professionals in different sectors.

Some problems that hinder effectiveness in operations in the police force are itemized by Karimu (2015), to include institutional constraints such as inadequate manpower both in strength and expertise, insufficient education and training, inadequate equipment and poor welfare condition of service. Hills (2008) writes that the several long hours put in by police officers in a single shift affect their efficiency and overall daily routine. Officers are reported to work more than 16 hours in a single shift due to lack of personnel. As a result, there exists a high level of irritability with the public and a complete loss of calmness and attentiveness with the public. The stress and fatigue induced thereof inhibit diligent information seeking and constitutes a barrier in obtaining needed information. Onyeozili (2005) buttressed that the Nigerian police has been understaffed, overworked and overstressed and as such, appear tired, weak and sleepy while on the job or in their patrol vehicles and as such, are not psychologically disposed to diligent and deep search for information

Findings from Olayinka (2009) show that members of the public who constitute a major source of security information to the Nigeria Police Force are afraid of being indicted in any volunteered security information because of the kind of little trust the former have in the latter. The use of coercion by the police on the public and creation of a communication gap cum lack of humour by the police naturally resulted into negative and unfriendly relations between the police and the public (Onyeozili, 2005). This ensuing stiffness in police-public relations thus makes the public view the police as wicked, harsh and rude and uncooperative towards supplying any information that can ensure police smooth daily operations. Outstanding among the impediments to information sharing discovered by Abrahamson and Goodman-Delahunty (2014) in their Canadian study is “processes-technology,” which represents internal and



external information sharing processes, systems, policies, and technologies. This equally constitutes a barrier in seeking and obtaining information as officers who are not privy to firsthand information are automatically deprived of such information. Other findings listed by Olayinka(Olayinka, 2009) include poor remuneration, unavailability of sophisticated weapon that match those of criminals, laxity of the Police-Public Relations Committee of the Nigeria Police Force.

### **3.0 Method**

The descriptive survey research design was deemed appropriate and employed as the study covered a given population and obtained data from questionnaires and interview. The researchers used a mixed-method approach (Muijs, 2010) of collecting both quantitative and qualitative data to comprehensively investigate the complex issues surrounding the information needs and seeking behaviour of police officers.

#### **3.1 Area and Population of Study**

The study covered the Divisional Police Stations in New-Owerri, Ehime-Mbano and Njaba representing Owerri, Okigwe and Orlu geo-political zones of Imo State, Nigeria respectively. The study comprises a total population of about four hundred and thirty-one (431) police officers with 150 from DPS New-Owerri, 138 from Ehime-Mbano and 143 from Njaba within the rank and file of the police profession comprising Superintendent of Police (SP), Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP), Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP), Inspector (ISP), Sergeant (SGT), Corporal (CPL), and Police Constable (PC)

#### **3.2 Instruments and Procedure**

We collected quantitative data using a questionnaire titled Questionnaire on Police Officers Information Needs and Seeking Behaviour (QOPOINSB). The questionnaire was constructed in line with the research objectives and validated through expert opinion. The questionnaire contained two sections. Section one collected descriptive information of respondents like the location of station, rank and level of education while section two contained the questions drawn from the research objectives. Question one contained twelve (12) various kinds of information that may be needed in the daily work of a police officer. These are placed in a five-point Likert scale of 5 for “Strongly Agree”, 4 for “Agree”, 3 for “Neutral”, 2 for “Disagree” and 1 for “Strongly Disagree”. Question two listed fourteen (14) options representing the various means which may be employed to obtain needed information. These questions as in (1) are placed in

a 5-point Likert scale of levels of agreement. Question three investigated barriers experienced in seeking and obtaining information with eight (8) options for the officers to select one or more.

In order not to disrupt activities in the station and to ensure maximum compliance, the head police officer in each station was given a letter of introduction, invitation to participate in the study, and instruction on how to complete the questionnaire, after which fifty copies of the instrument was handed over for 50 officers in each station. The entire procedure lasted for fourteen days (29/11/19 to 12/12/19). Out of the one hundred and fifty (150) copies handed over for the three stations, a total of 135 copies of the questionnaire was returned from divisional police station (DPS) New-Owerri (n=47); DPS Ehime-Mbano (n=40); DPS Njaba (n=48) giving a 90% response rate.

For the qualitative data, we conducted interviews, six weeks after the return of the questionnaire (23/01/20) with nine police officers, three from each of the police stations on an individual basis. We decided against group interview because we wanted to get the personal opinion, attitude and experience of each officer independent of the collaboration or assistance of others, thus we interviewed each officer outside the consent and proximity of others. Interview questions were not different from those of the questionnaire but were asked for clarifications or contradictions of responses from the QOPOINSB.

### **3.3 Method of Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using the descriptive statistics of arithmetic mean, frequency tables and simple percentages. The decision rule for the mean was calculated as  $5+4+3+2+1/5 = 3.0$ . Therefore, responses from questions one and two with mean scores above 3.0 were rated positive while those below 3.0 were rated negative. The significance of the proportion of Police officers' responses on each option specified as the kind of information needed in executing their daily work was tested using one-sample proportion right-tailed test. The significance of the proportion was ascertained for responses of officers who are in support (both strongly agree and agree in response opinion) against others who are not in support (both Neutral, Disagree and Strongly Disagree in response opinion) about the kinds of information required in their daily work. Response from objective 3 was calculated using frequency tables and percentages.

Table 1 shows the response summary of these respondents on each option specified as the kind of information needed by officers in executing their daily work together with the average

(denoted  $\bar{X}$ ) response on each option, the proportion (denoted  $P_A$ ) of response of police officers who are in support (both strongly agree and agree in response opinion) about each option and the calculated value of the standard Z deviate statistic (denoted  $Z_{cal}$ ), which was used to test the null hypothesis that there is no significance in the proportion of responses of officers who are in support (both strongly agree and agree in response opinion) and those not in support (neutral, disagree and strongly disagree) about each option.

**Table 2: The average (denoted  $\bar{X}$ ), proportion (denoted  $P_A$ ) and the calculated value of the standard Z deviate (denoted  $Z_{cal}$ ) for Responses on kinds of information needed by Police Officers in executing their daily work**

S/N	Options	SA	A	N	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	$P_A$	$Z_{cal}$
1	Crises/crime areas within the state	80	45	0	5	5	4.41	0.93	41.08
2	Information about location of criminals	84	10	22	10	9	4.11	0.70	17.59
3	Information on arrests of culprits	25	30	51	24	5	3.34	0.41	9.63
4	Information about armed robbers	36	50	11	28	10	3.55	0.64	15.39
5	Information on burglars	25	25	72	13	0	3.46	0.37	8.91
6	Drug addicts and sex workers	40	72	13	6	4	4.02	0.83	25.64
7	Internet fraudsters(yahoo yahoo)	30	75	6	12	12	3.73	0.78	21.74
8	Information about impersonators	47	50	12	16	10	3.80	0.72	18.56
9	Rape and other sexual harassments	83	33	5	6	8	4.31	0.86	28.71
10	Information on child traffickers	54	51	20	3	7	4.05	0.78	21.74
11	Court proceedings and rulings(charges and bails)	10	95	10	15	5	3.67	0.78	21.74
12	Information on Nigerian Government	37	76	10	8	4	3.99	0.84	26.33
13	Information on games and social life	0	50	20	50	15	2.78	0.37	8.91

The result in table 2 indicated that the average response of all Police officers to each option specified as the kind of information needed by Police Officers in executing their daily work is greater than the decision rule of three (3.0) while that for games and social life is less than three

(2.78). The result implies that all the options specified as the kinds of information are essential, necessary, needed and employed by Nigeria Police Officers in executing their daily work except for information on games and social life. To justify the exclusion of information on games and social life as an important kind of information needed by officers, the proportion of Police officers responses on each option specified as the kind of information needed in executing their daily work were computed and tested for significance. The proportion of Police officers responses to each option specified as the kind of information needed in executing their daily work shown in Table 2 lie between 0.37 to 0.93 while, the value of the calculated values of the standard Z deviate statistic (denoted  $Z_{cal}$ ) lie between 8.91 and 41.08. The calculated values of the standard Z deviate statistic (denoted  $Z_{cal}$ ) for all responses to each option is greater than the tabulated value (denoted  $Z_{tab}$ ) at 0.05 level of significance equals 1.64. This result indicates that the proportion of responses of Police officers who are in support (both agree and strongly agree in response opinion) about the kinds of information required in executing their daily work are significant. To further justify the exclusion of games and social life as an important kind of information needed in daily work performance, the officers through the interview revealed that the “ reports on crime are too much these days, how to combat these criminal activities is our major concern, not games...” “We don’t have time to discuss games especially when civil unrest is all over the country...” thus, information on games and social life is not needed for job performance of police officers.

**Table 2: The average (denoted  $\bar{X}$ ), proportion (denoted  $P_A$ ) and the calculated value of the standard Z deviate (denoted  $Z_{cal}$ ) for Responses on the information-seeking behaviour of Police Officers employed in their daily work**

S/n	Variables	SA	A	N	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	$P_A$	$Z_{cal}$
14	Critical Reading of newspapers	27	14	0	80	14	2.70	0.30	7.67
15	Information from higher authority	96	25	4	10	0	4.53	0.90	34.16
16	Utilization of the mass media	30	55	0	45	5	3.44	0.63	15.15
17	Set up road blocks to get information	9	6	6	73	41	2.03	0.11	4.11
18	Organization of arrests of suspects	15	44	10	56	10	2.99	0.44	10.24
19	Detention and interrogation of suspects	8	50	14	60	3	3.00	0.43	10.08
20	Utilization of anonymous informants	72	10	16	30	7	3.81	0.61	14.45
21	Utilization of vigilante groups	31	50	16	30	8	3.49	0.60	14.23

22	Consultation of traditional rulers and chiefs	65	20	9	30	11	3.73	0.63	15.15
23	Report from victims	60	50	3	32	0	3.87	0.74	19.64
24	Ambush laying for Criminals	10	5	23	63	34	2.21	0.11	4.11
25	Disguise ourselves and monitor	18	71	10	12	24	3.35	0.66	16.16
26	Procurement of Information from people	10	37	0	68	20	2.62	0.35	8.49
27	Visitation to court sessions	5	13	82	20	15	2.80	0.13	4.56

Table 2 shows the response summary of the respondents to each option specified as information-seeking behaviour of Police Officers in daily work together with the average (denoted  $\bar{X}$ ) response on each option, the proportion (denoted  $P_A$ ) of response of officers who are in support (both agree and strongly agree in response opinion) about each option and the calculated value of the standard Z deviate statistic (denoted  $Z_{cal}$ ), which was used to test the null hypothesis that there is no significance in the proportion of responses of officers who are in support (both strongly agree and agree in response opinion), about each option. The result in Table 2 indicated that the average responses of the officers to each option specified as information-seeking behaviour in their daily work are greater than the decision rule of three (3.0) except for responses on Critical Reading of newspapers, Set up roadblocks to getting information, Organization of arrests of suspects, Visitation to court sessions, Ambush laying for Criminals, Procurement of Information from people and Detention and interrogation of suspects which is 3.00. The result implies that all other options specified to represent the information-seeking behaviour of Police Officers in their daily work.

To justify the exclusion or not of Critical Reading of newspapers, Set up roadblocks to getting information, Organization of arrests of suspects, Ambush laying for Criminals, Procurement of Information from people and Visitation to court sessions as seeking behaviour of Police Officers in daily work, the proportion of Police officers responses on each option were computed and tested for significance. The proportion of Police officers' responses to each option shown in Table 2 lie between 0.11 to 0.90 while, the value of the calculated values of the standard Z deviate statistic (denoted  $Z_{cal}$ ) lie between 4.11 and 34.16. These calculated values of the standard Z deviate statistic (denoted  $Z_{cal}$ ) for all responses to each option are greater than the tabulated value (denoted  $Z_{tab}$ ) at 0.05 level of significance equals 1.64. This

result implies that a significant proportion of the officers are in support of options specified as their information-seeking behaviour.

**Table 3: Barriers experienced in seeking and obtaining information**

S/N	Barriers	Frequency	Percentage
28	Uncooperative members of the public	129	95%
29	Stalemate situations in investigations	75	55%
30	insufficient vehicles	93	68%
31	Bad road condition	99	73%
33	Lack of time to seek new information	87	64%
34	Inadequate communication facilities	99	73%

It is evident from Table 3 that barriers experienced in seeking and obtaining information are mainly uncooperative members of the public with (n=129) 95% followed by bad road condition and inadequate communication facilities which accounted for (n=99) 73% of the responses. As another barrier, an insufficient vehicle for movement and lack of time to seek new information hindered information seeking with (n=93) at 68% and (n=87) 64% respectively while (n=75) 55% of the respondents revealed that stalemate situations during investigations are one of the barriers they experience in seeking and obtaining needed information.

#### **4.0 Discussion**

From the calculation of the proportion of responses of officers in support (agree and strongly agree) with the kinds of information required for daily work, the study found that all options are significant and reflect the kinds of information needed by police officers in daily work performance. These include information about rape and other sexual harassments, crises and crime areas within the state, location of criminals, child traffickers, drug addicts and sex workers, the Nigerian government, impersonators, internet fraudsters (yahoo yahoo), information about armed robbers, court proceedings and rulings (charges and bails), information on burglars and lastly information on the arrest of culprits. Criminal offences like stealing, armed robbery and rape have been on the increase in the state (Ukaegbu, 2014; Uzodinma Emmanuel Ezenwa & Nnadozie, 2019), and from the findings of this study, yet constitute areas of information needs of the police.

These kinds of information are therefore needed for the police's fundamental duty of serving mankind, safeguarding lives and property, protecting the innocent against deception, the weak against oppression or intimidation and the peaceful against violence and disorder (Williams, 1986). Aina (2004) was in order in his submission that every individual whether literate or not has information needs which may be for recreation, to complete tasks that are critical for

survival or for carrying out day to day activities. Information on games and social life is not needed by the police for their daily work. This was further clarified to be as a result of the high rate of crimes and social vices on a daily occurrence in the state such that the police are so engrossed in its reprisal fight to have any need for games and social life.

The various means employed to obtain needed information which reflect the information-seeking behaviour of the officers are found to be information from higher authority, anonymous informants, reports from victims of crimes, consultation with traditional rulers and chiefs, disguising and monitoring people and places, using vigilante groups, the mass media, detaining and interrogating suspects. Findings from the study revealed that police officers do not use newspapers to obtain information. The interview response of the officers reflected newspaper reading to be a leisure/ past-time activity which they had no time to indulge in. “if I take the newspaper to read while at work, I am relaxing...” “Na Oga SP who go read newspaper for office...” This is because the daily occurrence of crimes does not allow officers time for relaxation and socialization using newspapers. Furthermore, most crimes published in the newspapers are already cases with the police. The study showed that roadblocks are not used to obtain the needed information. Interview response about roadblocks was that they used such means to bridge the escape of criminals by stopping and searching vehicles in reaction to crime information received. Other means which the officers do not employ in seeking and obtaining information are arresting and detaining suspects, laying ambush and waiting for people to come to the station. Comparing these findings to those of Guclu and Can (2015), those police officers initially consulted their knowledge and experience, and then used official documents as information sources in the context of conducting tasks, the police officers in Imo State, Nigeria rather receive information mainly from Superiors, anonymous persons and victims of crimes. In the same context, the officers through interview discussions explained that they rarely used printed journals, libraries nor attended conferences when seeking for information.

Barriers which hinder the officers in obtaining needed information are uncooperative members of the public, stalemate situations in investigations, insufficient vehicles, bad road condition, lack of time to seek new information and inadequate communication facilities. Collating their responses, the interview participants stressed on some barriers as a nagging hindrance to their pursuit of information. They revealed that when asked to get information from remote areas with problems of accessibility due to bad roads, there’s usually a partial search for such information as the investigation is quickly terminated if initial contacts do not yield positive information. Some of their statements “we have problems of continuity when we’re stuck with our vehicle in a remote community with no road except foot” “sometimes calling our fellow

officers there is affected by network problems...” “Driving on a muddy road especially during the rain is difficult...so we wait...” explain that some barriers are responsible for other hindrances in information seeking. When a search is constrained by poor road infrastructure, it results in a stalemate situation where continuity becomes a problem. The response on uncooperative members of the public corroborates Olayinka (2009) and reveals that the professional motto “police is your friend” still lacks conviction in the minds of the public. People do not trust the police and willingly withhold useful information that can aid police investigation. About inadequate communication facilities, findings by Karimu (2015) hinted that lack of adequate equipment for the police to perform their duties efficiently is a nagging problem in the force. Karimu (2015) respondents noted that there are no appropriate telecommunication gadgets in term of logistics, thereby constraining sending signals from one place to another. When a message is being brought in for transmission into the communication office it is always difficult to get such message through. As a result of this problem some important messages are delayed. All the participants in Karimu (2015) agreed that the police would perform better if equipment like better communication gadgets and vehicles are adequately provided to track down criminals.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

The study has revealed the various kinds of information needed by police officers for daily job performance to achieve set goals. Pertinent information such as information about crises and crime areas within the state, location of criminals, arrests of culprits, armed robbers, burglars, drug addicts and sex workers, internet fraudsters, impersonators, child trafficking, rape and sexual harassment, court proceedings and rulings and lastly information about the Nigerian government are all indispensable and required for optimum job performance. This information is obtained mainly from a higher authority in the force, anonymous informants, reports from victims, traditional rulers and chiefs, vigilante groups and mass media. Also, disguising themselves and monitoring people and places as well as detaining and interrogating suspects are means used by the police officers to get information. Problems of lack of cooperation from members of the public and bad road condition are two major barriers constraining information seeking among police officers in the state. Some of the other barriers are consequences of bad road condition in the state.

## **5.1 Recommendations**



As regards their fundamental duties of safeguarding lives and property, protecting the innocent against deception, the weak against oppression or intimidation and the peaceful against violence and disorder, the police profession remains a time-critical profession that needs a steady flow of information to remain viable. Crime has become a daily occurrence sequel to the prevalent get-rich-quick syndrome such that one would naturally question the ability of the police alone to curb it. Therefore, the police need to redeem their current image as perceived by the public to win their support and cooperation in fighting crimes in the society. There is a need to re-launch the strategy of community policing to involve the people more in policing their localities. The importance of good roads in the state especially for efficiency in the operations of professions like the police force cannot be overemphasized. This study recommends good and durable road construction in the state for ease of work in the police profession.

The world keeps changing in the face of technology. There is a need to incorporate modern technologies and improved communication facilities in the police force to come to par with the smartness exhibited by lawbreakers nowadays. This would positively place the police in parallel or even stronger competencies with criminals and go a long way in mitigating crime rate in the state and Nigeria generally.

### **Conflict of Interest**

Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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