
Knowledge of Psychology by the Nigeria Police and Its Impact on Crime Control

¹Yunana Ulea Salihu, ²Doka Jerry, ³David Markus Shekwolo PhD.

²Department of Psychology, Nasarawa State University, Keffi

³Department of Psychology, Nigerian Defence Academy Kaduna

ABSTRACT

*Published Online: 05 January 2022

This study examined the knowledge of psychology by the Nigeria Police and its impact on Crime Control using survey research. A total of 54 participants from the Nigeria Police which comprises of 36 male and 18 female from Abuja Municipal Area Council of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja participated in the study, using structured self-report questionnaires. The participants were selected using random sampling method. Three research hypotheses were tested using descriptive and correlation statistics. The results revealed that: There will be a significant increase in crime control if there is increase in the knowledge of psychology by the Nigeria Police ($r = .677, P < .01$). There will be a significant increase in public trust toward the Nigeria Police if there is increase in the knowledge of psychology by the Nigeria Police ($r = .720, P < .01$). There will be a significant difference between the graduates and non-graduate Police officer's knowledge of Psychology as it relates to effective crime control. It was discussed that knowledge of Psychology is necessary for effective policing since it is a discipline that studies human behavior.

Recommendation was made on encouraging the application of psychology in different areas of life especially in the area of criminal justice system and particularly the Police. The police as gatekeeper to the criminal justice system are the first unit to meet the criminal by investigation, arrest, interrogation and prosecution. Our legislative arm of government need to make laws that will introduce the study and application of psychology especially to the Nigeria Police. This will go a long way in providing effective crime control.

Keywords:

Knowledge, Psychology, Nigeria Police, Impact and Crime Control

INTRODUCTION

Psychologists have made great contribution working with the police and law enforcement agencies since its inception in 1878 at Leipzig Germany by Wilhelm Wundt the man regarded as the father of modern Psychology. They provide various direct psychological services and consultancy to officers and men of their respective organizations and departments. Until the 1960s, psychology as a discipline and law enforcement seemed mutually exclusive. However, since that time the practice of providing psychological services to law enforcement agencies not only evolved, it has expanded tremendously.

The expansion was due to forecast thinking of the law enforcement officers knowing well that human behavior is dynamic as a result needs dynamic approach also, continuous vulnerability to a difficult work conditions and environments are on the increase. Further, they noted that the unique culture of police work created its own set of stress factors and that affects many throughout the course of a career (Nweze 2010). Consequently, the society and as well law enforcement agents have begun to realize the need for proactive approaches to optimize the psychological functioning and knowledge on personal adjustment of officers and to build capacities of men and officers in other to enhance their skills in justice administrations, crime control and also reduce occupational stress of their staff (Bartol & Bartol, 2012).

Crime control and the administration of justice are handled by the criminal justice system. The criminal justice system is composed of three primary and discernible components: police, courts, and corrections. These components are sometimes referred to as subsystems. From this perspective,

*Corresponding Author: Doka Jerry

*Cite this Article: Yunana Ulea Salihu, Doka Jerry, David Markus Shekwolo PhD (2022). Knowledge of Psychology by the Nigeria Police and Its Impact on Crime Control. International Journal of Social Science and Education Research Studies, 2(1), 01-07

the components of the criminal justice system are seen as interrelated, interdependent, and striving to achieve a unified goal. This view of criminal justice often focuses on how cases flow through the system, causing ripple effects as cases move from one component to the next. The actions of police officers on the streets, for example, affect the workload of courts, and the decisions of judges in courtrooms affect the operation of jails and prisons.

Police hold a special place in the criminal justice system. Not only do the activities of law enforcement officers affect the operations of the entire criminal justice system, but police are said to be the “gate keepers” of the system: “They are usually the first to make contact with accused offenders and are in a position to make some very important decisions about what will happen to those individuals. Perhaps the most frequent decision that a police officer makes is to initiate an alleged offender’s journey through the maze of the Criminal Justice” (Alpert & Dunham, 1997). Although most citizens are never arrested or even experience a face-to-face encounter with the police in any given year, police are the most likely component of the criminal justice system to have an influence on their day-to-day lives. More often than not this influence is largely symbolic. People usually see the police while they are carrying out their day-to-day activities or when they are exposed to media depictions of the police. Police far outnumber members of other occupational groups in criminal justice (Kendra, 2015).

The primary responsibility of the police is to protect citizens from harm and danger, advocate for victims of crimes and promote the accountability of criminals by enforcing laws set forth by the city, state and country. The police are also responsible for interviewing witnesses and victims of crimes, investigating crimes in an attempt to secure criminals and making arrests. The responsibilities of the police also extend to enforcing laws that exist by ensuring drivers are obeying traffic laws, patrolling high-traffic areas and communities within the department’s jurisdiction to protect the safety of community members and questioning suspicious activity while on patrol. Police are also responsible for responding to emergency situations that require medical attention and may need to perform first-aid duties until medical assistance arrives on the scene. Responsibilities of the police are often heightened during natural disasters. For example, the police may be called on to search homes for survivors following a tornado or earthquake (McLeod, 2011). In addition, police are also responsible for maintaining order during riots or protests. To perform the job duties of a police officer, members of the police force train frequently on community safety, firearm use, laws and rules of order and ethics. With all the above function one important area of this research is their ability to control crime by either deterring potential criminals or prosecuting offenders.

Overtime, Nigerian Police has been under intense criticism, bombardment and battering by both the general public and the mass-media over its apparent inability to effectively

prevent and control crimes in the country, especially this time Nigeria is facing serious insecurity problems (Ekwonwa, 2012). So many socio-economic forces have been blamed for such failed situation. They include among others: absence of professionalism which has effect on quality of the manpower; poor training and training facilities available to Nigerian Police trainees; corruption that has engulfed the entire society, police extortion syndrome, general poor attitude to work, indiscipline, colonial legacy and mentality of the Nigerian Police to mention but a few. Consequently, there has grown public distrust of the Nigerian Police, apparent loss of confidence in them, hatred and suspicion; and the feeling of intimidation by Police presence. Most Nigerians, these days, are no longer prepared to provide or share information that will help expose criminals, or get involved in identifying them. Sometimes, they deliberately act against the efforts of the Police to track down criminals. Instead of reporting criminals or handing them over to the Police for possible prosecution, people prefer to take laws into their hands and burn or machete an apprehended suspected criminal to death or incapacitate him or her for life (Ekwonwa, 2012).

According to McLeod (2011) Psychology is the scientific study of the mind and behavior. Psychology is a multifaceted discipline and includes many sub-fields of study such areas as human development, sports, health, clinical, social behavior and cognitive processes. The study and practice of psychology encompasses a vast range of topics and a large number of subfields and specialty areas have developed as a result. Because human behavior is so varied, the number of subfields in psychology is constantly growing and evolving. Police departments have used the services of psychologists for more than two decades. In the 1980’s, police psychology began to be recognized as a distinct field, with psychologists’ activities expanding beyond screening job applicants to include a broader range of psychological support services. These included counselling to help officers cope with the unique stresses inherent in police work, training in human relations and general stress management, debriefing after traumatic incidents, and such operational interventions as forensic hypnosis and assistance in negotiations with hostage holders or barricaded persons. Psychological support services for officers who used lethal force were more prevalent than interventions for managing nonlethal, excessive force. The application of psychology to solving problems in the criminal justice system is called forensic psychology. Therefore a psychologist who applies the knowledge of psychology in contributing to the successful achievements within the criminal justice system is known as a forensic psychologist. Psychology plays a major role in the administration of justice in the criminal justice system. The criminal justice system comprises of the Court, the Police which includes the law enforcement agencies and the Prisons.

Psychology works full time with police and other law enforcement agencies. They provide both routine counseling

and guidance during or after a crisis such as a hostage negotiation. Others work in private practice as consultants to law enforcement agencies, helping officers understand the mind and motive of the suspects. Forensic psychologists help rehabilitate offenders through therapy, anger management and other counseling services. They also perform mental evaluations to determine if a suspect is competent to stand trial and may testify in court or assist attorneys with jury selection or witness preparation. They also interview witnesses and victims, especially in sensitive cases such as crimes against women or children (Kendra, 2015).

In a society where the police are proactive and really understand the knowledge of human behaviour and also properly apply the knowledge in the discharge of their duties, the court will have fewer cases to attend to. Historically, there are three broad theoretical models of criminal behavior. The police as an agent of government are responsible for the prevention and detection of crime, apprehension of offenders, preservation of law and order, protection of life and property and the regulation of the traffic. Indeed, the power of the Nigeria police for crime management is enormous because as the constitution provides, there should be no police other than the Nigeria police force. This is why the Nigeria police are supreme to crime investigation, arrest of suspects, detention and prosecution, at the same time acting as witness (Nweze, 1997).

Over the years Policing has included an array of activities in different contexts, but the predominant ones are concerned with order maintenance and the provision of services. During modern times, such endeavors contribute toward fulfilling a shared mission among law enforcement organizations with respect to the traditional policing mission of deterring crime and maintaining societal order. These responsibilities shows that police in a society have a task of ensuring that citizens abide by the laws that regulates their behaviours according to the prescribed laws. The interest of the police therefore is to subject human behaviour under control with the aim of protecting lives and properties. In order to be effective in controlling human behavior, the police must understand the factors that influence it Bartol and Bartol (2012).

This work looks at the ways by which police can be equipped in order to gain public trust. One cannot provide protection to the people that do not have trust in. therefore the police has to gain people's trust in order to effectively provide law and order with the aim of providing and maintaining peaceful community. The best way forward is for the police to be adequately equipped with the knowledge of human behavior which will prepare them to describe, explain, predict and correct the behaviours of the people. Also to understand the importance of psychology to the Nigeria police. The knowledge of psychology is a key to changing human to behave in conformity to the norms of the society. It also plays a major role because psychology as the systematic study of human behavior seeks to understand both normal and abnormal human behavior, covert and overt behavior in a

systematic way so as to describe, explain, predict and change human behavior.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Psychology has contributed immensely in the Justice Administration within the criminal justice system especially the police in the area of crime control through researches that was conducted and recommendations made over the years. These great contributions were made to unravel some mysteries of crime and procedures for effective control. Despite these contributions made by the knowledge of psychology, Nigerian criminal justice system has suffered a lot of challenges in recent times especially in the area of dispensation of justice. Many people have posed serious questions on how effective our justice system is especially the Police as it relates to arrest, investigation, prosecution to punishing the offenders and acquitting the innocent. Our criminal justice system is faced with many challenges such as suspects fallen victim of the crime that they did not commit, false confession due to inhumane torture and intimidation, prosecution of the insane persons, extra judicial killing, arrest and detention of innocent people of a community, and prosecution and conviction of innocent members of a community do occur on a daily bases. As a result of this, most people lost confidence in police. Many still keep wondering whether Police is still reliable and competent to control crime to a manageable state. Some prefer to let go than taking their case to the police station where dispute are supposed to be resolved while others prefer taking laws into their hands. These problems are also connected to total disregards to professional expert witness by the police in the process of crime investigation which most of the Nigeria police lack the techniques due to insufficient knowledge of human behaviour.

The Nigerian police are not adequately equipped with the knowledge of psychology because most them are not psychology graduate and during their training at the police college, they did not regard psychology as the major tool in achieving their aim rather; they focus on the use of force which in turn earns them distrust from the people. This clearly shows that the Nigerian police know little of psychology and believe much on the use of force instead of the use of psychological principles.

Most of the officers and men of the Nigeria police force indulge in the collection of bribe and extortion from the people they are supposed to protect, as such, they set the criminal free and arrest the innocent. All of these happen because they lack the ethical principles of psychology.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- i. What impact does the knowledge of psychology by the Nigeria Police has on crime control?
- ii. Is there difference in perception of the impact of the knowledge of psychology on crime control between officers and other ranks of the Nigerian Police?

- iii. To what extent do the Nigeria Police think the knowledge of psychology can impact on their ability to control crime?

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this research are:

- i. To examine the Nigeria Police on how relevant the knowledge of psychology can impact on crime control in Nigeria.
- ii. To examine if there is any difference in perception between the officers and other ranks of the Nigeria Police on the impact the knowledge of psychology on crime control.

Statement of the Hypotheses

- i. There will be a significant relationship between Police knowledge of psychology and effective Crime Control.
- ii. There will be a significant relationship between Police knowledge of Psychology and Public trust.
- iii. There will be a significant difference in perception between Graduate and Non-graduate Police officers on the relevance of Psychology in effective crime control.

METHODS

Design

This study used a non-experimental method of research particularly survey design to sample the perception of officers and men of the Nigerian Police on the impact the knowledge of psychology on effective crime control. Participants responded to questionnaire.

Participants

Participants used in this research includes officers and men of the Nigeria police within Abuja Municipal Area Council in Federal Capital Territory. A total of 60 participants comprising of both police officers and men regardless of their marital status, sex, level of education and between 18 to 65 years of age. Random sampling was used.

Instruments

A self-constructed instrument for the purpose of this research was used to collect data that will help in testing the research hypothesis. The research instrument has three sections A, B and C. Section A collects information about the participants' personal data such as Age, Sex, level of education and marital status. The second section B of the instrument carries 20 items with closed ended questions. This section contains items that measured the variable "police officer's Knowledge of Psychology" which is operationally defined as the extent to which a Police Officer knows what psychology is, what they do generally and particularly to the justice system. This

was measured based on how high a respondent scores on such items from the research instrument. Other items in the research instruments measured the perceived impact of their knowledge on effective crime control. Crime Control in this research is defined as the ability of the police to reduce the occurrence of crime. This can be measured base on how high or low a participant scores on items that measures that variable. Each item in this section measures a degree of agreement on a five likert scale ranging from 1 to 5, where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree.

Section C of the instrument contains open-ended interview question meant to give the respondents the opportunity to freely express themselves based on the questions that are of interest to the researcher and the research.

The psychometric properties of the instrument were measured by conducting a pilot study on similar population. The validity of the test was measured by using face and content validity to ensure that the test actually measures the variables of interest. This was done with the help of my supervisor and lectures within the Psychology department and my colleagues. Split half reliability was used to determine how consistent this instrument will actually measure what it is supposed to measure.

Procedure

Participants of this research were selected through simple random sampling process where all respondents were given equal opportunity of being part of the research process. The researcher employed the help of research assistants; they were instructed on the purpose of the research, the participants and the ethical standards that govern the research process. The researcher visited Police Station and had audience with the participants. After seeking audience and informed consent, only participants that consented to take part of the research were used. Participants were asked to tick on column that corresponds with their choice response. Either Strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UD) Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD).

Statistics

Descriptive statistics of simple percentage was used to analyze participants' demographic data which includes Sex, Age and level of education. Pearson Correlation statistics and T-test were used at 0.01 level of significant using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Ethical Considerations

The research is deemed to have no known risk to participants' physical, psychological or professional wellbeing. The probability of discomfort or magnitude of harm anticipated in this research is zero (0). Participants were briefed to ensure they fully understood the nature of the study and the role they played in the research. Participation to this research was voluntary and recovered data was handled with confidentiality.

RESULTS

Demographic Data of the Participants

Table 1: Summary of personal and demographic data of the participants

VARIABLES	FREQUENCY	PERCENT %
SEX		
MALE	36	66
FEMALE	18	33.3
TOTAL	54	100
AGE		
18-25	2	3.7
26-32	18	33.3
33-40	23	42.6
41above	11	20.4
TOTAL	54	100
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL		
NON-GRADUATE	34	63
GRADUATE	20	37
TOTAL	54	100
YEARS OF SERVICE		
LESS THAN ONE YEAR	6	11.1
1-5	5	9.3
6-10	13	24.1
11-15	13	24.1
16 YRS ABOVE	17	31.5
TOTAL	54	100
QUALIFICATION		
SSCE	35	64.8
NCE/OND	6	11.1
HND/BSC	11	20.4
MSC ABOVE	2	3.7
TOTAL	54	100

Table 1 shows the summary of frequency and percentage of participants' based on Sex, Age, Level of Education, Years of Service, and Educational Qualification

The Table shows that 36 of the police officers that responded to the questionnaires where male representing 66.7% will 33% representing 18 participants are female.

Out of 54 officers and men of the Nigerian police that participated in this research, 2 representing 3.7% are between 18-25 years, 18 equivalents to 33.3% are between the ages of 26-32 years. The age ranges of 33-40 years are 23 equivalents to 42.6% finally, 11 representing 2-4% of the total participants belong to the age range of 41 and above. From the data shown above, the age 18-25 which represents the youngest age range has least population while age 33-40 has the most populated participants in this research.

Two educational levels where defined in this research which are graduate and non-graduate. The table shows that 34 representing 63.0 percent of the respondent are non-graduate i.e have not graduated from any higher institution above primary and Secondary school while 20 participant

representing 37% are graduate, which spread across OND, NCE, HND, University Degree and other Monotechnics. The table also shows duration of respondent in active service. From the data shown in the table, those between 1-5 years are 6 out of 54 representing 11.1%, 6-10 years and 11-15 years takes 24.1% equal to 3 participants. 16 years above are 17 taking the highest representation with about 17 participant representing 31.5% about 5 respondent did not indicate their number of years in service.

This research identify 4 academic qualification from the response as shown in the table. More than half of the participants representing 64.8% equivalent to 35 participant out of 54 are SSCE holders, 6 participants representing 11.1% holds either and NCE or OND certificate 20.4% of 54 participants which is equivalent to 11 participants hold either a HND or a first degree while the least is those with MSC having just 2 participants occupying 3.7%.

Hypotheses Testing

There will be a significant relationship between police knowledge of psychology and effective crime control.

Table 2: Summary Results of Correlation showing relationship

	Mean	Std. Deviation	r	df	P
Police Knowledge of Psychology	33.00	4.953	0.677	52	0.00
Effective Crime Control	27.33	3.274			

The result from the table shows an r score of $r = 0.677$ which simply shows a significant relationship between the two variables of hypothesis one. This result means that the first hypothesis testing the relationship between Police Knowledge of Psychology and effective crime control is accepted since the result show positive relationship between the two research variables, this simply means that if Police

especially in Nigerian if equipped with the Knowledge of Psychology will effectively stall the number of criminal activities often reported as well bring perpetrators to book. This is further explained by the scatter plot diagram that shows the pattern of relationship between the two variables. Hypothesis 2: there will be a Relationship between Police of Psychology and Public trust.

Table 3: Summary Results of Correlation showing relationship

	Mean	Std. Deviation	r	df	P
Police Knowledge of Psychology	33.00	4.953	.720	52	0.00
Public Trust	12.61	3.105			

This Table shows the result of a Pearson Correlation Analysis of r score of 0.720 was obtained from the analysis. This $r = 0.720$ show a positive relationship between police knowledge of psychology and Public trust. With this result, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between the two variables of hypothesis; therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. The result further proves that if police can be equipped with Psychological information and skills it will

increase their efficiency therefore, increasing level of trust for the Police by the general public.

Hypothesis 3: there will be a significant difference in perception between graduate and non-graduate police officers on the relevance of psychology in effective crime control.

Table 4: Summary Results of Independent Sample t- test Independent Samples Test

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means								
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Effective Crime Control	Equal variances assumed	16.124	.000	-3.788	52	.000	-3.124	.824	-4.778	-1.469
	Equal variances not assumed			-3.375	27.970	.002	-3.124	.925	-5.019	-1.228

NB: The results of the analyses were confirmed thus, supported the hypotheses stated in the study From the result, 34 participant with a mean of 26.18 and standard deviation of 2.343 are non-graduate while 20 with a mean score of 29.30 and $SD = 3.729$ are graduates. Independent t-test analysis shows that the act df 52 the t value from the analysis is -3.788 at $p = 0.05$ level of significance meaning, a significant negative relationship exist between the

variables of interest, this could mean a different view and understanding and direction of scores between graduate and non-graduate police officers on their perception on the relevant of psychology effective crime control.

DISCUSSION

The correlation result for hypothesis one which states that “there will be a significant relationship between police

knowledge of psychology and its impact on effective crime control, shows a significant relationship between the two variables. The result $r = 0.677$ proves the hypothesis acceptable as significant. This simply implies that police officers if equipped with psychological knowledge will effectively control crime in our society.

This result supported the assertion made by Ojiji (2015) which says that “psychology is beginning to provide solution to the problems of Nigeria, which the activities of crime control is not exempted. He added that experiences of some psychologist working in applied settings which include the police are playing peripheral roles in national developments. Furthermore, this research further proves that the knowledge of psychology in the justice system cannot be over emphasized, since they deal with human behavior which psychologist seeks to unravel its mysteries. This result disproves the work of Gold, 1988, which underscore the important and need of psychologist not only by the police but by the justice system. According to his conclusion, psychology is only an instrument of justice manipulation and therefore should be ignored it is true that in our today’s society crime seems to beat a high side this research show that we can greatly reduce it if our justice system not only the police can involve the services of psychologist on the first step of investigation to the point of sentencing as well as in rehabilitation of offenders.

Despite showing high correlation between the two variables of this hypothesis, this research found lack of knowledge in some basic psychological information which the police officers are supposed to know e.g. many cannot differentiate between a psychologist and psychiatrist; some do not know what role a psychologist can play in the police force. Others belief they simply mind readers and not scientist. This misconception makes many to be closed minded in accessing psychological knowledge that would have benefited them in the discharge of their duties.

The second hypothesis states that there will be significant relationship between public trust and police knowledge of psychology on crime control. Result from this shows a significant relationship this means that the public especially those who knows psychology belief that if the police are equipped with this knowledge it will boost their crime control ability. The result with a high correlational scores of $r = 0.720$ means that the general public have confident that the knowledge of psychology can enhance not just the police crime controls skills but the justice system in dispensing speeding and effective justice to Nigerians.

Measuring public perception of police by Dekunle (1979).shows that the Nigerian rated the police law, that they are performing below expectation but this research shows that the Nigerian police image can be boosted to draw back public confidence if certain skills are experienced is impacted upon them.

There has been great fear and lack of trust from the general public towards the Nigerian police according to Ajayi (2014).

He concludes that the public sees the police as an instrument and face of the Government in power that is always ready to unleash terror as the highest opportunity also that the negative perception and attitude towards the police by the general public is as a result of the attitude of the personnel and ways they discharge their duties not due to the nature of service they are constitutionally meant to do. This research assumed that the knowledge of psychology will bring attitudinal change and professionalism and discharge of police duties as it relate to crime arresting, investigating and prosecuting crime in the society.

The third hypothesis stated that “there will be a significant difference in perception between graduate and non-graduate police officers on knowledge of psychology and crime control”. From the result of analysis, 34 participants with a mean of 26.18 and standard deviation of 2.343 are non-graduate while 20 with a mean score 29.30 and standard deviation of 3.729 are graduates. The independent t-test analysis shows that at df 52 the value from the analysis is $t = -3.788$ at $p = 0.05$ levels of significance, this result thus support the above stated hypothesis, and therefore confirming a significant relationship in perception between graduate police officers and non-graduate on the impact the knowledge of psychology has effective crime control by police. This result therefore assumed that graduate police officers will better appreciate the knowledge and principle of psychology than the non-graduate. This equally means that graduate police officers will show more professionalism on crime control as well enjoy better public thrust in the course of their duties.

CONCLUSION

The success or failure of any institution in every society is the level of knowledge it has. Knowledge is power as it is often said. This is because it has the power to reform or deform an individual or group.

Lack of psychological knowledge among Law Enforcement Agent has slowed and to some extent makes the police ineffective in the discharge of their duties, this has affected their image in the society as perceived by the general public. To a large extent, it has made the public to be non co-operative in easing the investigation process of the police by feeding them with useful information that will help in the effective discharge of their duties. It is therefore concluded in this research that since the police is the establishment with the sole responsibility of protecting life and property in Nigeria, they must be equipped with all that is needed to put them ahead of crime and criminals, to ensure professionalism and effectiveness. Finally, if police is to regain its trust, it must wake up to the challenge of improving the knowledge and skills, which psychology as an applied discipline that help them achieve this.

RECOMMENDATIONS

At the end of the study the following recommendations were made”

- i. We encourage the application of psychology in different areas of life especially in the area of criminal justice system and particularly the Police.
- ii. The police as gatekeeper to the criminal justice system are the first unit to meet the criminal by investigation, arrest, interrogation and prosecution.
- iii. Our legislative arm of government need to make laws that will introduce the study and application of psychology especially to the Nigeria Police. This will go a long way in providing effective crime control.

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