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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ROAD USERS AND UNIFORM MEN IN THE SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CLIMATE OF SOUTH EASTERN STATES OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study was on the relationship between the socio-political and economic climate of road users and Nigeria uniform men in south east of Nigeria. Five research questions guided the study. The Correlation Survey was used for the study. The population of the study was about 970 major motor parks drawn across south east of Nigeria and the sample size was 600 road users obtained and through multi-stage sampling technique. The reliability of the instrument was established using split half method and the result analyzed using Cronbach's alpha which yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.69. Pearson Product moment of Correlation was used to answer the research questions and the result indicated the following relationship exist between the socio-political and economic climate of road users and uniform men (military, police force, road safety, customs and NAFDAC respectively) (0.79, 0.85, 0.60, 0.57, 0.54) indicating that the messy and ugly sociopolitical and economic climate was forced to bearing on road users by the uniform men. The following recommendations were made among others, there should be total overhaul of the military and paramilitary, pay package should be increased, quality of certificate should be upgraded to diploma for intake, road blocks and checkpoints are to be eradicated, sophisticated equipment and gadgets are to be introduced.

Keywords: Relationship, Road users, Uniform Men, Societal Conditions, Southeast Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

A uniform is a prescribed identifying set of cloth for members of an organization. The Wikipedia views uniform as a variety of costume worn by members of an organization while participating in that organization's activities. Modern uniforms are most often worn by armed forces (military, navy, air force) and para-military (police force, emergency service unit, security guards, custom, immigration services, road safety, drug agency, traffic warders, correctional service workers etc). These constitute the categories of persons globally regarded as uniform men. The context of this write-up is restricted to the team consistently and constantly found on roads namely, the police force, the armed forces, road safety workers, custom services and Drug agencies.

Much ado will be over laboring the obvious with respect to the indispensable roles played by the uniform men towards enhancing, facilitating and enabling growth and development of the nation. Among the roles they play include serving as custodians and arbiters of justice as well as law enforcement agents. The above role functions present their profession as noble, dignified, respected and cherished profession which credible, trust worthy and highly disciplined persons of the society should perform. In order words they constitute part of the beacon on which the socio-political and economic climate of the country is anchored.

The term sociopolitical is a complex term derived from two complex words namely social and political. The word "socio" refers to the study of behaviors of people including ways they interact with one another on the other hand, politics according to Mark Carol Rom et al (2022) involves actions of government and all the people who work and serve or challenge it. Socio-political could therefore be defined as the relationship between behaviors of people and how they are governed (decision making, power distribution, resource and allocation of values).

In view of the above, sociopolitical climate could be defined as the prevailing standards of behaviors of the people and how they are governed (decision making, distribution of power, resource allocation etc) within an epoch. Concerning economic climate, it is viewed as key factors within a country which includes goods and services produced, availability of quality jobs, affordability of goods and services, tax rate, inflation, labor supply and demand, wages, laws, government policies etc. anchored on the scaffold that economics involves wealth, finance, expenditure and money.

Furthermore, road user is anyone who uses a road, such as a pedestrian, cyclist, motorists, vehicle passengers, vehicle users, motor tricycles etc. These users are guided by traffic laws to enable an easy and hitch free movement along the road. However, certain ugly incidents often warrant the need to checkmate the activities of the road users in other to ensure their safety and achieve the expected free movement such incidents include dangerous driving, overload, usage of damaged cars, over speeding, robbery. Etc. These necessitate the interventions of uniform men on the roads. The primary goal of the presence of uniform men on the road is to make transit easy for road users.

In Nigeria, the presence of uniform men on the roads is seen through checkpoint. It is disheartening to note that majority of these checkpoints have turned to thorns and inflicted many dangerous scares on the flesh of road users. Most of these uniform men have turned to wolves scavenging the sheep they were supposed to shepherd to the extent that Nigerians are

increasingly losing hope and confidence on nations' Uniform men (Military and Navy), Paramilitary (Police Force, Road Safety, NDLEA).These are the usual uniform men found on our roads and are accused of unbecoming conducts such as kidnapping, extortion, bribery, torture, illegal arrest and unlawful detention.

According to Ogundipo (2017), Nigeria army has noted with great concern allegations of complacency, kidnapping and extortion against soldiers. Consequent upon this, the then chief of general staff lieutenant General .T Y Brutae has ordered for immediate investigation into the matter. That apart, Taiwo Ojoye (2016) noted that the involvement of soldiers in kidnapping is an emerging trend that should worry authorities. According to him, kidnapping is fast assuming an epidemic dimension in the country. The situation has been worsened by the involvement of soldiers as was seen in the abduction of the wife of the former CBN Governor Magreth Emefiele, leaving Nigerians in fears as some cases of the kidnapping have ended tragically. Stanly Uche from Abia was kidnapped and a ransom of ₦30 million was paid over his dead body. There were other prominent Nigerians such as Olu Falae, Iyabo Anisulowo, Elechi Amadi, Kamene Okonjo, Obi Mikel's father, etc. Amidst the above, came the rude shock to Nigerians when two serving soldiers were named among the nine suspects while another soldier and gang leader escaped.

According to Ogundipo, the above showed a lot about the gravity of depravity in Nigeria Army. He further stated that not quite too long ago, some soldiers were court marshaled for selling arms from military armory worth more than ₦100 million.

Apart from the military, the paramilitary has their own junk of the nuisance. Aborisade (2021) noted the unlawful use of force and misconduct by Nigeria Police during the pandemic. The unlawful use of force was highly frown at by Amnesty international in the case of Oraefo (2019) against Nigeria Police force for extortions, illegal arrest, unlawful detention, and torture.

Ogundipo (2018) further noted that a colossal sum of ₦100 billion was extorted by Nigeria security forces in south east in three years. Ogundipe gave the breakdown as follows, Nigeria Police force ₦78.02 billion, the military ₦5 billion, Customs, Road safety, NAFDAC, NDLEA ₦16 billion. According to him, the premium times was said to have quoted

> "police extortion in Enugu States and to an extent Imo state is not as lucrative as those of Anambra and Abia States".

It is in the context of the above sociopolitical and economic climate that this study sets out to examine what relationship exists between uniform men (military, police force, customs, road safety and drug agencies) and road users. How has the uniform men enabled and enhanced good sociopolitical and economic climate for road users.

PROBLEM OF THE STUDY

The culture of checkpoint corruption has been a re-occurring decimal among Nigerian security and law enforcement agencies. The first inter-society report on the conduct of offences on road was first published on 2011. The report revealed that between 2009 and 2011, police officers earned about 53.4 billion in three year from 3500 road blocks across the country at the time. Further information indicated that south east accounts for about 60 %(32.2) billion

naira of the illegal loot. The nationwide investigation was built on the report of human right watch (HRW) published on August 17, 2010, which looked at corruption and abuses among the police (uniform men). The (HRW) human rights watch publication was titled; everyone is on the game, corruption and human rights abuses by Nigerian men of forces. The above was however done almost a decade ago when sanity and integrity was uphold to a significant degree. In the face of clogged wheels of the country Nigerian where corruption is celebrated. Extortion is institutionalized and banditry monumentalized.

These ungodly and dastardly vainglory acts parade the streets of Nigerian Personalized in uniform men especially in south eastern states of Nigeria. Therefore it becomes expedient to look into the ugly face of the south eastern states sociopolitical and economic climate and draw up the relationship between the road users and the uniform men. Therefore the problem of this study is to find out the sociopolitical and economic impact of uniform men (Military, Police force, Customs, Road safety and Drug agencies) on road users.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the relationship existing between road users' sociopolitical and economic climate and the uniform men (Military, Police force, Road safety, Customs and National Drug enforcement agencies).

The study specifically sought to examine

(1) The relationship existing between road users and military men in the prevailing sociopolitical and economic climate of south eastern states of Nigeria.
(2) The relationship existing between road users and the police force
(3) The relationship existing between road users and road safety officers
(4) The relationship existing between road users and the custom officers.
(5) The relationship existing between road users and NAFDAC

METHOD OF STUDY

The design used for this study was correlation and the area of study was all the states of south eastern part of Nigeria comprising of Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States. The population of the study was 970 major motor parks in south east, Nigeria (Road Transport Union Workers, 2023). The sample size consists of 600 road users drawn across using multi stage sampling techniques. The reliability was established using split half method and the result obtained was analyzed using Cronbach alpha and the reliability co-efficient of 0.69 was obtained. A total of 600 copies of questionnaire were produced and distributed through five briefed assistances and the entire questionnaire was collected.

The questionnaire consists of 50 questions arranged in five clusters which contain items measuring the relationship between road users and uniform men (military, police force, customs, road safety, drug enforcement agencies) in the prevailing socio-political and economic climate of south eastern states of Nigeria. Five research questions guided the study. The research questions were answered using Pearson's product moment of correlations.

RESULTS

The data obtained from the study were analyzed and the result presented in the tables below:

Research question one: what is the relationship existing between the military men and road users in the current socio-political and economic climate of the south eastern states of Nigeria?

Table one: Pearson Product moment of correlation on the relationship existing between road users and the military.

Source of variation	N	Military	Road Users
Military		1.00	0.79
	600		
Road Users		0.79	1.00

The result above indicated that a very high positive relationship of 0.79 exists between the military men and road users in the current socio-political and economic climate of south eastern states of Nigeria.

Research question two: what is the relationship existing between police force officers and road users in the current socio-political and economic climate of the south eastern states of Nigeria?

Table two: Pearson Product moment of correlations on police force officers and road users.

Source of variation	N	Police Force Officers	Road Users
Police force officers		1.00	0.85
	600		
Road Users		0.85	1.00

The result above indicated that a very high positive relationship of 0.85 exists between socio-political and economic climate of road users in south east and the police force officers.

Research question three: what is the relationship existing between the socio-political and economic climate of road users in the south east and the road safety officers?

Table three: Pearson Product moment of correlation on road safety officers and road users.

Source of variation	N	Road Safety	Road Users
Road safety		1.00	0.60
	600		
Road users		0.60	1.00

The result above revealed that a positive relationship of 0.60 exists between the socio-political and economic climate of road users and the road safety officers.

Research question four: what is the relationship existing between the socio-political and economic climate of road users in the south eastern states of Nigeria and the custom officers?

Table four: Pearson Product moment of correlation on relationship between road users and custom officers.

Source of variation	N	Custom Officers	Road Users
Custom officers		1.00	0.57
	600		
Road users		0.57	1.00

The table above revealed that a positive relationship of 0.57 exists between the socio-political climate of custom officers and road users.

Research question five: what is the relationship existing between the socio-political and economic climate of Drug enforcement officers and road users?

Table five: Pearson on the relationship between Drug enforcement officers and road users.

Source of variation	N	Drug Enforcement Agents	Road Users
Drug enforcement agents		1.00	0.54
	600		
Road users		0.54	1.00

The table above showed that a positive relationship of 0.54 exists between the socio-political and economic climate of road users and the drug enforcement agencies.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study were discussed in line with the purpose of the study which sought to determine the relationship existing between the socio-political and economic climate of road users and uniform men in south eastern states of Nigeria. bearing in mind that the sociopolitical and economic climate in Nigeria is messy, ruined and in shambles, characterized by bribery, lawlessness, bad governance, insecurity, anarchy, social and political conflicts etc, the findings revealed that a positive relationship exists between road users socio-political and economic climate and the uniform men (military, police force, road safety, customs and NAFDAC). Indeed, nobody gives what he/she has not, one can only offer what one has and in the face of the unbridled and chaotic socio-political and economic climate of the country, the uniform men can only give what they have (Cooper 2011, Stanley, et al 2011).

In view of the above, the questionnaire item used for the study consists of five clusters which contains the following; cause delay/time wastage (3.25), cause accidents (3.49), insults road users (3.29), cause traffic (3.49), causes inconveniences and exhaustion to road users (3.62), causes wastage of fuel (3.63), causes car damage/overheat and breakdown (3.36), impacts negatively on life expectancy (3.49), contributed significantly to tear and wear in cars (3.29), hit/throws objects on cars (3.29), demands unnecessary and irrelevant documents (3.90), were very punitive to road users (3.10), disturbs road users (3.20), commits illegal arrest and detention (3.10), causes intimidation (3.10), takes bribe (3.40), extort people (3.69), tortures road users (3.52), causes loss of life (3.60), accused of kidnap (3.69), causes emotional trauma (3.25), curb violence (2.69), clearing obstructions (2.63), combats crime (2.59), constitute nuisance to road users (3.26), does not obey international traffic code (3.10), constitutes treat

to road users (3.29), humiliates road users (3.60), violates road users right (3.49), aggression to road users (3.60.

Based on the above, the research question one which sought to determine what relationship exists between the sociopolitical and economic climate of road users and the military men revealed that a very high positive relationship of 0.79 exists between the sociopolitical and economic climate of road users and military men. The military men were seen to engage in virtually all the factors which describes the Nigeria socio-political and economic climate as messy, ruined, in shambles, chaotic and unbridled. They were rated high in extortion, torture of road users, cause traffic jam, causes accidents etc. This is in line with what Ogundipo (2017) and Ojoye (2016) all noted, according to them, allegations of complacency, kidnapping and extortion were leveled against the military. It was further remarked that the gravity of depravity existing in the military has given cause for concern.

The research question two that examined the relationship between the socio-political and economic climate of road users and police force revealed a very high and stronger relationship between the unbridled sociopolitical and economic climate of road users and the police force. The study revealed a disheartening high and strong relationship of 0.85 existing between the sociopolitical climate of road users and the police force. The police force was rated very high and their cluster revealed an average mean of 3.62 on all the questionnaire items. The items revealed that they commit extortion (3.69), torture road users (3.52), violates their human right (3.49), were aggressive (3.60), causes loss of life and properties (3.60) etc. This also is in line with what Aborisade (2021) and Oraefo (2019) noted against the Nigeria police force. According to them, they noted unlawful usage of force during pandemic and EndSars, illegal arrest, unlawful detention and torture. Ogundipo (2018) further noted that a colossal sum of 78.02 billion was extorted by the Nigeria police force in south east within a period of 3years.
Concerning research questions 3, 4 and 5 which sought to determine the relationships existing between the sociopolitical and economic climate of road users and the road safety, customs, NDLEA respectively. The results revealed a mild positive relationship of 0.60 0.57 and 0.54 respectively. They were also seen to engage in acts of abnormality against road users such as extortion (2.69), violation of road users right (2.62), aggressive behaviors (2.59), damage of property (2.92), causes accidents (2.98) etc. this goes to affirm the assertion of (HRW) Human Right Watch in their first inter society report published in 2011 under the title, Everyone is on the game, corruption and human right abuses by Nigeria men on uniform. Similarly, the Amnesty International in the case of Oraefo (2019) revealed that the Road safety, the customs and NDLEA was said to have collected a large sum of about 16 billion Naira from illegal check points within three years from south east.

CONCLUSION

The African laureate and author of Things fall apart Chinua Achebe rightly, remarked that things have fallen apart because the center cannot hold. In another epic he said that mere anarchy is loosed upon the land. Hence it will not be an over statement to hold the opinion of Achebe's prophesy with respect to the sociopolitical and economic climate of south east and Nigeria at large. This is because the beacon of authority the center, the scaffold of the edifice Nigeria has crumbled and has been compromised. Every sector of the Nigeria economy has experienced and is experiencing colossal damages in all its dimensions, socio-political and economic climate inclusive. Nigeria is a country whose climate would be described as

depraved, messy, ruined and unbridled. These features have dominated the activities of uniform men (military, police force, road safety, customs and drug agencies). These have deviated largely to the extent that they constitute serious nuisance to the road users. The human right watch described them as corrupt, and perpetrators of abuses which includes extortion, kidnapping, illegal arrest and detention among others on road users.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. There is the need to overhaul the entire military and paramilitary institutions
2. The government should abolish all forms of levy or money collection on road and make it a capital punitive offense
3. Toll gates should be introduced
4. A higher qualification at least diploma should be the minimum entry qualification to service.
5. Sophisticate equipment should be introduced in the system
6. Road blocks and check points to be abolished
7. Monitor cameras to be introduced at all designated check points.

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