

ON INFORMATION RELEASE IN THE NIGERIAN POLICE FORCE: THE ISSUE OF PUBLIC INTEREST

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Abstract: *Bentham's position is that interpretative science and all extra judicial acts of the state should restrain themselves to issues of public interest. However, high cost organizations, in many ways an extraction of the state, seem to view oath of confidentiality above public good. This probably stemmed from the culture of social alienation as was advanced by Max. Max argued that most organizations, first capitalist and imperial in nature, hoard information from public light, In Ghandi's thesis virtue is not for the good of society as the organization is only an extraction of the larger space called society, and as such must conduct its businesses for the greater good of its publics. The paper, being a position one, then avers that Nigerian police force has not really lived up to Bentham's greater good. Hence, the need to strike a balance between oath of confidentiality and public interest in the force.*

Keywords: *Information release, the Nigerian police force, public interest*

INTRODUCTION

A number of schools are fast emerging on organization practice. One of the schools, in many ways neoliberals, upholds the belief that organizations must provide detailed account about their operations with the host community. For one, based on anthro-sociological evidence, cultural values and diversity determine how well a people can tolerate an organization. However, for most of the organization theorists, one of such ways to gain acceptance is for the organization to continually interact with its member public. In many ways, they argue that the social system is framed in such a way that it is readily sustained by communication, and when void, conflicts continually erupt.

For one of these scholars (John, 2016), communication remains the basis of all human transactions. But then for some other scholars, organization practice should be able to provide its member publics with basic information they need to know about its operations (Osunyikanmi, 2012).

In other words, in strict office practice, information release transcends the idea of mutual interactions with member publics. Organizations must communicate relevant information about their mode of operations, at least, for the safety of the society as Marx put it. Marx argued that social alienation by an organization is dangerous to humanity as it is the nature of the capitalist to hoard information from the publics. Whether information on tax, payment system, mode of work, Marx as cited in (Ashcraft, 1975) hinged their relevance on societal well-being.

Negations then remain whether this doctrine is practiced in the Nigerian police force, where a number of cases either against convicts or the mode of works is swept under carpet The consequence of this is that the Nigerian society is not safe. If most neighbourhood organizations are

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conditioned by transparency laws so also must the police follow through, especially in cases of public good where such human interest issues shouldn't be adjudged on the oath of confidentiality.

It then follows that the Nigerian populace do not really follow through with the police desk. One argument about the non-release of information from the force is because of the enemy as relevant information is capable of providing room for external attacks.

While this appears to be true, it however does not include issues of public good. The paper then determines find out the degree to which the Nigerian police lives up to Bentham's position on greater good. Also is the need to allay issues of public good (interest) from the one of confidentiality.

Statement of Problem

Platorian doctrine argues that truth can be lost to dark sentences. Such sentences usually coined by the super structure of the society are formulated to conceal the matter. In other words, the idea about the release of information from the office desk of the Nigerian force has been swept off under the oath of confidentiality. The paper then adjudges that information about any organization, beginning with Nigerian police force for one, should be determined under the doctrine of public good (interest) rather than the said oath of confidentiality.

Objectives of the Study

Against the back drop of the above, the objective of the paper is to examine:

1. How well the Nigerian police force has live up to Bentham's position on "greater good".
2. To see if the doctrine of confidentiality is based on greater good or private interest of Nigerian police force.
3. To see if public interest doctrine on the information desk can help check transparency practice in the Nigerian force.

Research Questions

The study then seeks to proffer answers to the following questions:

1. How well has the Nigerian police force lived up to Bentham's position on "greater good in the release of information?
2. Is public interest doctrine able to promote greater good or private interest?
3. Is public interest doctrine on the information desk able to check transparency practice in the Nigerian police force?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Bentham's position on the social system advances the idea of greater number against private interest on his utilitarian theory of 1789, he argued that administrative issues be practiced on the frame work of greatest happiness for the greater number. In other words, the interest of the various social institutions should not out rule public interest. The greater population should determine their social space and culture of things.

It then follows, the paper avers, that the information desk of the police force has not really lived up to this theory, as information about police activities with the citizenry is hoard from public light, in many ways, tending to advance the course of private interest as against the move for greater number. In Bentham's position then confidentiality of person or persons or an organization should not over rule public good, as society can best function on normative principles. Hoarding information then from public light is against normative ethics as morally appropriate behavior will not harm others, but increase greater happiness. The police then hoarding relevant information about its activities, especially in issues of public interest, harms society's happiness as the individual would have been denied access to normative judgment, so then, the oath of confidentiality does not

contribute to the greatest happiness of the greatest number, but to the happiness of few private individuals.

METHODOLOGY OF RESEARCH

The Study adopted content analysis for its approach. The method as captured in Wimmer and Dominic (2006) then affords the researcher the ability to deal with a range of documents, journals, books, historical artifacts, etc. From these sources, content analyses of extracts are done to interpolate the position of the researcher.

On The Police Force and her Information Desk in Nigeria

The importance of the police as an instrument of law enforcement in human society cannot be overemphasized. One classical debate about this is that while lower creatures are able to conduct themselves, at least to some degree, the human nature is not so. Beginning from Hobbes to Marx, society each day, is becoming nasty and brutish, especially as morality wanes. At this point of social decay, man is not able to govern himself except there is a measure of law. But then Hobbes argued that the power of the state over the people is not for few privileged individuals to brandish but for collective wellbeing. It then follows that society governance on early times was calculated on the grounds of peace and mutual interaction. But also Marx averred that class struggle is capable of meddling in the affairs of the people as there will always be this longing for power. The leviathans, as Hobbes called them, further devise structures, a sort of super philosophy to check the masses. These structures come in the form of institutions, wherein the force is one of them. Beginning with this sort of social system then, institutions in many ways the force, no longer work for the well-being of the masses but in the interest of the leviathan (Marx, 1975; Ashcraft 1971)

But then again, society is fast growing as doctrines are emerging on how to better govern society. One of such doctrines is the doctrine of accountability in the police desk as information about the police, especially in Nigeria is an essential duty of police relations.

In Karimu (2013), it was noted that one aspect, the Nigeria police force seem not to be performing is in the area of accountability to Nigerians or its host community. This probably the scholar argues, stems from its traditional mode of practice on the doctrine of confidentiality oath as the security desk of the nation. By this long aged system of practice, the Nigerian police has completely cut off Nigerians from its internal affairs. In Nyamwamu (2012) this sort of policing system has positioned the force as though now stronger than the state itself.

In Omideyi (2012) then analysis of the police and policing in Nigeria calls for reforms and restructuring as it concerns police relations with its member publics. The scholar argued that the police in developing society especially has, not been under checks through the principles of accountability. The nature of the police desk then in Nigeria is one aspect the society is longing to see a change (Osunyikanmi, 2012; Omideyi, 2012)

It then follows that while it may well be said that organization confidentiality has a way of guarding the image of the organization, it can also exude conflict, especially when such information on the hoard is against public interest. Positions have been that confidentiality rule limits the disclosure of information about the victim, and in stringent cases must require the victim-service provider to disclose a victim's right or the organization in question (office of Bureau of Justice).

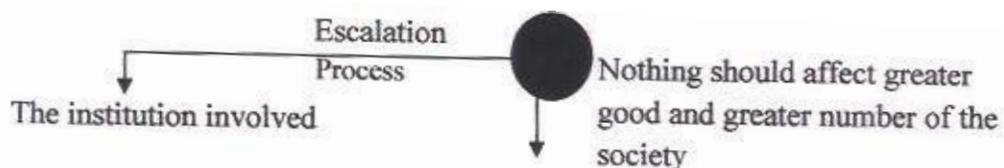
Conceptual Issues of Public Interest

As scholarly debate continues to make sway as to whether there is any time confidentiality oath can be breached, Bernadette et al (2018) argued that such issues as warrants, Court Subpoena, a victim disclosing a vile intention to harm another can however license the victim service provider to breach confidence.

This positive captures the idea that many a time confidentiality cum allied matters are morally associated with individuals seeking coverage. Not much is advanced about organization

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confidentiality where the organization, like the police, is required to declare its activities to the hearing of the public. Indeed, as adjudged in Ohonbamu (2002) the police being more concerned with security, should be given some leverage on confidentiality oath, but not when the institution is against the society herself. The activities of the police when seen as threat to society should be disclosed by the relevant desk. Hence the model below:



Here the model shows that information about an institution, the police for one, should be disclosed when it is likely to escalate to social infection, in many ways, capable of causing the society to go into wars or distemper of any kind.

In Bernadette (2018) while this to some degree is true, the police in question, do not have the moral and language power to interpret confidentiality issues within limit. Such denial of information from public light has the tendency to abet injustice against the larger society. Although, the scholarly debate is that no professional body can exercise its trade without a measure of confidentiality as the organization or practitioner in question will always interact with clients whose records may require non sharing of personal information without informed consent as this can be a violation of professional ethics.

Confidentiality in such cases, helps the victim to remain safe especially in the reporting of crimes, receiving of medical attention or while working with a service provider.

However, as averred in office of bureau of justice, task force agents like the police really do not have clear outlines as to how confidential data can be best managed in policy related matters. According the scholar, not having to understand policies, procedures and ethical issues required in confidential allied matters, can endanger public well being. Bernadette (2018) then argues that no confidential allied matter should over rule issues of public interest. For one, the institution like the police, is only an extraction of the larger space called society and many a time confidential drives promote private interest of the upper class. Hence, issues that are likely to escalate the society into vexation should be disclosed. Such issues include:

1. The force plotting against the society or its host community
2. When there is a division (a faction) in the force
3. When the force plots against a states- man
4. When the force e.g. a police is illegally involved in the death of a suspect

CONCLUSION

The paper then concludes that public good overrules private interest of any institution, for one the institution is only an extraction of the larger space called society and should be able to report back by way of informing the society about its activities, especially when such transactions are capable of harming public good when withheld. As well, the police informing society about its activities helps them not to be larger than expected, as confidentiality oath sometimes is used to favour some privileged men of honour. The paper then submits that one aspect of the police that requires reforms and restructuring is her information desk.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Hence the paper recommends that above cases should be treated by a unitary court system rather than special court of enquiry to aid transparency in disputes.
2. That oath of confidentiality should not be applied when the case is a matter of public good.
3. That there should be dissolution of the police or military court by the office of his Excellency
4. That the press should be well licensed to enquire into police activities and disclose relevant information.

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