



FUOYE JOURNAL OF CRIMINOLOGY AND SECURITY STUDIES (FJCSS)



**DEPARTMENT OF
CRIMINOLOGY AND SECURITY
STUDIES**

**Federal University Oye Ekiti
Nigeria**

**Vol. 1 No. 1,
JUNE, 2021**

**ISSN: 2786-9636 (Print)
ISSN: 2790-3246 (Online)**



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'Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea': Domestic Counterterrorism Pitfalls in Nigeria and the Troubled Foreign Counterterrorism Cooperation

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From Reporting Crime to Trial and Ruling: An Investigation into Victims' Assessment of the Nigerian Criminal Justice Process

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Abstract

The present study investigates the experiences of victims of crime with the Nigerian criminal justice practitioners from the point of reporting their victimisations to the trial process and court ruling. The study adopts a cross-sectional survey design. It was carried out in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. Sampling methods adopted include criterion, convenience, and purposive to select 31 participants for the study. In-depth interview was the instruments employed for data collection and information gathered was analysed using thematic analysis. The results indicated that participants were not satisfied with the process from the beginning to the end; even though appropriate penalties based on the provisions of the law have been imposed on their various offenders. Also, participants do not appear to have gotten the justice they strive for due to the inadequate or absence of compensation for the harms or losses suffered. The study, recommends that while the system protects the offenders based on the provisions of the law, there is also a need for the system to focus on the desires of the victims of crime.

Keywords: victims of crime, criminal justice system, reporting crime, victimisation.

Introduction

Crime has enormous effects on its victim(s). When a crime is committed, it is the victim that is mortified, dispossessed and feels the horror (Hall, 2012). The aftermath of a crime usually left the victim(s) with physical, emotional and financial strains or even death (Quinney & Treviño, 2001). Hence, significant to every crime (and criminal justice process) is the victim(s) against whom the crime was committed. Unlike the traditional justice system where crime is seen as a dispute between the perpetrator and the victim, the state assumes a dominant role in the justice process in the contemporary justice system in many parts of the world today (Salihu, 2020). Through its legal instruments, the state defines some specific forms of conduct as crimes. These crimes are considered infractions against the law and invariably become offences against the state than a dispute between the perpetrator and victim (Salihu, 2020).

In the contemporary justice system, the state has the power(s) to ultimately take over the control of the criminal proceedings including taking complaints from victims, investigation of the offence, arrest and prosecution of the suspect, arraignment and adjudication, and enforcement of the court pronouncement. Victims of crime are rarely given sufficient opportunities to participate directly in the trial (Yusuf & Yahaya, 2014). In most cases, they are invited by the law enforcement officers to get more information from them and/or to identify some suspects (Hall, 2012). Moreover, victims are also called upon for cross-examinations during the trials (Yusuf & Yahaya, 2014). Aside these, victims of crimes are not allowed to make any contributions, many of them sit in the court like other audiences to listen to the arguments (Krahé, 2018). However, the system made provisions for the protection of victims through its criminal laws; nonetheless, decisions about the crime are often made with the interests of the state



rather than those of the victim even though it was the victim who reported the offence to the authorities (Orth & Maercker, 2004).

In many societies today, crime victims are often referred to as 'forgotten individuals' in the administration of justice. The state through its apparatus of justice considerably pays much attention to the rights of the defendants in terms of ensuring due process (Ofori-Dua et al., 2019). Besides, the criminal justice actors emphasise more on punishing the present offender to ensure deterrence of future offenders (Hall, 2012). While such consideration is placed on the offenders and punishment, the criminal justice system is presumed to be representative of the victims and their interests and that of the larger society; nonetheless, no substantial consideration is given to victims' direct involvement in the proceedings (Salihu, 2020).

The United Nations' Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power adopted in 1985 recognises the rights of the crime victims and expressly implored member states to ensure that 'victims of crime are informed of their role and the scope, timing and progress of the proceedings and the disposition of their cases' (United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention (UNODC), 1999:1). Despite the provisions of this declaration, many victims still encounter multitudes of insensitive behaviour and varying misconducts from law enforcement agents, prosecutors and even court officials in most countries (Orth & Maercker, 2004). Ofori-Dua et al. (2019) likened the experience of some victims of crime in many nations where bribery and corruption have pervaded the justice system to marginalisation, restriction of freedom of speech and movement in some cases. Victims are given little or no chance to express their opinions; some are even threatened and prevented by the police to raise their concerns when they are called upon for questioning during the criminal justice process (Campbell, 2006). The unruly behaviour of these agents of justice who are expected to enforce the law in accordance with their ethical code of conducts made some victims to be victimised for the second time, thereby causing them another injury (Ofori-Dua et al., 2019). This kind of treatment happens in most countries around the world but more widespread in developing

countries where fundamental human rights are disregarded (Salihu & Gholami, 2018).

In Nigeria, the criminal justice system is rooted in various extra-judicial practices ranging from arbitrary arrests and detention of innocent people to bribery and corruption, manipulation and tampering of evidence, threatening of witnesses and victims of crime and other human rights violations (Salihu, 2019). According to Yusuf and Yahaya (2014), the actors in the system particularly the police are known for their insensitive behaviour to distress calls and responding to emergencies. Also, the system is faulty from the point of reporting the crime to trials and court verdicts. For these reasons, users of CJS always have unpleasant stories at the end of their encounter with the system (Famous, 2019).

Additionally, it is always difficult to differentiate civil matter from criminal matter, this is because the CJS actors particularly the police treat the two the same way. Civil cases where disputants should be enlightened and encouraged to approach the appropriate channels are of interest to the police (Akpunonu-Ogu, 2004). More so, in some cases, the system does not allow the victims of crime to present their rightful claims in conjunction with criminal proceedings (Adetiba, 1990). In addition, in situations where an offender is convicted, the sanctions (which are often outrageous and inconsistent with sentence guidelines) have no relevance to the victim (Yusuf, 2007). It, thus, appears that court sentences in Nigeria are only to gratify the momentary mental need of the victim and not to reimburse their losses.

The issue of victims' experiences with the Nigerian criminal justice system (NCJS) has been the concern of the civil society organisations and human rights activists in the country; whereas, the subject has received little attention from the academic world. Previous academic studies have largely centred on offenders' encounter with the criminal justice practitioners (Shajobi-Ibikunle, 2014; Alemika, 1993; Ebeniro, 2011; Jacob & Udofia, 2018). Besides, many of the existing academic literature on victims' encounters with the Nigerian CJS is basically theoretical (Adetiba, 1990; Karibi, 1990; Yusuf & Yahaya, 2014; Famous, 2019), empirical investigations that explored this area is scanty. It is



this account that this study investigates the experiences of victims of crime with the Nigerian criminal justice system. It aims to explore victims encounter with the criminal justice actors from the point of reporting their victimisations to the trial process and court ruling. The study also aims to gauge victims' assessment of the whole system.

Literature review

Who is a victim of crime?

Victims of crime are individuals who have suffered certain harm including physical, psychological or emotional, property damage or financial losses as a result of the action of another individual(s) and where such action has been defined by law as a crime (O'Doherty, 2011). The term victims of crime, according to the United Nations Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power encompasses 'persons who, individually or collectively, have suffer harm, including mental injury, emotional suffering, economic loss or substantial impairment of their fundamental rights, through acts or omissions that are in violation of criminal law operatives within the members states' (UNODC, 1999:118). In legal context, victims of crime are individuals, entities, wildlife or environment that have suffered a direct or indirect harm as a result of the commission of a crime (Clarkson, 2005). A victim of crime, according to Famous (2019:81) 'is any person who individually or collectively with another person or other persons has injury, loss, damage in consequence of a criminal offence, regardless of his relationship with the offender and including filial, parental, spousal or other relationship'. Justice Karibi Whyte defines a victim of crime as any creature or institution who has suffered harm from the criminal act of a lawbreaker who has been pronounced guilty in such act(s) (Karibi, 1990). From the foregoing, this study defines victims of crime as persons, creatures, or entity who have suffered harms either physical, psychological or emotional or property damages or economic and financial losses as a result of the actions or omissions (of another person) that have been prohibited by the criminal law.

The Nigerian criminal justice system

First and foremost, the criminal justice system is an essential mechanism employed in the administration of justice across the globe. It is a system that seeks to ensure and promote justice, fairness, the application and practice of rule of law and the exercise of a democratic society (Garland, 1990). Generally, the criminal justice system involves a number of activities and processes by different agencies established by governments to control crime and impose punishments on violators of criminal laws. The system comprises at least three components namely, the law enforcement (Police), the court process (judges, prosecutors, and defence lawyers) and the corrections (prison: officials, probation and parole officers) (O'Keefe, 2010).

The Nigerian criminal justice system derives its legal footing from the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended). The Nigeria constitution provides for the respect and protection of citizens' fundamental human rights such as the right to life, right to liberty, right to own property, fair hearing, freedom of association and speech among others (see Section 33-46 of the 1999 Constitution, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 1999). For these rights to be properly protected and to avoid any infringement, the law also provides for institutionalised criminal justice apparatus and empowers the state to prosecute and convict any person who commits a crime through the justice apparatus (Okogbule, 2005). The various institutions involved in the administration of justice in Nigeria include the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), the Court (Judiciary), and the Nigeria Correctional Service.

The NPF is an essential law enforcement body that is responsible for the prevention and detection of crime, apprehension of offenders, preservation of law and order, protection of life and property and the due employment of laws and regulation, (see Section 24 of the Police Act, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 1990). While the police initiate the process of a criminal proceeding, the courts ensure that due process is applied in the administration of justice. By virtue of the provisions of the law, all matters must be referred to the law court for adjudication. For this reason, the courts are charged with the responsibility



to establish the guilt or innocence of any person brought before the law, to ensure that appropriate penalty is enforced (see Section 6 (1-3) of the Constitution, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 1999). The correctional service is the third actor in the criminal justice process. It is a body that houses convicts and suspect on trial. By virtue of the law, the institution is responsible for the custody of all certified convicts and all suspects under remand order; presenting suspects in courts, administering reforms, setting ground for techniques of reformation, rehabilitation and reintegration of inmates among others (see CAP P29 of the Prison Act, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004).

Victims of crime and the Nigerian criminal justice system

Victims of crime are a significant element to the operations of the criminal justice system and for the administration of justice; being a key element made them more vulnerable (Ofori-Dua et al., 2019). For instance, victims of crime are subjected to multiple victimisations and neglect within the framework of criminal justice processes, which place more emphasis on bringing perpetrators to justice. At the time when victims discover that a crime has been committed against them, they suffer a range of physical, psychological and emotional disturbances and financial losses among others (Karimu, 2015). In addition to this, victims also suffer secondary victimization frequently in the hands of criminal justice practitioners particularly the police during the criminal justice process (Salihu & Gholami, 2018).

Famous (2019) observed that while crime victims are a vital component in the criminal justice process, for the most part in the area of detection and reporting of crime, and provision of valuable information and evidence, these victims are often ignored and their claims are misplaced during the trial process. Most of the emphases are centred on the suspected offender from the beginning of the trial to the end (Ali, 2017). Salihu (2019) also highlighted the importance of crime victims to the criminal justice processes and the victimisations suffered by them in the course of reporting the crime and undergoing the trial. Salihu (2019) stressed that in most part of the criminal proceedings, the police is not always a crime detecting

agency for most of the offences, but they apprehend and gather facts and evidence to prosecute offender; it is the victim that detects, reports, provides information about the suspect and in most cases helps the police to secure the arrests of the suspect. However, it is the same victim that suffers from police indifference and unethical behaviour.

How victims of crime are treated and handled by the criminal justice actors, according to Dambaz (2009), undermines and reduces them (victims) to mere observers and passive participants in trials that concerned their affairs. Orth and Maercker (2000) noted that victims who have gone through the criminal justice processes in Nigeria and in most common law states are always represented by the state through an assigned prosecutor(s), and act as prosecution witnesses for the process. Moreover, Adetiba (1999) observed that they are barely informed of the court sitting and proceedings and rarely consulted by the prosecutor in any decision-making throughout the process.

Human rights activists have also raised concern over disregard for the welfare, rights and other essential needs of victims of crime in the legal process. The system appears to have shifted its attention and agenda away from the victims to the needs and protection of suspected offenders (Human Rights Watch, 2010). Frynas (2001) succinctly describes the process by claiming that in the early stages of the criminal justice process, the approach is generally victim-oriented; however, as the process advances it shifts to a suspect-oriented approach. All these, in effect, are victimisation which also makes crime victims more vulnerable to other victimisations. On the whole, the relationship between the victims and the criminal justice system is affected and consequently influenced peoples' decision to report crimes to the police and to seek other means of getting justice (Salihu and Gholami, 2018).

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in Ilorin metropolis. Ilorin is the capital city of Kwara State located in the North-Central geopolitical region of Nigeria. For administrative purpose, the city was divided into 33 districts clustered into three local government areas



(LGA) namely Ilorin West, Ilorin South and Ilorin East. Ilorin is about 500 km from Abuja, the Federal Capital City of Nigeria and 306 km from Lagos State, the commercial hub of the country. The last population census in Nigeria in 2006, estimated that the population of Ilorin was around 777,667 (National Population Commission, 2006). The study used both the primary and secondary sources of data. The primary source was a cross-sectional survey design; the population for the research included victims of crime who have reported their victimisation to the police and whose offenders have been arrested, and cases have undergone criminal justice procedure particularly arraignment and conviction of the suspected offenders.

A number of sampling methods including criterion, convenience, and purposive sampling techniques were adopted to select the participants of the study. The criterion sampling method was first used to set criteria for the nature of participants to be selected. For instance, victims who have experienced crimes such as theft, vandalism, frauds, sexual offences such as assault and harassment and excluding rape, and robbery. Victims who experienced serious capital offences were not included due to the severity of the trauma experienced by such victims and to avoid any rigorous activities that may resurrect the experience of those gory events. Following this, convenience and purposive sampling method were used to select a total of 31 participants. Semi-structured in-depth interview was the instrument employed for data collection. The interviews delved into matters on victims' experiences during reporting their victimisation to the police, during the trial and following the court verdicts. Some of the specific questions include: What was the response(s) of the police when you went to lodge complaints? How swift was police actions to your complaints? Are you informed of any development in your case? How was the trial, in term of participation? What is your overall appraisal of the system? Are you contended with the verdict and to what extent does the verdict took care of your losses?

In the first place, the researchers conducted a pilot study on 9 victims of crime to discover and rectify potential errors in the procedure and questions, besides to confirm the reliability of the instrument.

Some research experts in the field of criminal justice and criminology were consulted to validate and assess and reassess the instruments before and after the pilot study. The instrument and some aspects of the methods were revised based on the recommendations made by the experts. With regard to the procedure employed, the researchers attended at least 41 different court cases through which they were able to identify some victims of crime. After some court hearings, the researchers approached some of the victims and informed them about the research, its purpose and its implications particularly what it seeks to uncover and address. Those approached were told to reflect on participation and not to respond immediately. Also, they were given note detailing information about the research, their rights to or not to participate and to withdraw from participation anytime. Moreover, the note contains assurance of their anonymity and confidentiality of any information shared and the contacts of the researchers in case they decided to participate.

While 15 victims granted us the time to explain more about the research, most of them were afraid to talk and as a result, referred the researchers to their lawyers before they can say anything. Through, their lawyers, the researchers were able to shed light on the research interests, the areas it covers, the implications and the rights of the participants. This method was successful because it produced 11 victims of crime. While 6 victims voluntarily called the researchers on phone to indicate their interests, 14 victims agreed to participate after meeting them at least 3 times after their court hearings. Hence, participation in the study was voluntary.

Finally, for record purpose and ease decoding, interview data were recorded with a digital recording device. In order to realise the research objectives and respond to the research questions raised, the information collected from the interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. The method allows the researchers to probe the themes of the text in the notes to discover the definitions enclosed in the text.



Results and Discussion

Socio-demographic information of the participants

The interview information for this study was obtained from 31 victims of crime who are residents of Ilorin and who have gone through the criminal justice processes. That is individuals whom crimes have been committed against and who have made formal complaints to the police and have also experienced or gone through the pre-trial and trial stage in a Nigerian court of law in Ilorin. The participants consisted of 15 men and 16 women. With respect to age, participants ranged between 23 and 57-year-old. About 24 of them fall between 23-46 year-old, while 7 were between 48 and 57-year-old. This indicates that majority of the participants were mainly young people.

Moreover, majority (22) of the participants had formal education. While most (21) of them had completed tertiary education (university, polytechnics and colleges of education), 7 had secondary school education and 3 were undergoing their tertiary education. Also, 9 had informal education such as vocational apprenticeship. In respect to the kind of crime committed against them or how they were victimised by their offenders, participants' accounts revealed that 9 criminal offences ranging from vandalism to theft of property, domestic assault, sexual-related offences including attempted rape and harassment, frauds (419) including internet scam, love scam, land scam, obtaining bank details under false pretences, had been committed against the victims. Additionally, interview information shows that participants do not have any experience or encounter with the criminal justice system prior to their victimisation.

Participants' gender, age and reporting crime

Previous academic investigations have demonstrated the role of gender and age on peoples' perception. These two variables significantly shape the ways we observe and define or give meaning to events and social phenomena around us (Strand, 1999; Walker et al., 2014; Chan et al., 2011). Based on the accounts of the participants of this study, these two variables were found to have largely influenced their decision to either report or not report to the police immediately they experience victimisation. Participants were asked

what their actions were immediately after they realised they have been victimised. Based on their expressions, their responses were divided into three distinct categories: a. those who went to report immediately to the police; b. those who were reluctant to report initially but later encouraged by friends/relatives to report some days after and; those who confronted their perpetrators and tried to put laws in their own hands to recover what was taken from them but later turned to the criminal justice system when they could not get their belongings back.

The first group mainly consists of males who are largely between the ages of 37 and 57-year-old, while female in this group were small in number and were between 34 and 41 year old. The implication of this is that participants' gender and age appear to have influenced and informed their decisions to report the crime to the police and not to take laws into their own hands. For instance, being male appears to have given some of the male participants who decided to report the crime, the confidence to approach the police station. Also, it can be observed that the age range of these participants indicate that they are not as young as other participants. People in this age group, according to Aderinto and Etuk (2008), are full-grown adults; they rarely settle dispute with violence and are more likely to rely on law enforcement agency to address burdening issues. Thus, age seems to have also played a significant role in their decision to report their victimisation.

The second group largely consists of female participants who were between the ages of 28 and 30-year-old. Based on the expressions of participants in this group, being female made them fear going to the police. Their fears appear to have been fuelled by the widespread impression among people that police generally harass and even victimise females who are victims of crime (Famous, 2019), and that police extort anyone who is in distress (Salihu, 2019). In general, these impressions prevented them from going to the police to report their victimisations. However, they later found their courage to report with the support of their loved ones. The implication of this is that, unlike the male participants, some female participants who are within such age (28 and 30-year-



old) range do not have confidence to go to the police to report their victimisations.

The third group mainly comprises male participants who are between the age range of 23 and 36-year-old. Participants in this age group are predominantly young people, most of them belong to post-adolescence period and early adulthood. An individual in this age group according to Covey et al. (2020) and Gargano et al. (2018) has the tendency to address burdening issues with violence and will probably involve his peers in solving problems in an aggressive manner. Accordingly, given the age group of this category of participants, the reason why they initially chose self-actualisation is obvious. On the whole, age and gender play an important role in reporting crime to the police. However, participants' level of education seems to have little or no effects on their decisions to either report or not to report crime to the police. The interview information shows that the three groups consist of educated and uneducated participants.

Reporting crime and law enforcement response to situations

For the reason that police is the gateway anyone victimised will first contact, interview information showed that participants contacted the nearest police station to report their victimisation. Their expressions indicated that they originally believe in the system and that they will get the desired justice. However, majority (24) of them said that the manner of police response during reporting their victimisation was held at a tip while others (7) claimed that they were received politely.

On the one hand, participants who reported poor police reactions recounted that officers who attended to them at the station were male police officers. They used words like no compassion, lack of good human relation, disrespectful, and corrupt to describe the police officers who attended to them at the counter. Besides, most of them claimed that officers they met at the stations asked them to pay money before any complaint could be taken; some noted that officers said they do not have writing materials to write down complainants' statement and they were made pay for or buy notebook and pen sold by another police

officer; others recounted that police officers said that they do not have functional vehicles at that moment to respond to the complainants' distress calls.

For instance, a participant (who is a victim of vandalism) stressed that

Police officers are callous when it comes to taking complainants' statement. Their utterances and facial expression alone are enough to make one regret going to them. Also, they have no regard and show no concern to whatever that happened to you or brought you to their station.

Another participant (who is a victim of robbery) said

I was so scared, panicking and crying after I was robbed by some armed assailants few kilometres to the police post. When I got to the police to report, I felt humiliated and my tears ceased immediately when a police officer that supposed to calm me down told me 'what is all this rubbish nah? Why are you crying like a baby? Are you mummy's pet? Sit down somewhere there and let me know if you are done crying.'

Another participant who is a victim of theft stressed that

The officer I met at the counter placed his hands on his chicks while I was explaining what happened to me; after I am done, he told me your money is 5000 Naira. He said the money should be paid before he writes anything down. I had to go back home and get the money; then he writes down my statements after I paid.

On the other hand, participants (7) who said police responses were courteous noted that they were well received by the police and their responses to the situation were swift. This group of participants recounted that officers who responded or initiated response to their case were female police officers. For instance, a participant narrated that



When I went to report at the police station it was a female officer that responded to me while other officers (male and female) around were indifferent. The female officer later called another female officer to assist her'. The reception was lovely and actions were quick.

From the accounts of the participants, it can be observed that the gender of the police officers met at the station predicts police response or action. Male police officers were reported to be corrupt and callous while female officers were reported to be calm and receptive. On the whole, participants' expressions indicate that they were unhappy with the kind of reception they received from the (male) police officers and some of these expressions implicate the police institution of unethical practices such as corruption, poor human relations and extortion of already traumatised victims of crime who came to lodge a report of their victimisations.

Police action after victims' reports

Following reporting their victimisations, participants were asked to describe how officers in charge of their cases helped in term of facilitating the investigation, apprehension of suspects, processing of case and assurance of justice. A few numbers of them indicated that police investigations into the matter started few days after reporting and suspects identified and taken into custody. However, most of the participants stressed that it took the police months before any action was taken following reporting at the station. Some of the participants noted that they had to bribe the officers in charge of the case to initiate the necessary procedure and that police approach to issues does not suggest any assurance and confidence of justice.

Moreover, some participants reported that after several months of uncertainty the police apprehended and detained their perpetrators for a few hours (some for few days) and later released them on bail without notifying them (victims). Generally, participants appear uncontended and displeased with the way police handled cases especially when no attempt was made after reporting and the release of perpetrators

without their consents. Besides, some victims said that nothing happened to the culprits after reporting to the police. For instance, a participant stressed that

After several weeks of police searching for my perpetrator and could not find him, I later arrested him with the assistance of some friends and handed him to the police.¹ He was detained for about 3 hours and released on bail without informing me or my counsel. He was rearrested following a court order issued to the police to provide him.

These findings agree with the result reported by Salihu (2019) that Nigerian police officers rarely respond to distress calls, solicit for bribe or inducement before complaints are recorded and, as a result, complainants to pay for writing materials.

Victims' participation and awareness of the development and outcomes of hearings

Interview information suggests that not only were the participants apprehensive about the attitude and police response to reporting crimes and facilitation of investigation of cases and arrest of their perpetrators, but they were also concerned about being kept in the dark about all information relating to their cases. Most of the participants reported being kept in the dark; that all information regarding investigations, the arrest and arraignment of suspects were kept from them. Participants reported that police informed them that the matter has become a state case and no more in their hands. Accordingly, police invite them only when some information is required and/or when there is a need to identify some arrested suspects. Notwithstanding, after that, every other thing remains the same.

¹ Section 20 of the Administration of Justice Act (ACJA, 2015), Law of the Federation of Nigeria provides that 'A private person may arrest a suspect in Nigeria who in his presence commits an offence, or whom he reasonably suspects of having committed an offence for which the police is entitled to arrest without a warrant'.



Additionally, participants also complained about the court process. In most cases, they were not informed of the trial dates and outcomes; they were only called upon to testify and/or when cross-examinations are required by the prosecutors or defence team. In situations when victims are aware of the trial date, participants claimed that they only sit in the courtroom like other court observers. They were not allowed to make any contributions or points to the discussion; it is the prosecutors that speak for them during the process. A participant stressed that

It is disturbing that a crime perpetrated against you is being argued in your presence in the court of law and you could not say a thing, even when the prosecutor is not at his best.

Moreover, some of the participants were critical of the cross-examination they were made to go through. Most of them claimed that the defence lawyers were tough on them in the manner in which they ask questions and putting words into their mouths during cross-examination but the prosecutors were lenient on their perpetrators. However, their facial expression as the researchers observed indicated that, understandably, their condition and anxiety to get justice might have influenced their opinions in this regard.

Also the back and forth arguments in courts, adjournment of cases, and lengthy trial period appear to be another area of concern for a substantial number of the participants. Most of them claimed that they were tired of the argument and counter-argument and apprehensive about what the outcome of the case would. Moreover, due to a lack of understanding of some legal terms and technicalities such as adjournment, application for interlocutory, majority of the participants claimed that they got stuck at some point and do not border themselves about the outcome of the case any longer. A participant said

I get more frustrated and nervous when they started speaking their legal jargons. I do not understand anything at that point and there is no one to explain, not even the prosecutors. Sometimes I go out of the courtroom.

These results corroborate the view of Famous (2019), Orth and Maercker (2004), Yusuf and Yahaya (2014) and Karibi (1990).

Victims' evaluation of the whole process

Following the description of their experiences in the criminal justice processes, participants were asked to evaluate the process and the overall system, from the day victimisation was reported to the day verdict was passed, and their contentment with the outcome. Based on their responses, majority of them were unhappy from the commencement of the process. Most of them reiterated and described their first experience with the police, particularly police attitudes towards taking their statements, asking for inducement, initiating an investigation, and apprehension of their offenders, as unacceptable and disparaging. A participant said '*police approach that day was a disgrace to all police officers in Nigeria. I did not expect that from a law enforcement officer*'.

In addition, participants were not contented with the performance of the prosecutors. They (participants) described them (prosecutors) as incompetent, secretive, conspiratorial, non-appearance and that they are not time conscious. A participant noted that '*the prosecutors always come late to the trial and sometimes even failed to appear in court. These attitudes among others stalled my trial several times*'. However, while most of the participants were critical of the court process (mainly actors engaging in time-wasting activities like adjournment, presentation and re-presentation of evidence and calling of witnesses, non-appearance of defence lawyers and prosecutors among other things), none of them passed any significant remark on the judges.

Also, most of the victims stressed that even though their perpetrators were given appropriate sentences but they could not get reasonable compensation to cover their losses. A participant who is a victim of fraud noted that '*I am relieved that the offender has been punished for the offence; at least, that will prevent him from spreading the evil to other people*'. However, the verdict did not address my losses'. Similarly, a victim of vandalism stressed that '*it is good that my perpetrators have been sentenced but my problem with the court ruling is that the compensation readout is not favourable at all*'. In this way, it appears that a considerable



majority of the participants were dissatisfied with the system at the end of the whole process.

Given that most of the participants had no prior encounter with the criminal justice actors, their encounter with the police during reporting their victimisation appears to have ruined their hope and aspirations for justice. The attitude portrayed by the police officers (most of the participants met at the station), the way cases were handled in terms of initiating investigations and making arrest and release of their perpetrators couple with the court processes and uncontended verdicts appear to have given participants erroneous impression about the whole system. Thus, the system is generally viewed as corrupt and unproductive.

Conclusion and recommendations

This study investigates the experiences of victims of crime with the Nigerian criminal justice system. It focuses on the various encounters experienced by victims of crime from the point of reporting their victimisations to the trial process and court ruling. Based on the interview information, the author concludes that participants are not satisfied with the process from the beginning to the end, even though appropriate penalties based on the provisions of the law have been imposed on their various offenders; majority of them appear not to have gotten the justice they strive for due to the inadequate or absence of compensation for the harms or losses suffered. Accordingly, while the system protects the offenders based on the provisions of the law, there is also a need for the system to focus on the desires of the victims of crime. The criminal justice actors should be mindful that victims' desires abound justice or punishment for the offender, access to information and participation in the process, and adequate compensation for the injuries or losses suffered; this should be part of the agenda of the system. Moreover, it is important to provide adequate on-the-job-training and retraining for the criminal justice practitioners on police-public relationship and how to deal with victims in distress to reduce any potential risk of secondary victimization.

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