VOL. 08 NO. 6,
MAY, 2025
E-ISSN 3027-1401
P-ISSN 3026-9148

African Scholar Publications & Research International
www.africanscholarpub.com

Journal of Arts and Sociological Research (JASR)

State Police and Crime Control in Nigeria: A Focus on Imo State

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DOI: **https://doi.org/10.70382/ajasr.v8i6.039**

Abstract

This study explored the need for state police and crime control in Imo State of Nigeria. The idea is set to assess the need to establish state police capable of occasioning effective and efficient crime control through enhanced state personnel information gathering, crime management, as well as logistic support for crime control in the state. Survey research design was adopted for the study. The researchers collected data through primary source (questionnaire). The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages and mean. The study was anchored on Diffusion Theory. It was discovered that there is need to establish state police, which would be capable of occasioning effective and efficient crime control; through enhanced local personnel intelligence gathering, crime management, as well as logistic support for crime control in the state. It was recommended that the government at all levels should occasion a well thought out effective and efficient constitutional review to establish state police, to enhance local information gathering, crime management, and logistic support to reduce the rate of crime in Imo State of Nigeria.

Keywords: State Police, Crime control/management, Intelligence gathering, Local personnel, Logistic support.

Introduction

The Federal Police Force was established under Section 214, 215 and 216 of the 1999 constitution. Section 214 thereof provides for a unified and centralized police force that operates from the centre, and prohibits the establishment of any other form of policing in Nigeria. State police simply means the absence of a centralized national police force, which is outside the control of the Inspector-General of Police (IGP) (Ochie, 2023). State police can also be described as a body of police force unique to each of the federating units, having state wide authority to conduct law enforcement activities and criminal investigation across that particular state. This implies a death below the over bloated and behemoth Federal Police Force in Nigeria (Adebayo, 2022).

The concept of state policing is not altogether a new phenomenon in Nigeria. It has been widely recommended as one of the means of addressing the issues of insecurity in our country. The perception has received wide acceptance by most Nigerians for their peculiar exclusive reasons. The government has recently joined. Some say that the Federal Police Command is incompetent or has failed in its duty of securing Nigerians (Oduba, 2020). Others believe that the closeness of state police will help for more effective policing. Many people belong to this school of thought, while others claim that over the years, they have advocated for state police and community policing since 2006 (Ibeama & Edoh, 2022). However, in Nigeria context, state police consists of a kind of sub-regional police force which ought to be organized, maintained and operated under the jurisdiction of a particular state government, as opposed to the federal government (Abubakar, 2019).

No doubt, a federal system of government is a centralized arrangement that distributes powers between the federal, state and local governments. These powers are categorized into exclusive, concurrent and residual lists. In the exclusive list are those items on which only the central or federal government can legislate like; the external relations, internal policing, defense, custom, etc. The concurrent list contains those items which both the federal/central and state government can legislate at the same time. For example, education, agriculture, taxation, road maintenance among others. The residual list comprises of those items that are left in the purview of the local authorities such as; public toilets and environmental sanitation among others (1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended).

One of the items under the exclusive list that has generated so much debate recently in Nigeria is the issue of policing. Currently, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), like the Military, is being run in line with

the (unification) decree No. 34 of 1966, promulgated by General JTU Aguyi Ironsi. The decree which foisted a unitary system of government on the nation was Ironsi's articulation that needed to bind the nation together following the geo-ethnic tumor and near national fracture brought about by January 1966 coup (Mersim, 2021). This "constitutional basis" called or gave room for the centralization of the administration of the Nigeria Police, as well as paramilitary establishment. The decree engendered nothing but a unitary system in a purportedly federal setting (Nwafor, 2017).

Crime control or management is applied specifically the efforts made by the governments to reduce crime, enforce the law, and maintain criminal justice (Ibeanoro, 2021). That could be why Governor Ortom of Benue State, cried out when Herdsmen gave him notice of future attack. The State Commissioner of Police was aware. The helpless governor cried to the centre in Abuja, no help came. The herdsmen attacked, lives were lost, mass burial took place and the Governor wept like a baby (*Vanguard News, August 15, 2018*). It is ironical to say that Nigeria is the only prominent democracy in the world that still maintains a unified Central Police Force (CPF) over a population of 210 million people, 36 Federal States and 774 Local Government Areas. Hence, there is need for the study.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria is currently in a state of dire security quagmire. Nigeria is literally at war with herself, with large swaths of lands flowing blood of innocent Nigerians through serial killings. Insecurity of lives and property has taken the centre state. For over a decade now, Nigeria has been facing the heinous torture, maiming, gruesome killings by Boko haram, Fulani herdsmen, Kidnappers, armed rubber, armed bandits, Unknown gun-men and other insurgents. All these have claimed hundreds of thousands of lives of the innocent Nigerians. Any government legitimacy is measured by its ability to secure the lives and property of her citizens; and to give democratic dividends to the governed (Section 14 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, as amended).

With the ongoing wanton killings, many have wondered if Nigeria truly indeed, has security agencies paid with the tax payers' money, to protect lives and property. Studies conducted by Abubakar (2019) and Ezenkwa (2023) confirmed that, notwithstanding the existence of the Army, Navy, Air-force, Nigeria Police Force, DIA, NIA, the Nigeria and Civil Defense Corps and the Department of Security Service (DSS), the unspeakable crimes still take place unabated. Of all these security agencies, the Nigeria Police Force is the one that is constitutionally saddled with the responsibility of the day-to-day protection of lives and property of Nigeria.

This is why some scholars and political commentators call what Nigeria is practicing "unitary federation". It is federal on paper but unitary in operation (Okike, 2018). Recent realties of security challenges in the country have to contend with this, particularly in the past 12 years or so. The security challenges have continued to fuel the debate on whether

there is a need for the federal government to devolve (policing) power to allow states and possibly local government authorities to run their own police, especially, as the wave and pattern of crimes across the country assume local peculiarities. The argument is summarized thus; "Do local problems require local solutions?"

Research Objectives

The general objective of the study is to examine the impact of state police on crime control in Nigeria. The specific objectives are:

1. To find out whether there is need for constitutional review to establish the state police to reduce the crime rate in Imo State.
2. To determine ways in which the local personnel intelligence gathering can help to reduce the rate crime in Imo State.
3. To ascertain whether effective local crime management can be used to reduce the crime rate in Imo State.
4. To identify how adequate funding/logistics can make the personnel more effective to reduce the crime rate in Imo State.

Research Questions

Based on the objectives of the study, the following research questions were posed for the study:

1. Is there need for constitutional review to establish state police to reduce the crime rate in Imo State?
2. In what ways can the local personnel intelligence gathering help to reduce the crime rate in Imo State?
3. In what ways can effective local crime management help to reduce the crime rate in Imo State?
4. In what ways can adequate funding/logistics make the personnel more effective to reduce the crime rate in Imo State?

Review of Related Literature

Concept of State Policing

State policing is a Police Force under state authority, city or local government in a state. It has also been defined as the police organized and maintained by a state (Mersim, 2021). Agwanwo (2023, p. 64) on his part sees state police as "the act of policing in a federal system wherein the state government employs police officers for the purpose of policing the state". A developing country like Nigeria according to Abubakar (2019) requires regional police for the purpose of increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the government, as well as the economy, arguing that in almost every state of the federation, there has been a kind of policing response from the state government on the issue of insecurity, which underscores the need for regional police in Nigeria.

Speaking on the contrary, Onyema (2017) wondered why the political elites who could make the state police to happen are opposed to the idea, pointing out that it remains a puzzle only time would solve. He contends that we cannot continue to live in a constant denial of our reality, noting that perhaps, we do not need or ripe for state police. In his view, the reality will continue to stare us in the face, just like a shadow follows an object about. It is against this background that Akamere (2021) reminds us that, the irony of accepting the wave of insecurity as being normal is the need to change from the old ways and embrace the dawn, as we cannot continue to do something in old ways and expect different results. Based on this, Ochie (2023) opines that the veritable way out of the current quagmire of insecurity and similar security challenges of Nigeria would be the establishment of state police. His submission is born out of what he referred to as the persistent allegation of abuse of the NPF by those who currently run and control it.

Intelligence Gathering and Crime Reduction

Intelligence gathering is a system through which information about a particular entity or thing is connected for the benefit of another through the use of more than one inter-related ideas or sources. Such information may be gathered as military intelligence, police intelligence, government intelligence, private intelligence or even the local people intelligence (Ezenkwa, 2019). This could be why Udezuo (2021, p.155) posits that "intelligent assessment employs intelligent analysis to refine information gathered in the process of tackling criminal elements to reduce crimes". For example according to him, someone who is a native of rural community in Imo State is more likely to understand the local terrain and social dynamics of the particular crime under investigation in the area, than someone who is from another rural community in Kano State. Such a native would be better positioned or informed to tackle crimes in the area than someone born and bred in a place hundreds of kilometers away. This is a pointer to the fact that state police would be more penetrable and widespread, as well as community friendly and result oriented unlike the Nigeria Police Force (Agwanwo, 2021).

Again, in a similar development, Okike (2018) points out that despite the force's customarily straight and rigid line of command and communication, it is one institution where respect for the hierarchy is cast in iron as a rule. In his opinion therefore, it would be difficult for a State Commissioner of Police as we have witnessed severally, to use his initiative based on the circumstances in certain cases that require responses in real-time to act without approval from the Inspector- General of Police (IGP) or an Assistant Inspector-General of Police (AIG), as the case may be. Adebayo (2022) appears to be in the same page with Okike (2018) when he observes that it is also what characterizes the relationship between the Commissioner of Police (CP), the Area Commanders (ACPOLs) and Divisional Police Officers (DPOs) down to the Constable in the office. The above scenario has on so several occasions led to the loss of lives and properties in the country (Okike, 2018).

Crime Control/Management

Crime control is the attempt put across by the authorities to reduce crimes or deter criminals from committing crimes. Ibeanoro (2021) asserts that crime management is applied specifically to efforts made by the governments to reduce crime, enforce the law, and maintain criminal justice. The former president of the Nigeria Bar Association, Olisa Agbakoba (SAN) argues that in any management system, if power is concentrated on one person and the component parts are ignored, there is bound to be inefficiency. According to him, an Inspector-General of Police sitting in Abuja cannot effectively check the human behaviours in Nigeria. On the premise, Adebayo (2022) maintains that the standard procedure is that policing is developed along three areas via: Federal, State and Local Government. For him, that is what happens in the United States and United Kingdom. In this position, Odelewe (2020, p.118) holds that, "State police is important to support the federal policing authority to effectively tackle crime, terrorism and whatever misdemeanor in any country". In Nigeria, it is only the federal government that can approve the procurement of certain equipment to combat crimes in the country. In view of the rigorous processes involved in the approval of sophisticated weapons to fight crimes, which slows down the crime management procedure/process, noting that such slowness in emergency situations always result to catastrophic losses of lives and property. Ochie (2023) on his part observed that some of the former governors like Samuel Ortom of Benue State together with his South-West counterparts came up with some regional security arrangements/management to give real-time responses to local security challenges. Ortom named the Benue State's arrangement "The Community Volunteer Guards" (CVG) charged with the responsibilities to tackle the activities of those he tagged "criminal herdsmen," who according to him, have been destroying farmlands, killing and maiming villagers across the state for years (*Vanguard News, August 15, 2018*).

Meanwhile, the South-West states named theirs "Western Nigeria Security Network" (WNSN), popularly known as "Amotekun"- cheetah to tackle the rising spate of kidnapping among other crimes in the region (Ibeama & Edoh, 2022). In the South-East, "Ebube Agu" has also been launched but their activities have been somewhat overwhelmed by those of the unknown gunmen killing people and destroying properties in the region in a way that has brought the economy of the most enterprising group of Nigerians to its knees (*PM News, February 12, 2018*). The North-East part of the country established what is called the Civilian Joint Task Force "Civilian JTF" made up of local volunteers which has also been a response to the menace of the Boko haram insurgency, using their knowledge of the local terrain in intelligent gathering to complement the efforts of the federal force (*Leadership News, March 9, 2016*).

Logistics/Funds in Crime Control

Aremu (2018) avers that sub-national policing is a form of policing where there is devolution of security operations in the hands of the federal government. He points out that its operations, logistics or funds are controlled by other governments other than the national or federal government. In this position, Abubakar (2019) quickly observes that Katsina State is one of the worst-hit states in the north as far as the recent spate of kidnapping or banditry is concerned. In his wisdom, he averred that it was a massive surprise and relief in 2022, when the news surfaced that Katsina State Governor, Aminu Bello Masari, launched a security outfit to tackle kidnapping and banditry in the state. According to reports, the volunteers underwent basic training on how to handle light weapons like AK47 rifles. The Governor reportedly applied to the federal government for a license for the operatives of the outfit to bear arm after they were trained, but he was disappointed. However, it could be recalled that despite being the creation of their respective States House of Assembly's edict, Amotekun and the Community Volunteer Guards are not yet allowed to bear arms, even when the Governors are ready to fund the procurement, knowing that the federal government is the custodian of the approval for anybody or outfit so created to bear arms in the country, and it has not been granted so far (*Vanguard News, August 22, 2018*).

The argument that the Governors would not be able to fund the state police may not be holistically true as the situation today is that most of the state commands of the current federal police are maintained and funded by the governors. Most of the State Governors have given the Federal Police in their various states commands and zones operational vehicles, apparatus, gadgets amounting to billions of Naira. Such huge funds and security votes accruing to state government would have been channeled to funding of the state police, if it had been created (Ezenkwa, (2023). To get rid of the fear that the governors cannot finance the state police and their welfare – remuneration can be tied to the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF); with a commission created in every state to be in charge of their welfare. The commission should be bequeath with the supervisory role on the state governors to ensure that they will not use the outfit for their selfish interest (Erondu, 2019).

Theoretical Framework

The study adopted Diffusion of Innovation Theory. The theory was first discussed historically in 1903 by the French Sociologist, Gabriel Tarde who plotted the original S-shaped diffusion curve, followed by Ryan and Gross (1943) who introduced the adopter categories that were later used in the current theory popularized by Rogers & Katz (1957).The theory is often regarded as a valuable change model for guiding technological innovation where the innovation itself is modified and presented in ways that meet the

needs across all levels of adopters. It also stresses the importance of communication and peer networking within the adoption process.

In simple terms, the diffusion of innovation refers to the process that occurs as people adopt a new idea, product, practice, philosophy, and so on. Rogers mapped out this process, stressing that in most cases an initial few are open to the new idea and adopt its use. As these early innovators 'spread the word' more and more people become open to it which leads to the development of a critical mass. Over time, the innovative idea becomes diffused amongst the population until a saturation point is achieved. Rogers distinguished five categories of adopters of an innovation: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. Sometimes, a sixth group is added as non-adopters.

By application, the diffusion of innovations theory is a hypothesis outlining how the state police as an ideology can gain advancement and spread throughout Nigeria, from introduction to widespread adoption. Therefore, the theory seeks to explain how and why new ideas and practices (state police) can be adopted, including why the adoption of the state police can help to check insecurity in Imo State and Nigeria at large. The way in which the state police as innovations are communicated to different parts of the country and the subjective opinions associated with the innovations are important factors of how quickly diffusion, spreading and acceptance occurs. This theory is frequently yawning for the need to review the constitution to establish the state police capable of occasioning effective and efficient crime control through enhanced state personnel information gathering , crime management, as well as local logistic support for crime control in Nigeria.

Methods

The study adopted a survey research design. The population of the study consisted of all the people in the twenty seven (27) Local Government Areas of Imo State. With the help of "Taro Yamane formula', four hundred (400) village heads, youth leaders and security personnel were randomly selected as sample size, out of four million, nine hundred and twenty eight thousand (4,928,000) people in Imo State. The sample of the study consisted of twelve (12) Local Government Areas selected by stratified random technique in the three (3) Senatorial Zones on the basis of four (4) Local Government Areas per Senatorial Zone. A questionnaire titled, State Police and Crime Control Survey Questionnaire (SPCCSQ), structured in a four likert format was administered for data collection, complemented with interviews and secondary data. In order to ascertain the validity of the instrument for the study, the researchers ensured that the questionnaire covered the research questions of the study and was given to experts for scrutiny. This was pilot tested and a reliability coefficient of 0.80 was obtained. The data was collected and analyzed using frequency counts, percentages and mean. The decision rule for interpretation of the

results of the data analysis was that of a mean score of 2.5 and above, which was regarded as agreed/ accepted, while below 2.5 was disagreed/ rejected.

Results

Data Presentation and Analysis

It should be noted that out of the 400 copies of the questionnaire distributed, only 363 copies were properly filled out and returned, whereas 37 copies were not returned**.**

Research Question 1: Is there need for constitutional review to establish state police to reduce the crime rate in Imo State?

Table 1: Response on Peoples' View towards the Need for Constitutional Review to Establish State Police**.** **N = 363**

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	FX	MEAN	DECISION
1.	Establishment of state Police will help to control crimes.	130	110	85	38	1,058	2.91	Agreed
2	Constitutional review to establish state police is sacrosanct.	140	105	83	35	1,076	2.96	Agreed
3	State police is not a panacea for insecurity in the state.	36	94	109	12	785	2.16	Disagreed
4	Political elites are opposed to state police.	115	105	99	44	1,017	2.80	Agreed.
5	The institutional response from the state government to the issue of insecurity underscores the need for state police.	141	104	80	38	1,074	2.96	Agreed.
	Grand Mean						**2.76**	**Agreed**

Source: Survey Data, 2024.

Table 1 showed that the respondents in items 1, 2, 4 and 5 with mean scores above 2.50 agreed that, there was need for constitutional review to establish state police to reduce the crime rate in Imo State, while the respondents in item 3 disagreed that state police is not a panacea for insecurity in the state, with mean score less than 2.50. Thus, the grand mean is 2.76. The implication is that many of the respondents believe that there is need for constitutional review to establish State Police to reduce the crime rate in Imo State.

Research Question 2: In what ways can the local personnel intelligence gathering help to reduce the crime rate in Imo State?

Table 2: Mean Response on Local Personnel Intelligence Gathering and Crime Control.
N = 363

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	FX	MEAN	DECISION
1.	Local intelligence gathering cannot assist the security personnel in combating crimes.	40	90	111	122	774	2.13	Disagreed
2.	There is need for local intelligent gathering.	121	112	91	39	1,040	2.86	Agreed
3.	The personnel from the rural areas will help to source useful information to fight crime.	135	101	86	41	10.56	2.91	Agreed
4.	If such local information is utilized, it reduces crime commission.	139	106	81	37	1,073	2.96	Agreed.
5.	The personnel from a locality are in a better position to tackle crime because they know the terrain.	120	113	91	39	1,074	2.96	Agreed.
	Grand Mean						**2.75**	**Agreed**

Source: Survey Data, 2024.

Table 2 indicated that the respondents in items 7, 8, 9 and 10 with mean scores above 2.50 agreed that, the local personnel intelligence gathering could help to reduce the crime rate in Imo State, while the respondents in item 6 disagreed that local intelligence gathering cannot assist the security personnel in combating crimes, with mean score of 2.13. However, the grand mean is 2.75. This implies that there is agreement among the respondents that the local personnel intelligence gathering can help to reduce the rate of crime in Imo State.

Research Question 3: In what ways can effective local crime management help to reduce the crime rate in Imo State?

Table 3: Mean Response on Effective Local Crime Management in Imo State.
N = 363

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	FX	MEAN	DECISION
1.	There is need for local management of crime.	110	120	94	122	1.027	2.83	Agreed
2.	Effective managing of crime can reduce it	118	102	98	45	1,019	2.80	Agreed
3.	Effective crime management attempt to deter criminality.	121	112	90	40	10.40	2.87	Agreed
4.	Crime management also ensures that the law is enforced.	140	101	85	35	1,082	2.98	Agreed.
5.	It helps to maintain the administration of criminal justice.	121	101	98	43	1,026	2.83	Agreed.
	Grand Mean						**2.86**	**Agreed**

Table 3 revealed that all the respondents in items 11 - 15 with mean scores above 2.50 agreed that, effective local crime management could reduce the crime rate in Imo State. Again, the grand mean is 2.86. This underscores the fact that the people believe that effective local crime management can reduce the crime rate in Imo State.

Research Question 4: How can adequate local funding/logistics reduce the crime rate in Imo State?

Table 4: Mean Response on Adequate Local Funding and Crime Control.
N = 363

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	FX	MEAN	DECISION
16.	There is need for local management of crime.	130	110	85	38	1.058	2.91	Agreed
17.	Effective managing of state police cannot reduce rate of crime.	31	99	113	120	767	2.11	Disagreed
18.	Effective crime management attempt to deter criminality.	119	100	95	49	10.15	2.80	Agreed
19.	Crime management also ensures that the law is enforced.	135	101	86	41	1,056	2.91	Agreed.

20.	It helps to maintain the administration of criminal justice	117	102	96	48	1,014	2.79	Agreed.
	Grand Mean						**2.70**	**Agreed_**

Table 4 reveals that respondents in items, 16, 18, 19 and 20 with mean scores above 2.50 agreed that adequate funding/logistics could reduce the crime rate in Imo State, while the respondents disagreed with items 17, that effective managing of state police cannot reduce rate of crime, with mean score less than 2.50. However, the grand mean is 2.70. This underscores the fact that a good number of the respondents are of the view that adequate funding of the state police can reduce the crime rate in Imo State.

Discussion of Findings

The findings in table 1 revealed that there would be need for constitutional review to establish state police to reduce crime rate in Imo State. This finding is in agreement with Abubakar (2019), who advocated that "Nigeria requires regional police for the purpose of increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the government, as well as the economy in a developing country". He argued that, in almost every state of the federation, there has been a kind policing response from the state government on the issue of insecurity, underscores the need for regional police in Nigeria. Supporting the result, Ochie (2023) submitted that the veritable way out of the current quagmire of insecurity and similar security challenges of Nigeria would be the establishment of state police.

Table 2 showed that the local personnel intelligence gathering could help to reduce crime rate in Imo State. The finding is in consonant with the result of Udezuo (2021), who posited that intelligent assessment employs intelligent analysis to refine information gathered in the process of tackling criminal elements to reduce crimes. This finding is supported by Okike (2018) who pointed out that the state police would be more penetrable and widespread, as well as community friendly and result oriented unlike the Nigeria Police Force, "if established".

Table 3 indicated that local crime management could help to reduce crime rate in Imo State. The finding is in line with the submission made by the former president of the Nigerian Bar Association, Olisa Agbakoba (SAN) who argued that in any management system, if power is concentrated on one person and the component parts are ignored, there is bound to be inefficiency. He observed that, an Inspector-General of Police sitting in Abuja cannot effectively check the human behaviours in Nigeria. In consonance with the result, Adebayo (2022) maintained that the standard procedure is that policing is developed along three areas via: Federal, State and Local Government. For him, that is what happens in the United States and United Kingdom. Corroborating this position,

Odelewe (2020) held that, "State police is important to support the federal policing authority to effectively tackle crime, terrorism and whatever misdemeanor in any country".

Finally, table 4 revealed that adequate local funding/logistics of the state police could reduce crime rate in Imo State. This finding is in tandem with Ezenkwa (2019) who observed that most of the State Governors in their various capacities have given the Federal Police Commands in their states and zones operational vehicles, equipments, gadgets amounting to billions of Naira. In support of this ideology, Aremu (2018) averred that sub-national policing is a form of policing where there is devolution of security operations in the hands of the federal government. Again, corroborating this assertion, he pointed out that its operations, logistics or funds are controlled by other governments other than the national or federal government. However, Mersim (2021) agreeing with Aremu (2018) contended that such huge fund and security votes accruing to state government could have been channeled to funding of the state police, if established.

Conclusion

This study has examined would be effect of state police on crime reduction in Imo State, Nigeria. The results of this study have provided empirical evidence that the establishment of state police could reduce rate of crime in Imo of Nigeria. It is evident that Nigeria needs constitutional review to usher in a true fiscal federalism, devolution of powers to the federating units, to enable the establishment of state police for effective and efficient policing in Imo State of Nigeria.

Recommendation

Based on the findings, it was recommended that:

1. The government/political stakeholders should occasion a well thought out effective and efficient constitutional review capable of ensuring the establishment of state police to reduce the crime rate in Imo of Nigeria.
2. The federal government should encourage the establishment of state police to enable effective local personnel grassroots intelligence gathering to control crime rate in Imo State of Nigeria.
3. The government/political stakeholders should encourage the local crime management, with the collaboration of the rural rulers, youths, etc. to reduce the crime rate in the state.
4. The Governors/political stakeholders should sufficiently/adequately fund the local security to reduce the crime rate in the state.

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