

Research Article

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Public administration and public safety in Anambra State of Nigeria

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Abstract: The study is on public administration and public safety in Anambra State. The essence is to examine how public safety is influenced by public administration. The study was necessitated by the poor nature of public safety in the study area. A quantitative research design was used for the study. Three basic objectives guided the study and accordingly three research questions were raised. The population consisted of citizens residing in Awka town the capital of Anambra state. A sample of 150 respondents was drawn using a print questionnaire titled Public Administration and Public Safety Questionnaire (PAPUSQ). The questionnaire Cronbach-Alpha reliability index was 0.82 which is indicative of high reliability and simple percentage was used to analyse the three research questions that guide the study with 50% as bench mark. Results indicated that nature of public safety in the state is rather poor. Many citizens do not enjoy the dividends of good governance. In the same manner, the study discovered that one of

ways to improve public administration in order to forestall public safety is by eradication of corruption, prosecution of corrupt public administrators among others. It was suggested that the masses should elect only credible persons to hold public offices. Also, there is need to put systems and structures in place to checkmate the excesses of public administrators. The study therefore concluded that public administration has a critical role to play in ensuring public safety.

Keywords – Corruption, Democracy, Governance, Public administration, Public safety

1. INTRODUCTION

Public administration is the act of ensuring the goodness, comfort and safety of the citizens. It entails the government seeing to it that the public (masses) are kept in good condition and that they are free from any form of harm or danger. The government is responsible to the citizen on the issue of public safety. Across the globe, various governments are challenged by issues of public safety. In most of the low income countries, crime impedes urbanization which impacts negatively on economic growth. Public safety is the duty of government which certifies the protection of the populace in their constituencies, organisations and even establishments against threats to their existence and progress of their countries. When people are not secured they cannot thrive in their endeavours. Safety is defined as the condition of being free from harm, danger, or any form of threats (Webster, 2018). In the same vein, the American Heritage Dictionary (2019) sees safety as the condition of being sure that the negative effects will not be inflicted by some under defined agents. Based on these definitions, safety could be seen

as a state of being free from any form of danger or attack. In this regard, public safety therefore means a situation whereby the citizens are free from any threat to their life, existence, properties or their businesses. It is the duty of the government to ensure that lives and properties of the citizens are secured. Public administration is centered on the total well being of the citizens. Agu (2018) argued that any government in power is being elected by the citizens and as such the citizens' wellbeing should be of paramount importance. One of the cardinal yardsticks to measure the effectiveness of nay government is the extent of public safety enjoyed by the citizens of that country.

It is on this note that Andre (2020) states that Public Administration is a venture whereby leaders are compelled to serve the communities to forge ahead with common good and bring about positive change. This implies that leaders are equipped with skills to administer all tiers of government (grassroots/local, state/provincial, federal) and even non governmental or non profit organisations and to ensure that citizens enjoy security and are safe in their own land. Public administrators promote urban development, implement public policies, and protect public safety. In recent times, public safety has become an issue of great concern in most countries especially in Nigeria. Anambra state is not an exception. In the present day Nigeria, there is general insecurity, there are few or no functional social amenities; some areas in Anambra state do not have good access roads. In the same vein, businesses are not thriving as expected, most families are finding it difficult to feed their children, the cost of living is rising greatly daily, our hospitals are not well equipped leading to deaths which could have been prevented. All of these are indicators of poor public safety. It seems as if there is a great problem with governance in Nigeria. The citizens seems not to be enjoying the dividend of democracy and it looks as if the citizens are regretting electing some leaders into power.

Public welfare is very cardinal in governance because according to Maxwell (2018) a fundamental key of Public Administration rests with economy and efficiency which means availing the people of public services at the barest cost which has remained the crux of administration reform. In spite of increased concern about certain values like responsiveness to public needs, justice, fair treatment as well as involvement of the people in government, efficiency remains the ultimate objective. An efficient government or administration is one which ensures that the masses are well catered for by providing them with the basic necessities of life as well as making their environment safe and conducive for the citizens to live in. Where crimes and threats to safety abide, public safety is threatened. In the view of Organisation for Economic and Cooperation Development (OECD) (2012) Public Administration is the major instrument to heighten economic growth and making sure that the benefits are evenly distributed among the citizens. It also assists in building confidence in government and other public institutions such as banks, enterprises agencies and so on. The issue of restoring trust has become critical in a world which is in a crisis of trust. But these objectives or dividends are far cry in Anambra State. Many citizens are not getting any fair share of the fruits of economic development, crime is on the increase due to hardship, workers are being owed salaries while a lot others are losing their jobs daily and insecurity has become a norm. The question is what are the factors that lead to such scenario in Anambra State? How could public administration be improved to help forestall public safety? These and other related questions are the main import of the present study.

2. LITERATURE SURVEY

2.1. Definition and importance of public administration

The term public administration has lent itself to diverse definitions from various scholars. For example, McDonald (2020) defined public administration to incorporate legislative actions, revenue/taxation, national defense as well as public order and safety; it also includes immigration services, foreign affairs, international assistance with the administration of government programmes. Also Gucelin (2019) saw it as the act of carrying out government policies in a particular area. Similarly, based on the views of Davidson (2018) public administration can be defined simply as leadership in the public sphere which is pioneered by executive action. A cursory look at these definitions points to one cardinal issue which is public interest. It then means that Public Administration could be

defined as the act of securing, catering and ensuring the total well being of the masses (public) or the citizens in a country or a place. It includes but not limited to provision of basic social amenities, safe and conducive environment, enactment of laws and policies that promote the well being of citizens among others. In short public administration is all about public governance.

Akpan (2012) posits that Public Administration is the tool used in carrying out the manifestos and programmes of politicians in government. He contends that Public Administration is the servant of politics adding that Public Administration embraces all the areas and activities related to public policy. This obviously includes the formal processes and operations through which the legislature exercises its powers. Also included are the duty of the courts in judicial matters and the job of the military and similar agencies. According to Balogun (2017), Public Administration is the combination of human and material resources in order to achieve the aims of Public Policy. This calls attention to matters of public policy implementation which is germane to this study in view. Public Administration has the duty of ensuring that the people are taken care of with the provision of safety and security. It also shoulders the responsibility of determining which government policies and programmes that engender welfare of the citizens. The whole essence of public administration is well being of the people. The activities of Public Administrators include: Planning, Organizing, Directing, Staffing, Coordinating, Reporting and Budgeting. It is synonymous to personnel management in the sense that the target group in public administration is human beings (Explicit Success Scholars, 2019).

Public administration is very important in any nation. This is because the hallmark of any administration is to ensure that the masses are in good condition and safe in their own domain. Some of the key importance of public administration have been well documented in literature. For example according to Wilson (2017), public administration is important for the following reasons:

- Public administration serves as an instrument for providing public services
- It is government instrument for ensuring safety and security of citizens.
- Public administration ensures the maintenance of peace and order in society thereby ensuring protection of lives and property from unforeseen threats.
- It establishes a stabilizing force in our society- it ensures that there is no breakdown of order or sense of confusion especially when there happens to be a new government.
- Public administration is a tool for policy implementation and law enforcement as well as execution of policies, Implementation of laws, policies, and programs, as well as their execution.

Similarly, Negero (2013) stated that the real essence of Public Administration is in the important basic services which the administrators give to the general masses. It is the duty of the administrators to see that citizens' lives and properties are safe through maintenance of law and order in the society. Lending a voice to the importance of public administration, Ahmed (2014) noted that it is the duty of public administrators to ensure the economic, cultural and even spiritual advancement of any nation. Continuing, Ahmed averred that the day to day functioning of the leadership instrumentality regarding external relationships and territorial defense are also very important duties of Public Administration.

2.2. Meaning of public safety

Public safety is all about removing any conditions or situations that may cause harm, danger or threats to the wellbeing of the citizens. According to United State Legal Law (2020) public safety refers to the the wellbeing and protection of the entire populace which is viewed as a responsibility of government.

Freebase (2019) sees public safety as the authority and responsibilities the entity oversees. This extends to the prevention and protection from occurrences that could be dangerous or negatively impact on public safety. It ensures that the public are protected from significant danger or harm; even crimes and disaster. In a nut shell one can define public safety as public well being or public progress. Government has the duty to ensure the protection

of citizens in their territory, organizations and institutions against threats to their well being and to the prosperity of their communities (Abubakar, 2019).

Laurier University (2019) report stated that public safety incorporates the various needs of citizens, communities, and the nation as a whole. The importance of public safety cannot be overemphasized since a safe and healthy environment not only protects citizens from injury and illness, it can also lower injury /illness costs, reduce wastages, increase productivity and quality. Public safety is about the general public feeling safe, whether at home, in the street or at work. Public safety extends to the living standards and ability to pursue and achieve optimal gains from other domestic, social and economic aspects of life without hinderance from crime and disorder or fear.

2.3. Public administration and public safety

There seems to be a connection between public administration and public safety. It is interesting to note that public administrators are elected by the public to legislate over the affairs that concern the entire citizens in a particular state. Aghenta (2014) opined that for the people to elect anybody to be in charge of their affairs it then means that such an elected person has earned the trust and confidence of the masses. As a result, the public expects that the public administrator must see to their welfare. This is because administrators are overseers and managers of the resources in the state. They (administrators) are duty bound to live to the oaths of their offices. According to Wikipedia (2014), one of the duties of public administrators is to ensure public safety. Safety in this sense is used in its universal sense which means that it covers all areas of life that are expected to make citizens comfortable and relaxed in their country or state. In essence anything or condition that threatens the peace of mind, stability and progress of the citizens constitutes a breach of public safety. For instance, Akpan (2012) noted that when the resources meant to be used to finance projects (like power supply, potable water, good roads, schools and hospitals) in the state which are meant to benefit the populace is diverted by administrators to personal use, and the beneficiaries suffer and the suffering threatens their peace and stability which leads to public nuisance. At such cases public safety is thwarted. Public administrators at all levels as custodians of the resources of the state are to ensure that citizens enjoy the good governance.

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The core goal of public administration is the well being of its citizens. The citizens or the masses are the centre of attraction of every government- be it at the federal, state or local level. Any government that does not cater for her citizens is regarded as a failed government. This is because public administration is about the common good of the populace. In Nigeria, many citizens are no longer secured. One of the cardinal roles of the government is to secure the lives and properties of their citizens as well as shield them from every form of threats or attacks—physically, emotionally and otherwise. It is the duty of the government to ensure safety of lives and properties of the masses. Public safety is a situation whereby people are free from all forms of harm or danger and they are free to conduct their businesses without fear of molestation. A good administration is known by the extent to which the citizens are catered for through provision of essential social amenities and policies that promote growth and wellbeing of the citizens. However, in Anambra State, at present, there is poor public safety. A lot of social amenities are lacking, there is high rate of crimes, drug abuse by youths is on the increase, and many businesses are no longer thriving coupled with high inflation, In the same vein, daily, there is security threats to human lives, people are no longer free to move about in their own fathers' land and most hospitals and schools are no longer functional leading poor health and deaths. A lot of citizens are not enjoying the dividends of good governance in Anambra State. It seems as if there is a problem with the state of administration in the study area and public safety is threatened. Now the problem of this study is embedded in this broad question, 'What then, is the role of Public Administration in ensuring Public Safety in Anambra State?'

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY OR METHODS

The study was conducted in Awka the capital of Anambra State using quantitative research design. The researcher elicited data from selected civil servants, media practitioners (journalists) and some business people, rural men and women, and youths residing in Awka. These categories of respondents were considered ideal because they represent all calibre of citizens in any state and it will equally help the researcher to get a wider and balanced view of the topic of discourse. A sample of 150 respondents was drawn and used for the study by means of the convenience sampling technique. A researcher made questionnaire titled Public Administration and Public Safety Questionnaire (PAPUSQ) was used for data collection and was distributed to the selected respondents in Awka town, the capital of Anambra State. A period of five (5) days were used for data collection via direct delivery method. The reliability of the questionnaire was established via the Cronbach-Alpha method and a reliability index of 0.82 was obtained which showed that the data collection instrument is reliable for the study. Data obtained were analysed using the simple percentage for the three research questions used for the study. The use of percentage was due to its simplicity and ease of interpretation by the readers.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.1. Data analysis

Research Question 1: What is the nature of public safety in Anambra State?

Table 1: Nature of public safety in Anambra State

S/NO	Statement	Agreed		Disagreed	
		Freq	%	Freq	%
1.	Citizens of Anambra state enjoy good democratic governance	43	28.7	107	71.3
2.	There are functional public medical and health services in the state	50	33.3	100	66.7
3.	The security network in the state is impeccable	30	20.0	120	80.0
4.	All social amenities are working well in Anambra State	48	32.0	102	68.0
5.	Economic activities are thriving	38	25.3	112	74.7
6.	All government policies are carried out to favour the welfare of citizens	60	40.0	90	60.0

Field survey 2021

Result in Table 1 shows that all the six items in the table have percentage responses below the bench mark of 50%. This is an indication that majority of the respondents disagreed to the views posited. In essence, it them means that the state of public safety in the state is not conducive.

Research Question 2: What factors pose threats to effective public administration in Anambra state?

Table 2: Factors that pose threats to effective public administration in Anambra State

S/NO	Statement	Agreed		Disagreed	
		Freq	%	Freq	%
1.	Corruption in high and low places	138	92.0	12	8.0
2.	Poor information and communication technology	120	80.0	30	20.0

3.	Nature of administrative control	130	86.7	20	13.3
4.	Poor management of human and material resources	110	73.3	40	26.7
5.	Use of poorly trained administrators in administration	115	76.7	35	23.3
6.	Institutional weakness	107	71.3	43	28.7

Field survey 2021

Going by data in Table 2, corruption in high and low places (92.0%) and nature of administrative control (86.7%) are the lead factors that hinder effective public administration in the study area. The least observed factor is institutional weaknesses (71.3%). However, it is interesting to point it out that all the items in Table 2 are valid as each has percentage response above the bench mark of 50%.

Research Question 3: How can public administration be improved to enhance public safety in Anambra state?

Table 3: Ways of improving public administration to enhance public safety

S/NO	Statement	Agreed		Disagreed	
		Freq	%	freq	%
1.	Enactment of polices that fights corruption	150	100.0	00	0.0
2.	Prosecution of bad public administrators	135	90.0	15	10.0
3.	Public administration reform	140	93.3	10	6.7
4.	Deemphasizing of control over administration	128	85.3	322	14.7
5.	Development and improvement of information technology	105	70.0	45	30.0
6.	Engagement of citizens in public administration	120	80.0	30	20.0

Field survey 2021

Data in Table 3 reveal that fighting corruption (100%) and public administration reform (93.3%) are the lead measures suggested that could help improve public administration and enhance public safety. However, the least observed measure is development and improvement of information technology in public administration (70.0%). All the items in Table 3 are valid and accepted because each has a percentage response above 50% bench mark.

5.2. Discussions

The study to on public administration and public safety aimed at examining how public administration could help enhance public safety in Anambra State. The study was necessitated by the dissatisfaction of citizen about the nature of governance in the state.

The analysis of research question one which bothered on nature of public safety discovered that the nature of public safety in the state is rather poor. Many citizens do not enjoy the dividends of good governance. A lot of social amenities like pipe borne water, good hospitals, roads, school are not provided. The few that are available are dilapidated and hence unfit to render good services. This is in tandem with OECD (2012) who stated that in most states of some countries governance is poor; a lot of citizens are suffering as they are not favoured by the perversity policies imposed on broacher. Public safety is a crucial factor, hence when public safety is not

guaranteed, there will be danger or threats to citizens. This will create a huge fear which will later lead to bad governance.

Research Question two unraveled factors that pose threats to effective public administration. The factors include corruption in high and low places and poor management of human and materials (80%). This is in line with Aghenta (2014) who asserted that poor management of resources causes a great leak in public administration. This leak is in form of wastages and poor supervision. When the administrators in charge are not prudential in the use resources, desired results (which include but not limited to public safety) will be a mirage. It takes good administration to achieve success.

In the same manner, it was gathered that one of the ways to improve public administration in order to forestall public safety is by eradication of corruption. Corruption means dishonest or unethical conduct by a person entrusted with a position of authority or responsibility (Wikipedia, 2014). The findings agree with Max Weber et al's public administration theory that was informed by positivism. Corruption is a product of greed, an act which deviates from the formal rules of conduct governing the action of someone in a position of public authority because of private or personal motives such as wealth, power or states. Corruption has lately become a common phenomenon. The rate of corruption in the country is becoming an issue of threat to public sanity and administration. In fact the world all over is decrying the rate at which corruption has permeated all facets of the society. A lot of persons (public administrators inclusive) engage in one form of corruption or the other. It has become an integral part of the Nigerian economic, political, educational and social life. Corruption is found at all sectors of the economy and at different levels of government. Public administration is not left out in the scourge of corruption. The high rate of corrupt practices exhibited some public administrators have caused serious problem in the smooth running of the state. Some of the corrupt practices include embezzlement of public funds, inflation of budgets, diversions of public funds to personal use among others. Each of these corrupt practices does not make for good public administration. A lot of corrupt practices go on daily in our nation. It is multifactor. It ranges from monetary to other forms. When measures are put in place to checkmate corruption, then to achieve public safety will be a possibility.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings from the study, the following are recommended:

1. The masses should elect only credible persons to hold public offices.
2. There is need to put systems and structures in place to checkmate the excesses of public administrators.
3. People elected into public offices should be taken through an orientation exercises to understand the tenets of their offices.
4. The general public should be empowered to be part of public administration in the state.

7. CONCLUSION

The study dealt with public administration and public safety in Anambra State. it was gathered that public safety in the study area is not yet adequate. Many citizens are yet to reap the dindends of good governance. A lot of security threats still abound. In the same view, some factors were identified as head causes which include (but not limited too) corruption, poor information and communication technology among others. In order to improve public administration and achieve public safety, nipping of corruption was suggested and prosecution of bid administrators among others. The study therefore concludes public administration has a critical role to play in ensuring public safety.

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