

Perception of Bounty as a Means of Trapping on-the- Run Criminal Kingpins

Akum Ketty Ayum, Harry Obi-Nwosu, & Chidozie E. Nwafor

Department of Psychology Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka

Corresponding Author: Chidozie E. Nwafor(ce.nwafor@unizik.edu.ng)

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the Perception of bounty as a means of trapping on the run criminal kingpins in Nigeria. This is timely given that criminals are trying to destroy what is remaining of this country and they have over stretched the containing capacity of the law enforcement officers. Theories suggested that implosion strategy might prove right by crushing the kingpins behind every gang. This was explored in a sample of 150 law enforcement officers in Anambra state using questionnaire. Descriptive design was adopted, and chi-square was used to test the hypotheses. The results showed that targeting kingpins, bounty hunters and staking money were all perceived as helpful, effective, and acceptable means of trapping criminal kingpins. It was concluded that policy planners and makers should consider making bounty an official technique and develop it further for combating crime.

Keywords: **Perception, Bounty, trapping on-the- Run, Criminal Kingpin**

Background to the Study

The Nigerian Government has over the years used several strategies to curb various forms of criminal activities such as kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery, and trafficking in person. Some of these strategies included use of Hybrid forensic equipment, community policing, vigilantism, and private security arrangement. However, it seemed as if these strategies have not met with public security expectations. Indeed, within 2021, the crime rate seems to have risen to an all-high proportion, with so many killings and mass

disruption of economic activities under the umbrella phenomena of terrorism, banditry, and herdsmen attacks. Evidently, the situation has overwhelmed the traditional security agencies, and several of them have paid the supreme price. According to Numbeo (2021) the global crime index for the mid-year 2021 ranged from 12.13 percent to 83.76 percent in the 137 countries under their surveillance. Nigeria was ranked 16th in the globe, 5th in Africa and first in sub-Saharan Africa. It is therefore evident that Nigeria Government needs to rethink her strategies for crime control and apprehension of criminals.

Common observation shows that there is unprecedented surge in such crimes as terrorism, banditry, assassination, kidnapping, and rape. Consequently, Government, corporate bodies and private individuals have reacted to these increased incidents by increasing their spending on security related matters (Akinsanmi, 2020).

These days the pandemic nature of crime have gradually became a tradition and seemed to have resisted all the anti-crime strategies of the law enforcement agencies such as operation Python dance, operation fire for fire, SARS, Operation Nkpochapu, operation lafiya dole among others. The overarching consequence is that the masses have lost faith on the law enforcement officers and political officer's holders and are now taking laws into their hands. Thus, within the last five years the numbers of extra judiciary killing seemed to have increased: a compelling need to change the strategies (Akinsanmi, 2020).

A crime is an act of breaking prohibitory rules or laws to which legitimate punishments or sanctions are attached and which requires the intervention of a public authority (Scottish Centre for Crime & Justice Research [SCCJR], 2015). Crime is also a public wrong, an act or offence which violates the law of the state and is strongly disapproved by the society. It is an act or omissions forbidden by law that can be punished or fined (Thotakura, 2011).

Given the geometrical increase in crime rate and the damning consequences of crime, policy makers have been consulting security experts and observing global best practices for combating crime to see what could work best in preventing and reducing crime in Nigeria. This is coming at a time when the law enforcement agencies are now overwhelmed increased crime all over the country and are looking for strategy and intervention models to cope given the limited number of personnel to deal with the ever-increasing security

challenges. Also, noticeable is the fact that most of the renaissance crime in Nigeria these days are more organized with sophisticated hierarchy and leadership (Kingpins) which makes them formidable.

One of the re-emerging models that prompted the framing of the present research is “Kingpin crime approach”. Some proponents of the kingpin model argue that removing a leader weakens an organization through its effect on its connections, and reputation, and by creating disarray in the ranks below, and that this may in turn reduce the organization’s level of criminal activity (Lindo & Padilla-Romo, 2015).

The main hurdle is what is the best strategy to trap, arrest or neutralize a criminal kingpin? Basically, most of the conventional methods of tracking and arresting criminals are no longer very efficient in slowing down the activities of criminals in Nigeria. Thus, other non-conventional strategies might be tried out to see if they can work. One of the non-conventional strategies that comes to mind is the use of “bounty hunters”.

According to Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (1995) bounty can be defined as money paid as a reward to locate, capture or kill an outlaw; it can also mean generosity, abundance or a monetary reward given by the government for catching a person or an animal.

In countries where bounty hunting is legalized, a bounty hunter is referred to as a professional licensed person who captures fugitives or criminals for a commission or bounty (Adam, 2008). In the united State of America for instance in the various states the occupation is officially known as bail agency enforcer, bail enforcement agent, bail agent, recovery agent, bail recovery agent, or fugitive recovery agent and they have traditionally operated outside the legal constraints that govern police officers and other agents of the state. This is because a bail agreement between a defendant and a bail bondsman is essentially a civil contract that is incumbent upon the bondsman to enforce. As a result, bounty hunters hired by a bail bondsman enjoy significant legal privileges, such as forcibly entering a defendant's home without probable cause or a search warrant. However, since they are not police officers, bounty hunters are legally exposed to liabilities that normally exempt agents of the state. These immunities enable police to perform their designated

functions effectively without fear. But citizens who are approached by a bounty hunter are neither required to answer their questions nor allowed to be detained. Bounty hunters are typically independent contractors paid a commission of the total bail amount that is owed by the fugitive.

Bounty hunting is a vestige of common law which was created during the Middle Ages. They primarily draw their legal imprimatur from an 1872 Supreme Court decision, *Taylor v. Taintor*. The practice historically existed in many parts of the world; however, as of the 21st century, it is found almost exclusively in the United States and the Philippines, as the practice is illegal under the laws of most other countries.

In Nigeria although the law enforcement agencies can sometimes place price on any individual that can provide information on the arrest of crime kingpin. There are examples when Nigeria law enforcement agencies made bounty offer to arrest criminals. There was a scenario in River State where the police place a one-million-naira bounty reward on the head of a child molester and ritual killer who raped, murdered and removed vital organ from an eight-year-old girl (Akosile, 2017). Another example of bounty offer in Nigeria was when the Nigerian military declared 19 senior members of the terrorist Boko Haram group blamed for thousands of deaths in northern Nigeria wanted. The army also placed a N50 million bounty on the suspected leader of the group, Abubakar Shekau and N10 million for various commanders of the sect. A statement by the spokesman of the Joint Task Force, JTF, listed 19 alleged commanders of the sect. They were wanted in connection with terrorist activities particularly in the north-east zone of Nigeria that led to the killings, bombings and assassination of some civilians, religious leaders, traditional rulers, businessmen, politicians, civil servants and security personnel amongst others (Ogala, 2012). However, there is no provision in Nigeria constitution for licensing bounty hunters.

The legality of bounty hunters in Nigeria is predicated upon executive enforcement of law, this is because, there is no law in Nigeria that specifically empowers the law enforcement agencies to pronounce or offer money in lieu of arrest of a criminal. The closest thing to this jurisprudence and practice in Nigeria is the concept of citizen's arrest as provided under the Police Act of 2020 and the Administration of Criminal Justice Act of 2015.

The Nigeria Police Act of 2020 and the Administration of the Criminal Justice Act (ACJA) 2015 gave the leeway for a private citizen to arrest someone who commits an offence recognized by the law or is suspected of having committed an offence. Section 39 of the Nigeria Police Act of 2020 states 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” (Wanjoku, 2020). This implies that citizens are allowed by the law to arrest suspects of a crime without the presence of the police. After the arrest has been made by the private citizen, he or she is expected to hand over the suspect to a police officer or take the suspect to the nearest police station.

It seems obvious that this provision of citizen arrest under the Administration of Criminal Justice Act is for arrest of minor civil offenders not a serious kingpins or fugitives who may be dangerously armed. In some countries bounty hunters are also licensed to carry assault weapons to perform their duties. There is also a dimension of bounty hunting where their duty is only to provide useful information (law enforcement informants) that can lead to the arrest of the criminal kingpin.

As many states in Nigeria are amending the Administration of Criminal Justice Act, with formal licensing of private security outfit (Vigilante Groups) to help in combating crime, one other upcoming possibility is licensing of bounty hunter to help in trapping and eliminating criminal kingpin.

While this may be good ways of combating crime, there seem to be a sparsity of data and research on perception of bounty hunting as a strategy of combating crime.

Although the Administration of criminal justice act (2015) made provision for citizen arrest of law offenders, there are limitations to the type of criminals an unarmed citizen can arrest within this provision. Recent activities of bandits, kidnappers, and armed robbery operations in Nigeria showed that they are very dangerous, organized, and with very strong leadership. Thus, trapping kingpins in such sophisticated groups need an equally competent individual who might be a licensed bounty hunters. This is the usual practices in countries where bounty hunters operate. However, countries may differ in their operationalization of

bounty hunter. In Nigeria, there is no constitutional recognition for bounty hunters. However, law enforcement agencies have in a very small scale used this strategy to try and trap criminals (Akosile, 2017; Ogala, 2012). With the increasing reports of gang criminality, bandits, and kidnapers in every state of the nation negotiating and collecting ransom most times, and public outcry on nefarious activities of these organized armed robbers and killers, it has become more urgent to provide scientific support for such strategy as bounty hunting. Such scientific evidence will close existing knowledge gap in this regard. More so, the unfolding of events in Nigeria is pointing that in the near future firearms may be liberalized (Obi-Nwosu et al., 2019) and private security may be licensed including bounty hunters. Therefore, it is important to launch research that can gather data on the perception of bounty hunting as a strategy of trapping crime kingpins in Nigeria.

Kingpin Model for Combating Crime

A kingpin strategy is the term US law enforcement uses to refer to the targeting for arrest of the leadership of drug trafficking organizations (DTO's). The strategy can also be applied to counterterrorism or other organized crime; referring to the strategy of targeting leaders of these crime gang to disrupt illicit networks (Dudley 2011; Pachico 2011). This strategy is embodied by the "Consolidated Priority Organization Target" (CPOT) programs of the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), which identifies important DTO's and their leadership (DEA 2006). While these strategies disrupt network operations, they can also disrupt them to the point of creating internecine conflict, resulting in spikes in homicides as various factions and lieutenants vie for control of illicit networks. This has become commonplace in Mexico among the various "cartels" as violence surges following the arrest of important leaders (Guerrero Gutierrez 2010; Jones 2011). For supporters of these strategies, the logic is "cut off the head of the beast and the body ceases to function":

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is to ascertain the peoples' perception of bounty as a strategy for trapping criminal kingpins.

The specific objectives are:

-
1. To determine if targeting and arresting crime kingpin is a positive way of reducing crime
 2. To determine if bounty will be a positive means of trapping on the run kingpins
 3. To establish if staking money as incentive to catch criminals will make investigators to work harder.

Hypotheses

1. Targeting and arresting crime kingpin will significantly and positively be perceived as way of reducing crime among the participants?
2. Bounty hunting strategy will be significantly perceived as a means of trapping on the run kingpins?
3. Staking money as incentive to catch criminals will be significantly perceived as a way of making investigators to work harder

Methods

Participants

The participants were 150 members of Law enforcement officers working in Awka capital territory (90 =police and 60 = civil defense). They included 85 male and 65 female officers. Their ages ranged from 22 to 50 years and their average age was 34 years. The minimum working experiences among the participant was 5 years.

Instrument

The data was collected with a perception of bounty hunter appropriateness questionnaire developed in the course of the study. The questionnaire contained three main items which were responded in a Likert format that ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 4= strongly agree. These items are “Arresting a criminal kingpin is a good way of fighting crime”, “Staking money as incentive to catch criminals will make investigators to work harder”, “Promise of money rewards to informants is the easiest way to catch criminals”. **The**

content validity ratio of 96% was obtained when the items were subjected to screening for relevance by 6 experts from department of psychology and criminology.

Procedure

All the participants were required to give oral consent and their confidentiality was assured. Incidental and purposive sampling techniques was used to identify the participants (police and civil defense officers). Each of the participants that was willing to participant in the study was administered the questionnaire and the questionnaire was collected immediately upon completion. It took a total of 16 days in the field to collect data from 150 officers.

Design and statistics

The study adopted a descriptive survey design (Creswell, 2014). The quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and chi square nonparametric test was used to test the hypotheses.

Results

Table 1: Frequency of response from the participants

s/n	questions	SD(%)	D(%)	A(%)	SA(%)
1	Arresting a criminal kingpin is a good way of fighting crime	5(3.3)	20(13.3)	55(36.7)	70(46.7)
2	Staking money as incentive to catch criminals will make investigators to work harder	10(6.7)	15(10.0)	90(60.0)	35(23.3)
3	Promise of money rewards to informants is the easiest way to catch criminals	10(6.7)	15(10.0)	50(33.3)	75(50)

From the result a total of 83.4% believed arresting criminal kingpin is a good way of fighting crime while a total of 16.6% thought it was not a good way.

Similarly, 83% thought Staking money as incentive to catch criminals will make investigators to work harder while 16.7% thought otherwise.

In the same vein 83% believed Promise of money rewards to informants is not the best way to catch criminals while 16.7% thought otherwise.

TABLE 2: Chi Square testing the three research Hypotheses.

s/n	Questions	X^2	df	sig
1	Arresting a criminal kingpin is a good way of fighting crime	72.67	3	.01
2	Staking money as incentive to catch criminals will make investigators to work harder	107.33	3	.01
3	Promise of money rewards to informants is the easiest way to catch criminals	75.33	3	.01

The test of relativeness using non-parametric chi square test show that three hypotheses were accepted. For hypothesis one those who agreed that arresting a criminal kingpin is a good way of fighting crime where significantly higher than those who thought otherwise $X^2(3) = 72.67, p=.01$.

The same pattern was observed in hypotheses two and three respectively. For hypothesis two those who believed that Staking money as incentive to catch criminals will make investigators to work harder were significantly higher than those who thought otherwise $X^2(3) = 107.33, p=.01$. And for hypothesis three those who believed that Promise of money rewards to informants is the best way to catch criminals were significantly higher than those who thought otherwise $X^2(3) = 75.33, p=.01$.

Discussion

The study was set up to explore how members of the law enforcement agencies will perceive bounty as a means of trapping on the run criminal kingpins. The result showed that the participants agreed that arresting criminal kingpins is a good strategy for controlling crime. While this strategy is supported by kingpin model (Dudley 2011) who argued it has worked in controlling and slowing down drug related crime. On the contrary studies suggested that it can trigger off other pattern of crime because it may result to internecine conflict, resulting in spikes in homicides as various factions and lieutenants vie for control of illicit networks. This has become commonplace in Mexico among the various “cartels” as violence surges following the arrest of important leaders (Guerrero Gutierrez 2010; Jones 2011). However, for supporters of these strategies, the logic is “cut off the head of the beast and the body ceases to function.

Furthermore, the result shows that Staking money as incentive to catch criminals will make investigators to work harder. This is in tandem with reinforcement theory which emphasized the fact that one’s behaviour is a function of its consequences, which is based on the law of effect; that one’s behaviour that has positive consequence has the tendency of being repeated. If people know that there is a reward attached to dismantling criminal gangs and kingpin this will more likely motivate them to work harder to capture such criminal elements.

This same principle can also be used to explain why the third hypothesis was accepted. In that a promise of monetary rewards to informants is a positive reinforcement that can motivate people to work harder in other help stop criminal elements.

Implication of the study

The study has policy and theoretical implications. Policy makers and those involved in community vigilante can adopt this method to crush rising and terrorizing criminal elements in the communities. Theoretically, it supports the assertion that every successful criminal gang has kingpins or major sponsor when such kingpins are tactically eliminated such gang is likely to collapse.

Limitation of the study

The study purposively focused on the members of law enforcement officers. Useful data could have been collected from the public on their perception of the phenomenon. A focus group qualitative technique could add to understand how best to use the bounty strategy.

Suggestion for future studies

Future studies can include public to enrich the data and also use mix-design to obtain more information.

Conclusions

As criminal elements get sophisticated and more clandestine in the leadership and operations. It is usually easy for them to identify and avoid men on uniform. Alternative strategy of using bounty may add new motivation to the public to be part investigators who might give useful information for the capture these dangerous kingpins there by slowing down crime. More research are need on the best way to involve civilian population in this process and maybe a standard guideline or even training and licensing for civilians who are willing to serve in this capacity.

References

- Adam L., (2008). Illegal Globally, Bail for Profit Remains in U.S." *The New York Times*.
- Administration of Criminal Justice Act (2015). Explanatory Memorandum.https://www.poicylaw.info/assests/downloads/2015_Administartion_of_criminal_justice_act.pdf
- Akinsanmi, G. (2020). PEAC: Nigeria Lost \$10.3bn to Boko Haram, Armed Insurgency in 2020. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2021/05/16/peac-nigeria-lost-10-3bn-to-boko-haram-armed-insurgency-in-2020>
- Akosile, A. (2017). Bounty Policy. <https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2017/08/31/bounty-policy>
- Creswell J. (2014). *Research Design:qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*.Thousand Oaks, SAGE publication. Inc

-
- Dudley S (2011). Bin Laden, the drug war and the kingpin strategy. Insight Crime, <http://insightcrime.org/insight-latest-news/item/847-insight-bin-laden-the-drug-war-and-the-kingpin-strategy>
- Guerrero Gutierrez E (2010) Cómo reducir la violencia en México. Nexos, <http://www.nexos.com.mx/?P=leerarticulo&Article=1197808>. 3
- Jones N. (2011). Report tracks how intra-cartel wars exploded in Mexico. Insight Crime, <http://insightcrime.org/insight-latest-news/item/548-insight-report-tracks-how-intra-cartel-wars-exploded-in-mexico>.
- Lindo, Jason M.; Padilla-Romo, María (2015) : Kingpin Approaches to Fighting Crime and Community Violence: Evidence from Mexico's Drug War, IZA Discussion Papers, No. 9067, Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA), Bonn
- Numbeo (2021). Crime Index by City 2021 Mid-Year. <https://www.numbeo.com/crime/rankings.jsp?title=2021-mid>
- Wanjoku, D.N. (2020). Overview Of The Administration Of Criminal Justice Act And Laws. <https://nji.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Overview-of-the-Administration-of-Criminal-Justice-Act-and-Laws.pdf>
- Ogala , E. (2012) E' JTF declares Boko Haram leaders wanted, places over N240 million bounty on insurgents' (2012) <<https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/108406-jtf-declares-boko-haram-leaders-wanted-places-over-n240million-bounty-on-insurgents.html>> accessed 9/19/2021.
- Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research (2015). What is crime? <https://www.Sccjrac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/SCCJR-What-is-crime-pdf>.
- Taylor, R.B. (2014). The impact of crime on communities. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. Doi:10.1177/002716295539001003
- The Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1995). Definition of Bounty. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/English/bounty>
- Thotakura, S. (2011). Crime: A conceptual understanding. *Indian Journal of Applied Research: 2011*. Doi:10.15373/224955x/MAR2014/58