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**KNOWLEDGE AND CHALLENGES IN THE USE OF
INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY
FACILITIES FOR CRIME PREVENTION AMONG THE NIGERIA
CUSTOM SERVICE**

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Abstract

The Nigeria Custom Service is a strategic income earning agency for the government. However, owing to criminal activities around the borders and other linkage areas, there is high risk of import prohibitions into the country as well as financial loss for the government. This study examined the role of information and communications technology on crime prevention in the Nigeria customs service (NCS). The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The sample was purposively drawn from the three (3) Area Commands in the south West, Nigeria that shared border with neighbouring countries. A total of four hundred (400) customs officers were randomly sampled. A questionnaire tagged "Information and Communications Technology and Crime Prevention Questionnaire" was the research instrument developed and used to collect data. Simple percentage, frequency count and ratio statistics were used in analyzing the

data drawn from the questionnaires. The findings from the study showed that level of ICT knowledge by NCS officers significantly improved crime prevention across the Nigeria border. The results equally indicated that various specific challenges confronted the NCS in cross border crime prevention are presented. It was recommended that the government together with the NCS should concentrate more on ICT based capacity building towards finding a lasting solution to the challenges of NCS. Such challenges include: inadequate and non-availability of crime detective devices, erratic power supply, lack of modern technologies and porous nature of the Nigeria borders. The NCS should establish CCTV across the entire border and other necessary places of its operation.

Keywords: *Information and Communications Technology, Crime, Crime Prevention, Nigeria Customs Service*

Introduction

Crime is a major issue at all levels, globally, regionally and nationally. A United Nations statistical report published in February 2010 shows global homicide trends over the period 2003-2008 for the majority of countries surveyed in the Americas, Asia, Europe and Oceania. The types of crime issues now plaguing Nigeria is not only homicides, but also a wide range of organized criminal activity including trafficking in guns, drugs and persons, murders, kidnapping, burglaries and scams, cybercrime and other information security issues. Crime problems threaten the stability of the economic environment, disrupt social order and ultimately impact negatively on the prospects for sustainable growth, economic development and competitive engagement of our communities in the global environment.

Crime prevention is a concept that has been applied in a number of different ways to the problem of crime. In addition, crime prevention strategies have been targeted on different levels

of prevention (primary, secondary, tertiary) and on the need for individual (i.e. private actions), parochial (group actions by neighborhood residents), and public actions (i.e. decisions to call the police) to prevent crime. (James & Gary 2011). Understanding crime prevention requires studying intentions, as well as consequences. A broad array of measures needs consideration beyond the traditional number of criminal events or offenders.

The control and regulation of cross-border activities are essential for ensuring peace and stability, also for promoting pertinent political and socio-economic activities needed for robust nation's economy.

Information and communication technology (ICT) systems are widely used in organizations. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) systems has many favourable consequences, because they support interaction and collaboration, workplace learning and work performance (Global South Group. 2012).

Even a cursory review of the historical development of efforts of the Nigeria Customs Service to prevent crime underscores the point that technology – or more precisely, technological innovation – has been the driving force leading to reform of crime prevention and crime control strategies, both by individual citizens and concerned groups, and by Nigeria Customs Service (Harris, 2007).

The Ogun Customs Area Command, in Ogun state of Nigeria, with one legal/approve route to the neighbouring country but numerous illegal ones and with known low levels of capacity to secure its border as well as respond effectively to this growing network, have become particularly vulnerable. The ramifications of international crime are distributed throughout the society, leading to instability and threatening national and regional security and development. Analysis of organized global criminal networks paints a picture of knowledge based organized efficiency, co-ordination in logistics of supply or distribution chains

and financing, taking full advantage of global information and communication systems. Any response therefore to global, regional and national crime and security threats will require a similar level of knowledge based, organizational efficiency.

The world is interconnected by expanded flows of goods, people, capital, information and technology. It is becoming easier for countries to conduct business internationally. This provides countries with the opportunity to fast-track economic growth and development through increased international trade, and for Nigeria to excel in West Africa and beyond. (Global South Group. 2012)

The porosity of the Nigeria borders continue to engender cross-border crime and instability in the country owing to the lack of an appropriate mechanism for monitoring movement and illegal activities across these borders. Cross-border crime obviously undermined good governance and security, with negative impact on the rule of law, economic activities and human right; general societal and cultural advancement within the sub-region. Some of these activities involve the illicit trafficking of small arms and light weapons/ammunition and human beings, especially women and children; mercenaries and the recruitment and use of child soldiers in armed conflict, transnational syndicate involved in crimes such as peddling of narcotics and the smuggling of goods into and out of the country. It is no more news to see the advertisement of auction of goods on different social media fraudulently claimed to have emanated from the NCS, proliferation of arms of all kinds, leading to a high level of insecurity and turning the nation to a dumping ground of fake and substandard imports that could be injurious to health. As a result of these issues, it became necessary to investigate the role of ICT on crime prevention in the Nigeria Customs Service.

The broad purpose of this study is to investigate and discuss the role of information and communications technology on crime prevention in the Nigeria Customs Service. This is to

explore ways of preventing crime in the Nigeria customs service domain.

Specifically, this study intended to:

examine the knowledge of the Nigeria Customs officers in the use of NCS ICT tools.

- 1) examine specific challenges that confront the NCS in cross border crime prevention.

In order to achieve the above-stated objectives, the following research questions are generated

Research Question 1: How knowledgeable are the officers of the NCS in the use of NCS ICT tools?

Research Question2: What specific ICT challenges confront the NCS in cross border crime prevention?

Literature Review

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and the Nigeria Customs Service

Nigeria Customs Service and Global South Group,) worked on ICT and Customs modernization through automation, the necessary components of a modern customs information and communications technology (ICT) system include seven core functions: cargo control; declaration processing; payments and accounting; risk management; statistics and reporting; intelligence and enforcement; and a communications gateway.

ICT in NCS is provided by the Nigerian Integrated Customs Information System (NICIS), which comprises the ASYCUDA++ processing and risk management system, enhanced by a number of modules known collectively as Trade World Manager (TWM). The basic design of ASYCUDA++ is founded on three main concepts: flexibility, independence, and

open environment. A major benefit of the system is that it allows the Customs administration to configure it according to its own specific needs. Automation, in conjunction with use of Direct Trader Input (DTI) and EDI (Electronic Data Input), allows for information to be accessed in advance of goods' arrival, and therefore cleared more quickly, greatly improving trade facilitation.

Custom Service and Incidences of Criminal activities

Charles (2007) submitted ETSI White Paper No. 5 ICT Product Proofing against Crime. This ETSI White Paper introduced the concept of Product Proofing (for ICT products and services) and provides a set of techniques that can be used for the identification and reduction of crime threats. An assessment of ICT crime and the state of knowledge concerning the nature of those crimes and their existing responses is then illustrated. Finally, this ETSI White Paper identifies some key areas requiring further study that can lead to the development of crime proofing standards to promote the crime proofing of products and services. It was concluded that this White Paper has presented some of the key concepts, approaches and frameworks relating to crime proofing, with the aim of facilitating the development of standards to assist product proofing against crime. Examples have been given of where crime takes place in ICT, and some instances presented of standards designed to combat such crime.

Crime is a universal social problem which goes beyond the general notion of theft, murder, assault, rape, fraud and other unwholesome behavior (Steve, 2007). The concept of crime emphasizes on the decline of public security and steady descent into social chaos. Wikipedia defines crime as deviant behaviour that violates prevailing norms and cultural standards. Perceptions and hence definitions of crime may be affected by the social, political and economic conditions as well as the legal and societal responses. This social menace gives birth to crime prevention

and control, which must dovetail into the entire region of security management.

The number of offences classified as economic crimes decreased slightly in comparison with the previous years. The economic crimes investigated by the Nigeria Customs service in 2011 consisted mainly of illegal imports investigated as tax frauds and aggravated tax frauds, and of intellectual property offences. In 2011, 44 per cent of the economic offences investigated by the NCS were tax frauds (all forms of offences) and 29 per cent were industrial property offences. Economic crime pertaining to electronic trade and to intra-Community trade flows is a growing threat. The Internet is used in marketing and selling highly taxable products, such as electronic appliances, alcohol and tobacco to consumers, while simultaneously evading the tax regulations imposed on these products.

As regards economic crime related to foreign trade and transit traffic, the perceived threat continues to be economic crime taking place within legal business activity. Special attention must still be paid to the misuse of customs procedures, and to products which are imported under false documents. In December 2011, a ship was stopped at KotkaMussalo Harbour and the ensuing customs inspection revealed that it carried 69 Patriot missiles which did not have the appropriate export license required by the Finnish Act on the Export and Transit of Defense Materiel. The US Customs seized the missiles and the case was investigated as an export offence involving defense materiel.

In 2011, criminal activity occurring in export and transit procedures was still detected. As before, there were also cases involving forged documents. The number of aggravated counterfeiting offences investigated by Customs increased somewhat in comparison with 2010. In 2011, there were six cases of aggravated counterfeiting offences, an increase from the previous year's two cases. Petty counterfeiting offences have also increased during the past two years. In 2011, there were 35

recorded counterfeiting offences. The ambiguities occurring in export still involve double invoicing. In these cases, goods are appropriately cleared for export from Finland to the country of destination, where the authorities are presented with import clearance information that differs from the original details provided in Finland. Different estimates on the effect of double invoicing have been given. However, it is difficult to point out any exact figures. According to estimates regarding certain products, up to 20 per cent of the exports from Finland to Russia involve double invoicing.

Crime Prevention strategy in the Customs Service

Crime prevention is a term describing techniques used for reducing or deterring crime and criminals. It is applied specifically to efforts made by governments to reduce crime, enforce the law, and maintain criminal justice. Obviously, crime prevention in NCS is including any initiative or policy which reduces or eliminates the aggregate level of smuggling or any forms of commercial frauds. It also includes government and community based programmes to reduce the incidents of risk factors correlated with criminal participation, the rate of smuggling as well as efforts to reduce such related crime.

Crime prevention includes 'strategies and measures that seek to reduce the risk of crimes occurring, and their potential harmful effects on individuals and society, including fear of crime, by intervening to influence their multiple causes'. These measures can be implemented by individuals, communities, businesses, non-government organizations and all levels of government, to target the various individual, social and environmental factors that increase the risk of crime. Strategies include those that modify the physical environment to reduce the opportunities for crime to occur (environmental approaches), and those that address the underlying social and economic causes of

crime and limit the supply of motivated offenders (social and structural approaches).

Crime prevention activities are also one of the more controversial parts of Customs work. Because of their potential impact on a broad citizenry, such activities often raise civil liberty questions. In addition, the interdependence of all the institutions and activities that go into crime prevention make it difficult to unambiguously assess the effectiveness of any individual component. In spite of the difficulty in rigorously determining what prevents crime, several Customs activities are at least partially justified by the assumption that they contribute to crime prevention. Here, we discuss three such functions: surveillance, crime analysis, and offender tracking.

Customs and the Crime Control Television (CCTV) System

Customs service is "the situation that exists as a result of the establishment of measures for the protection of personnel, information and property against hostile persons, influences and actions (Mosud, 2013). It embraces all measures designed to protect and safeguard the citizenry and the resources of individuals, groups and the nation against international sabotage or external aggression". Security can also be defined as any measure taken with a view to protecting anything of interest to an individual, organization or government, lives, money and materials are usually the essential things the security staff is required to protect. The threats to Nigeria security according to Mosud(2013), is epitomized by the virtually unstoppable rural urban drift (in spite of the deteriorating conditions in urban centres of the country) the fierce competition for the control of State power (especially at the federal level), the manipulation of ethnic and religious identities and sensibilities, the clamour for resources control and convocation of a sovereign National Conference (SNC) could be seen as indicators of the failure of the State to generate inclusive growth and development. The list of criminal

acts is endless: assassinations, kidnapping, arson, organized armed robbery, vandalization, ritual acts, financial crimes, fraudulent acts, impersonation, economic sabotage, political brigandage in the general society, prostitution and women trafficking, drug abuse, cultism, examination malpractices, bullying, raping and assault amongst youths and students.

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study is the descriptive survey of the *ex-post facto* type. The target population for this study comprised all the 1046 (one thousand and forty six) customs officers in Ogun Area Command Ogun state Nigeria.

The sample of this study comprises customs officers in Ogun Area Command in Ogun State, Nigeria. Purposive random sampling technique was employed to select Ogun Area Command from the three (3) Area Commands in the South West that share border with neighbouring countries. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 400 (four hundred) out of 1046 (one thousand and forty six) customs officers in Ogun Customs Area Command Nigeria.

In an attempt to examine the role of information and communications technology on crime prevention in the Nigeria customs service, the researcher used self-developed questionnaire titled: ICT and Crime Prevention questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two sections. Section A consists of items that measure the respondents' demographical variables and section B contains the factors that examine the role of information and communications technology on crime prevention in the Nigeria customs service. The instrument consisted of twenty (20) items based on the four likert point which range from Very High (VH), High (H), Low (L) and Very Low (VL)

Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics. Simple percentage as well as frequency counts, ratio statistics and regression analysis were used to interpret the information

drawn from the questionnaire. Data were tested at 0.05 level of significance

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: How knowledgeable are the officers of the NCS in the use of NCS ICT tools for crime prevention?

Table1: NCS Officers Knowledge in the use of NCS ICT Facilities for crime prevention

| S/N | Statements | VH | H | L | VL | MEAN (\bar{x}) | Std Dev |
|-----|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|------------|-----------------------|------------|
| 1. | How do you rate the ability of NCS officers in operating the scanning machines during cargo examination | 148 (37.0) | 226 (56.5) | 20 (5.0) | 4 (1.0) | 1.79 | 1.561 |
| 2. | How is the level of ASYCUDA++ and risk management system training among the NCS officers | 78 (19.5) | 172 (43.0) | 148 (37.0) | 2 (0.5) | 2.18 | 0.743 |
| 3. | The ability of officers to interpret the Red, yellow, blue, and green light of the NCS risk management system is. . . | 110 (27.5) | 200 (50.0) | 90 (22.5) | -- (--) | 1.95 | 0.706 |
| 4. | At what rate is the level of training of PAAR | 96 (24.0) | 120 (30.0) | 176 (44.0) | 6 (1.5) | 2.23 | 0.831 |

| | | | | | | | |
|----|---|--------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|------|-------|
| | among NCS officers | | | | | | |
| 5. | The level at which NCS officers can analyse Scanned images is ... | 86 (21.5) | 122 (30.5) | 140 (35.0) | 40 (10.0) | 2.34 | 0.936 |

Table 1 reveals that 93.5% of the respondents rated the statement "How do you rate the ability of NCS officers in operating the scanning machines during cargo examination" high ($\bar{X}=1.79$). 62.5% of the respondents rated the statement "How is the level of ASYCUDA++ and risk management system training among the NCS officers" high ($\bar{X}=2.18$). 77.5% of the respondents rated the statement "The ability of officers to interpret the Red, yellow, blue, and green light of the NCS risk management system is. . ." high ($\bar{X}=1.95$). 54% of the respondents rated the statement "At what rate is the level of training of PAAR among NCS officers" high ($\bar{X}=2.23$). While 52% of the respondents rated the statement "The level at which NCS officers can analyse Scanned images is ..." high ($\bar{X}=2.34$). Based on the result from table 1, the knowledge of the officers of the NCS in the Use of ICT is very high.

Research Question 2: What specific challenges confront the NCS in cross border crime prevention?

Table2: The challenges facing NCS in the use of ICT in preventing crime

| S/N | Statements | VH | H | L | VL | MEAN (\bar{X}) | Std Dev |
|-----|--|---------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------------|------------|
| 1. | The inadequate availability of crime detective devices has | 160 (40.0) | 186 (46.5) | 36 (9.0) | 14 (3.5) | 1.75 | 0.760 |

| | | | | | | | |
|----|--|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|------|-------|
| | made cross border crime ... | | | | | | |
| 2. | The extent to which Erratic power supply affect the 24 hours operation of NCS electronic devices is... | 80 (20.0) | 242 (60.5) | 64 (16.0) | 8 (2.0) | 2.00 | 0.669 |
| 3. | Lack of modern technologies in the NCS operation has made cross border crime prevention so ... | 60 (15.0) | 76 (19.0) | 220 (55.0) | 38 (9.5) | 2.59 | 0.859 |
| 4. | The level of training of NCS officers to operate the scanning machines and image analyses is ... | 38 (9.5) | 94 (23.5) | 188 (47.0) | 76 (19.0) | 2.76 | 0.871 |
| 5. | The porous nature of the Nigeria borders is..... | 220 (55.0) | 120 (30.0) | 44 (11.0) | 8 (2.0) | 1.59 | 0.768 |

Table 2 reveals that 86.5% of the respondents rated the statement "The inadequate availability of crime detective devices has made cross border crime ..." high ($\bar{X} = 1.75$). 80.5% of the respondents rated the statement "The extent to which erratic power supply affect the 24 hours operation of NCS electronic devices is..." high ($\bar{X} = 2.00$). 34% of the respondents rated the statement "Lack of modern technologies in the NCS operation has made combating cross prevention so ..." high ($\bar{X} = 2.59$). 33% of the respondents rated the statement "The level of training of NCS officers to operate the scanning machines and image analyses is ..." high ($\bar{X} = 2.76$). While 85% of the respondents rated the statement "The porous nature of the Nigeria borders is....." high ($\bar{X} = 1.59$). Based on the result from table 2, various specific challenges confront the NCS in cross border crime

prevention are presented. Challenges such as inadequate availability of crime detective devices, erratic power supply, lack of modern technologies and porous nature of the Nigeria borders.

NCS Officers Knowledge in the use of NCS ICT Facilities

Based on research question one which asked that "How knowledgeable are the officers of the NCS in the use of NCS ICT tools?" the result obtain from the descriptive analysis shows that 93.5% of the respondents rated the statement "How do you rate the ability of NCS officers in operating the scanning machines during cargo examination" high ($\bar{X} = 1.79$). 62.5% of the respondents rated the statement "How is the level of ASYCUDA++ and risk management system training among the NCS officers" high ($\bar{X} = 2.18$). 77.5% of the respondents rated the statement "The ability of officers to interpret the Red, yellow, blue, and green light of the NCS risk management system is. . ." high ($\bar{X} = 1.95$). 54% of the respondents rated the statement "At what rate is the level of training of PAAR among NCS officers" high ($\bar{X} = 2.23$). While 52% of the respondents rated the statement "The level at which NCS officers can analyse Scanned images is ..." high ($\bar{X} = 2.34$). This indicates that the knowledge of the officers of the NCS in the Use of ICT is very high. This is in agreement with the findings of Nigeria Customs Service and Global South Group (2012), which was conducted on customs reforms and modernisation in Nigeria.

Challenges Facing NCS in the Use of NCS ICT tools in Preventing Crime

In line with research question two which asks that "What specific ICT challenges confront the NCS in cross border crime prevention?" the result obtained from the descriptive analysis shows that 86.5% of the respondents rated the statement "The inadequate availability of crime detective devices has made cross

border crime ..." high ($\bar{X} = 1.75$). 80.5% of the respondents rated the statement "The extent to which erratic power supply affect the 24 hours operation of NCS electronic devices is..." high ($\bar{X} = 2.00$). 34% of the respondents rated the statement "Lack of modern technologies in the NCS operation has made combating cross prevention so ..." high ($\bar{X} = 2.59$). 33% of the respondents rated the statement "The level of training of NCS officers to operate the scanning machines and image analyses is ..." high ($\bar{X} = 2.76$). While 85% of the respondents rated the statement "The porous nature of the Nigeria borders is,...." high ($\bar{X} = 1.59$). This indicates that various specific challenges confront the NCS in cross border crime prevention are presented. Challenges such as inadequate availability of crime detective devices, erratic power supply, lack of modern technologies and porous nature of the Nigeria borders. This is in agreement with the findings of Francesco, (2013) who presented new technology and the prevention of crime, violence and conflict.

ICT Knowledge by NCS and Crime Prevention across the Nigeria Border

With respect to hypothesis two, which states that, "level of ICT knowledge by NCS officers does not significantly improve crime prevention across the Nigeria border," the result obtained from the analysis shows that there was a significant positive strong correlation between ICT knowledge by NCS and crime prevention across the Nigeria border, $r = (569)$, 0.000 , $P < .05$. The findings indicated that level of ICT knowledge by NCS officers significantly improve crime prevention across the Nigeria border. However, the finding of this study was consistent with those of earlier researchers: Nigeria Customs Service and Global South Group, (2012) who worked on ICT and Customs modernization through Automation.

Summary

This paper investigated the role of ICT on crime prevention in the Nigeria Customs Service. The porosity of the Nigeria borders continue to engender cross-border crime and instability in the country owing to the lack of an appropriate mechanism for monitoring movement and illegal activities across these borders. Some relevant literatures on information and communications technology, crime prevention and Nigeria customs service were reviewed. The paper highlights the various procedures adopted in carrying out the study.

The findings from the study showed that level of ICT knowledge by NCS officers significantly improved crime prevention across the Nigeria border.

Lastly, the results indicated that various specific challenges confronted the NCS in cross border crime prevention are presented. Challenges such as inadequate availability of crime detective devices, erratic power supply, lack of modern technologies and porous nature of the Nigeria borders.

Conclusion

From the data collected and analysed, the discussions, the literature reviewed and the findings of the study, it could be concluded that:

Officers of the NCS are knowledgeable about the use of NCS ICT tools especially ASYCUDA++ and PAAR.

The NCS is confronted with various challenges across border in preventing crime. Challenges such as inadequate availability of crime detective devices, erratic power supply, lack of modern technologies and porous nature of the Nigeria borders.

This study makes an important contribution in understanding the role of ICT on crime prevention in the Nigeria Customs Service.

The level of ICT knowledge by NCS officers improve the rate at which crime prevention across the Nigeria border has been put under control.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, discussions and conclusion drawn from this paper, the following recommendations were made:

- 1) Concerted efforts should be made by the NCS to improve on training and retraining of NCS officers on the use of its ICT tools so as to remain resolute with the global best practice.
- 2) The government together with the NCS should concentrate more on the cross border crime by finding a lasting solution to the challenges of NCS. Challenges such as inadequate availability of crime detective devices, erratic power supply, lack of modern technologies and porous nature of the Nigeria borders.
- 3) NCS should partner with the telecommunication service providers for easy access to network for proper monitoring of the Nigeria borders

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