

## Nigerian Police Officers' Perception of the Power and Potency of Juju (Black Magic) For Criminalities

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**Abstract.** Scholarly works on crime and policing are yet to accord much attention to the phenomenon of juju practice and criminality. Indeed, while accounts of survivors of juju-oaths and juju-using criminals have been considerably documented, limited empirical studies have attempted to examine the awareness, beliefs, perception and experiences of law enforcement officers in their dealings with criminals that deploy the use of juju for protection against apprehension. Therefore, an exploratory approach was used to fill in the gaps in existing knowledge on police belief and response to the use of supernatural powers for the perpetration of crime and crime-fighting. The methodology employed qualitative data obtained through interviews with investigative police officers of selected divisional offices within Ogun state. Results suggest a high level of awareness, belief and positive perception of police officers to juju practice in criminalities and crime-fighting. Police officers' adoption of juju powers as a counterforce to combat juju-using criminals appears to be on the increase while they advocate for the recognition of the potency of juju rituals by the criminal justice system. Government and police authorities should recognize, orientate, regulate, and engage juju practice and priests, and maintain sound police-community relations in tackling juju-using criminals.

**Keywords:** Black magic, Criminalities, Juju, Nigeria Police, Power

### 1. Introduction

In the face of ever increasing acts of lawlessness, the Nigeria police has continued to grapple with numerous challenges and factors militating against active and effective discharge of its functions to the society. In recent years, Nigeria police has particularly been faced with systemic impediments

that include inadequate manpower, deficiency in required quality of personnel, lack of budget support for needed improvement, political interference with police investigations, obsolete and inferior arms and ammunitions, inadequate and ineffective use of modern information and communication technology (Bello and Adeyinka, 2013; Chinwokwu, 2013; Falaye, Adama, and Agemerien, 2013; Mbamalu, 2014; Aborisade, 2018; Amusan and Saka, 2018). Above all these challenges, offenders of various crimes have equally been active in devising different methods to make themselves invincible and evade apprehension by the police.

Hitherto, officers of the Nigeria Police had to contend with battling criminals that possess superior firepower that often incapacitates officers' bid to combat criminalities (Odeh and Nanji, 2015; Oyemwinmina and Aibieyi, 2016; Aborisade and Adedayo, 2018). This is premised on the perennial poor state of arms and ammunitions of the country's police that has been described as obsolete and ineffectual (Nte, 2011; Chinwokwu, 2013). Public opinion holds that lack of sophisticated firearms by the Nigeria police to confront armed criminals is responsible for the widely reported reluctance of police officers to respond to distress calls of citizens under attack from armed bandits (Nigeria Police Watch, 2011; Nwoye, 2016). However, new wave of media reports have identified criminals' use of juju for invincibility and avoiding arrest as a daunting obstacle that police officers have had to face (BBC News, 2014; Mirror, 2015; Punch, 2018). Although, not a new phenomenon, reported use of juju by criminals has grown in leaps and bounds in recent years.

Accounts of captured criminals on how they made exploits in their criminal careers with the use of juju have been widely reported in different channels of

news media (Information Nigeria, 2013; Punch, 2018). Televised press conferences held by various police departments have also included the exhibition of criminals' juju amulets, charms and other paraphernalia alongside their arms and ammunitions. Meanwhile, there have been cases of notorious criminals who operated in many parts of the country with brazen audacity for several months, years, without being caught (Idowu, 1980; Igbo, 2001; Nwalozie, 2011). Public opinions hold firmly that these criminals were only able to carry out such nefarious activities without being arrested due to the power and potency of juju that they often use in protecting themselves (Harnischfeger, 2006). In spite of avalanche of media reports, there remains a dearth of criminological literature that borders on police officers' awareness, belief, perception, encounters and response to criminals' use of juju to evade arrest. Meanwhile, current news reports indicate that policemen are equally adopting the use of juju to catch criminals (Legit, 2017; Times Live, 2018). This study therefore takes an exploratory approach to fill in the gaps in existing knowledge on police belief and response to the use of supernatural powers for the perpetration of criminalities and crime fighting. Specifically, police awareness, belief and perception about criminals' use of juju to avoid apprehension are examined. Also, the accounts of police personnel's encounters with juju-using criminals and response to possible effects of juju in crime fighting are taken and analysed.

## **2. Juju Practice and the Nigerian Criminal Law**

Juju is a spiritual belief system that utilizes various items like amulets, animal horns, and spells that are incorporated into religious practices, usually connected with witchcraft in Africa (Ellis and Ter Haar, 2004; Adams and Dzokoto, 2005). Although, it used to be prominent among the West Africans, and regarded as a traditional West African religion, it has however grown in leaps and bounds across the African continent and gained a colloquial meaning that has gone beyond what it connotes initially (Ellis and Ter Haar, 2004). This is as a result of its current use to refer to any supernatural power, phenomenon, or resource that has no connection with the orthodox religions of Islam and Christianity (Dunkerley, 2018; Odogwu, 2018). The objects or idols that are believed to possess the spirits of juju are often made by sorcerers that are also referred to as witch doctors or juju priests (Abioje, 2013).

The potency of juju or black magic that dates back to pre-colonial Nigeria has been acknowledged by

scholars (Igbo, 2001; Nwalozie, 2011; Abioje, 2013), while its resurgence and use for criminalities gained popularity from the 1980s (Bisikay, 2011). Juju is connected to the traditional African religion popularly known as voodoo. However, while juju is mostly used for evil and wrongdoings, voodoo is believed to be used for native medicine and other helpful purposes (Abioje, 2013). Also, voodoo practitioners are mostly herbalists who make use of a combination of herbs, bark of trees and water to cure diseases. The knowledge to perform such healings using voodoo is usually obtained from ancestral spirits and parental indoctrination (Bisikay, 2011). On the other hand, juju priests make use of irregular objects like human or animal skull, horns and other inanimate objects.

There is a range of supernatural powers that juju (black magic) is believed to possess by the adherents of traditional African religion. These include; invisibility, clairvoyance, see-spirit (ability to see the dead), dark magic (ability to summon demons and other dark entities), indestructibility (the person's body is impervious to damage especially impenetrable by bullets and sharp metal objects), mind control (ability to control other people's mind) and spell casting (Ojo, 1981). The belief and use of juju in various forms transcend social and economic classes as people of different kinds, educated and illiterate, rich and poor, urban and rural dwellers and so on patronise juju priests (Bisikay, 2011; Abioje, 2013). For example, the head of the Niger Delta Development Commission, Mr. Sam Edem, was charged to court for stealing money to hire a juju sorcerer to bring him success (BBC News, 2008). In the report, police authority alleged that in one of the rituals performed by him, he burnt millions of naira and rubbed the ash on his body for spiritual fortification.

Since claims of juju or witchcraft are not easily verifiable by the scrutiny of judicial proceedings, the Nigerian criminal law accords limited recognition to the existence and potency of juju or criminal charm (Ojo, 1981; Chinwokwu, 2013; Dunkerley, 2018). However, where it is apparent by proof that juju or witchcraft was used to commit crimes against persons or property, the laws have provisions for the punishment of offenders and protections of the society from mysterious machinations (Smith, 2004; Harnischfeger, 2006). The Nigerian law was able to clamp down on some aspects of witchcraft and juju that it can identify and regulate. This is through the provisions made in the Criminal Code Act Sections: 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, and 213; the attitudes of the law to trial by ordeal, witchcraft, juju and

criminal charms are provided. However, the burden of proof to establish the use of juju for criminal purposes weighs heavily on the police and other prosecutors during the judicial proceeding.

### 3. Juju Charms, Occultism and the Challenges of Policing Nigeria

Existing literature posits that the use of charms or juju for deviance and criminality dates back to pre-colonial Nigeria (Igbo, 2001; Nwalozie, 2011; Abioje, 2013), however, there had been the resurgence and rapid development in the use of juju for violent crimes since the post-colonial era (Ojo, 1981; Smith, 2004; Harnischfeger, 2006). Notably, the proliferation of arms and ammunitions that were introduced during the colonial period is identified as one of the factors that made violent crimes to thrive in post-colonial Nigeria. Meanwhile, the existence of juju practice and rituals for criminalities which existed since the traditional period combined with accessibility to modern weapons that were brought into the country during the advent of colonialism are parts of explanations given for the emergence of juju usage for violent crimes in the country (Harnischfeger, 2006). For instance, armed robbery kingpins of 1960s and 1970s were reported to have taken advantage of accessibility of modern weapons and juju power to subdue their victims and escape arrest from the police within these periods (Ojo, 1981).

The first celebrated armed robber in Nigeria, Dr. Ishola Oyenusi, who terrorized south-western parts of the country in the 1970s, was attributed to have combined the use of sophisticated weapons with juju power (Smith, 2004). In his days, he often bragged that “bullet has no power” whenever he had cause to confront the police officers in a gun battle or shootout (Nwalozie, 2011). The confidence he exhibited at the time was attributed to the perceived potency of his juju-enhanced ‘bullet proof’ which he wore until he was eventually apprehended and executed. Reports also had it that, robbery czars, such as Lawrence Anini, who exploited the city of Benin in the 1980s, Shina Rambo, who was feared for his exploits within the south-western parts of Nigeria in the 1990s, and Abiodun Ogunjobi, also known as Godogodo, another robbery kingpin of south-west Nigeria in the 2000s, all made extensive use of juju in their criminal careers before they were caught (Vanguard, 2013).

However, the rate at which criminals make use of juju to perpetrate evil in the entire Nigerian state has continued to grow since the turn of the current millennium (Odeh and Nanji, 2015; Oyemwinmina

and Aibieyi, 2016). The growth of existing crimes like armed robbery, and emergence of new crimes like kidnapping for ransom, drug and human trafficking, widened the scope of insecurity in the country (Akinyele, 2001; Harnischfeger, 2003). On the other hand, the incapability of the Nigerian police to contain the high level of insecurity became apparent (Adejumo, 2014; Aborisade and Adedayo, 2018). This led to the emergence and growth of alternative security arrangements and vigilante groups in different parts of the country in order to bolster security (Smith, 2004). Militia groups like Odu’a People’s Congress, and Bakassi Boys did not only clampdown on criminals using juju, they equally took on witch doctors and juju priests that provided spiritual fortifications for people of the underworld (Harnischfeger, 2003). Incidentally, considerable peace was restored to these areas as crime rate was rapidly reduced, leading to increase in public perception that the juju-enhanced, anti-crime activities of vigilante groups are more effective in ensuring security (Harnischfeger, 2006).

The use of juju rituals for oath-taking is equally prominent amongst criminal gang members who often swear to oath of secrecy in case one or more of them are captured by the law enforcers (Nwalozie, 2011; BBC News, 2014). Therefore, this portends a herculean task to the police who may interrogate arrested criminals with the belief that they will use this means to track the whereabouts of the remaining gang members from the confessions of those arrested (Idowu, 1980; Igbo, 2001). In particular, this has been identified as one of the main reasons for the challenges policemen faced in tracking down armed robbery kingpins in Nigeria (Ojo, 1981). This is because arrested gang members usually preferred to die than to volunteer information about how to capture their leaders, since they are of the belief that giving such information will inevitably lead to their deaths anyway (Igbo, 2001; Nwalozie, 2011; Chinwokwu, 2013). On the other hand, the official non-recognition of the efficacy of juju in criminal justice in Nigeria makes it inevitable for police officers to deploy all within their armoury to apprehend criminals.

### 4. The Present Study

Given the positions of extant literature on the subject of this research, the aim of this current study is to explore the level of belief and perception of the police on the efficacy of juju use for crime purposes in Nigeria. This is in order to unravel the unreported challenges that police personnel may be exposed to in the course of fighting the increasing rate of crime in

the country. The apparent success of ethno-militia groups that used charms to confront juju-using criminals may have also impacted on the impression of police personnel about the efficacy of juju and its adoption to confront criminals. This assumption was given credence by news from media channels that police officers are taking to the use of juju to catch criminals (Legit, 2017; Times Live, 2018).

Although, news media reports suggest that some police men are equally deploring juju to neutralize the effects of criminals' juju, no official statement from the police has implied that the use of juju has been sanctioned by police authorities. This may be as a result of the social perception of juju as fetish, devilish and against the tenets of Islam and Christian religions that represent the faith of overwhelming majority of Nigerians. Therefore, adherents of Christianity and Islam that adopt juju may have to do so discreetly in order not to be perceived as deviants. This explains the rationale to conduct a qualitative study in this current study as there is a greater chance of police officers volunteering the truth at a face-to-face interview than questionnaire. There is also a higher chance that officers will share experiences of their encounters with juju-using criminals using qualitative methods.

## 5. Research Methodology

In this study, a qualitative approach was adopted because the topic of the research is an unexplored, sensitive and complex issue. An initial attempt to deploy quantitative techniques to gather data was unsuccessful as a large number of officers declined to participate in the study. Therefore, the methodological approach was explorative with the aim of developing an initial understanding of police perception of the existence and, act as a platform for subsequent studies. The study is aimed at capturing viewpoints and breathes of experience instead of commonality and dominant discourses. Therefore, interview is considered to have sufficient structure that would enable the answering of the research questions, while enabling flexibility to pursue the thought process of participants.

### 5.1 Ethical considerations

The research made conscious efforts to abide by ethical rules and standards guiding data collection from human subjects. Before the data collection aspect of the study commenced, approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State. In addition, permission to engage police officers in the study was sought and obtained from

the office of Ogun State Police Command, Eleweeran, Abeokuta. Emphasis was laid on the voluntary nature of the research throughout the recruitment and interview processes. All contacts gave verbal consent to the research and they were assured that the goal of the study was to examine the perception and beliefs in criminals' use of black magic – not to judge or condemn officers' belief in fetishism.

### 5.2 Sample participants

The participants of this study were 34 officers from 13 police stations in three cities within Ogun State; Abeokuta, Sagamu and Ijebu-Ode ( $N= 26$ ), and four divisional police headquarters in the purposively selected cities ( $N= 8$ ). The selection of police offices in these three cities was premised on convenience and assurances from police contacts that information about the study will be accessible. All participants were recruited from major jurisdictions on a voluntary basis, through known contacts, even though approval for the research was granted by the office of the Commissioner of the Police, Ogun State. Thereafter, purposive sampling was used to select participants consequent upon their job roles as field officers (to ensure those with contacts with criminals are selected), years of experience, statuses and voluntariness in being a research participant. Initially, the study was designed to be quantitative in nature considering the number of police investigators in the Zone 2 command. However, the reluctance of police officers to fill questionnaire was evident during the pilot study. The researchers were then advised by volunteering officers to make use of semi-structured interview methods instead, as many officers will be averse to filling out information about what they consider confidential and strict police affairs. Also, due to the non-recognition of juju, witchcraft and charms in the Nigerian justice system, officers that believe in their potency would not want to divulge such information easily on questionnaire. Meanwhile, most participants were able to speak fluent English, and translations were done for a few officers who were more comfortable speaking in *Pidgin* English.

### 5.3 Study instruments

The study was carried out within a period of three months spanning through October, 2018 to January, 2019. During this period, 48 officers were contacted and 34 of them agreed to be part of the study. The participation rate for the study was high (70 percent), mainly as a result of the efforts of contact officers that assisted in soliciting for participation of officers in the study. Audio recording was not allowed during

the interview, therefore notes of the proceeding were taken down by a research assistant. Interviews averaged thirty-five minutes. Eleven minutes was the shortest time used for the conduct of the interview, while the longest lasted for 70 minutes. The interview time varied considerable due to the differentials in the amount of experiences officers are able and willing to share, their admittance of the power and potency of juju, and the semi-structured nature of the interview that allowed them to freely express themselves.

Although, the primary data collected for the study was qualitative, considerations were equally given to some quantitative data. As a result, short standard instruments were used to gather data that throws light on demographics characteristics of the police personnel, their religious affiliations and ethnic background. These are considered as important elements that may impact on their belief, perception and attitude towards juju and its usage.

#### 5.4 Data analysis

Analysis of the data collected from the field was in conformity to the iterative process that often characterises grounded theory in particular, and qualitative research more generally (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, 1995). At the time the data were being gathered, extensive field notes on various observations and interactions relevant to the study of police perception of juju charms and its use by criminals were taken. After data collection was concluded, content analysis was done with the use of a qualitative software program (NVivo). Content analysis has to do with the probing of content and themes of text to uncover both definitions contained in the text and those that emerge through the analysis (Krippendorff, 2012). Open coding was used for the identification of the themes that are apparent in the narratives of the participants with the use of line-by-line analysis. The connections between the themes started becoming clearer after initial memos had been written, then, we reverted to the full body of data to commence focused coding. The use of focused coding assisted to ensure that the themes that emerged from the initial subset of the data were both appropriately configured and relevant to the full set of data. A similar line-by-line process of open coding was utilised for the focused coding, however, specific codes that had been identified as relevant to the theoretical background were applied.

#### 5.5 Research Limitations

As a result of the emotive and complex characteristic of the study and its study population, this research is

not devoid of limitations that usually trail data collection from police personnel, especially in developing societies. First, the sample of the study is relatively small and may not have been representative of police officers' opinion on juju use by criminals in Nigeria. Substantial effort was made to adopt a mixed-method approach for this study; however, at the recruitment stage for quantitative data collection, officers expressed unwillingness to complete questionnaires. Those that filled left a lot of questions unanswered. Therefore, the researchers were constrained to use only qualitative method for data collection. Second, at the point of recruiting participants for interview, the study equally had high rejection rate as officers were unwilling to divulge information about their personal beliefs. Third, in spite of the assurance of confidentiality and anonymity made to the participants, some of them still appeared suspicious of the exercise, and this may contribute negatively to validity of the information they supplied to the study.

Finally, the sampling was of necessity opportunistic. Only officers that were at their duty posts and willing to participate were engaged in the study. However, in spite of these limitations, the field experience of the interviewers provided the capacity to engage the police officers and elicit useful information for the study.

## 6. Results

### 6.1 Preliminary Analyses

Between October 2018 and January, 2019, 34 face-to-face interviews were conducted in selected police divisions, stations and offices within Ogun State command. As a result of the purposive sampling technique adopted for the study, only divisional crime officers (DCOs) and investigate police officers (IPOs) that have at least five years' experience were engaged. This was done to ensure that those involved in the study have considerable number of years' experience in combating violent crime perpetrators, since earlier studies revealed high level of juju patronage amongst violent criminals. Their religious affiliation was considered important, since the topic of the study has spiritual or religious bearing. Eighteen of them indicated being Christian, 14 expressed they are Muslims, while only stated that they are not affiliated to any religion. None of the participants expressed their profound belief in traditional religion, however, 11 indicated that they belief in the power and potency of juju and have patronised juju in one form or another in the past, but were not wholly traditionalists. All the officers

engaged in this study as participants indicated that they had previously worked in various divisions of the police before they were transferred to their present Command in Ogun State. This implies that they are able to offer experience of juju usage in criminality and law enforcement across different regions in Nigeria.

## 6.2 Main Analyses

The body languages of police officers engaged in the study and some of their responses showed that their negative perception of juju practice and rituals is informed by their affiliation to Christianity and Islam, as well as their official positions as officers of a justice system that accords no official recognition to juju practice. However, some contractions in their responses to questions that borders on their awareness, belief, perception, and whether the government should officially recognise juju practice made their self-denial quite evident. In some instances, participants that earlier expressed that they do not patronise juju for fortification later made comments like “no police officer that usually confronts criminals will go to criminals’ hideout ‘unprotected’ except he/she is on a suicide mission,” “Only God is my protector...God made the ‘herbs and the roots’ for the use of mankind. Meanwhile, the ‘herbs and roots’ are objects that are synonymous with juju practice often utilized by herbalists. In spite of the spate of denials, majority of the participants offered relevant information about their experiences and encounters with juju-using criminals. In the following sub-sections, the themes discussed are: police awareness, belief and perception about charms and juju practice, encounters with juju-using criminals, strategies adopted to apprehend juju-using criminals.

### 6.2.1 Awareness, belief and perception about charms and juju practice

All the participants of the study answered in the affirmative to the question on whether they are aware of juju beliefs and practices as well as its use by criminals to commit crimes and escape arrest. However, 11 of the officers declined accepting that juju has compelling powers over people or can be potent enough to make criminals get away with their crimes at the point of arrest. One of the officers in this category expressed his opinion further:

*...juju is about belief. Those that believe in it get scared and apprehensive which makes them to see the effect that is not really there in reality. It is a psychological thing. Even if it has potent power, you must believe in it before it can exert such power on*

*you. I am a police officer, and I believe police uniform itself has the fear-factor that makes juju and juju-users to tremble in fear. That is why we are usually able to arrest criminals who use juju or not...*

(Olayinka, Sergeant, Abeokuta)

Majority of participants that refused to concede to the power and potency of juju premised their disbelief on their strong belief in orthodox religion that offers a stronger supernatural power. One of such officers who are of Christian faith volunteered:

*...the Bible recognizes the existence of such spiritual powers which is why I responded positively to my awareness of juju and other familial spirits. However, I am not bound, neither am I susceptible to such power because the power that is in me is greater than the power that is embedded in juju. I have been part of squads that went to effect arrest of babalawo (juju priests) and even criminals that possess such juju powers. Once you are strong in your faith and refuse to hold such belief in your heart and allow it to affect your confidence, you will definitely triumph.*

(David, Corporal, Abeokuta)

Other notable positions held by officers that do not believe in the potency of juju power are that “it can only work for or against those that believe in its potency,” “it is a thing of the mind and only work in the mind of those that believe in it.” Ironically, some of the participants in this category conceded to having experienced some mysterious things happening during their police career like “suspects sudden disappearance from detention,” “engaging criminals in shoot-out without the criminals getting hit,” “mysterious disappearance of casefiles under their care.” To these ‘mysteries,’ the officers are of the belief that “suspects may have been released by corrupt officers,” “the shot at criminals may have been badly aimed” and “casefiles may have been taken to sabotage the case” respectively.

As for the 23 participants that hold that juju is powerful, their premise was mostly based on their personal experiences, their affiliation to traditional religion which involves juju worship and practices, and accounts of close associates that have come in contact with juju power. Some of them hold that officers of the Nigeria Police that deny the existence and potency of juju and its use in perpetrating crime are “only engaging in self-denial and self-deception.” Olayipo, a police Inspector, was one of those that vehemently believed that no police officer will claim oblivion of juju potency in Nigeria:

*...the use of juju by criminals, violent or nonviolent is now commonplace in Nigeria. There is certainly no police officer that goes for arrest operations or investigations that will claim that juju doesn’t work*

*or is not powerful. That officer is only lying to himself. I am a Christian but I have seen juju working a lot of times and I cannot deny that. In fact in Nigeria now, juju is used to cause harm, protect criminals and do general evil than good. There is no state or town that an officer will work now that he or she will not see juju in action...*

(Olayipo, Inspector, Abeokuta)

Majority of the officers that believe in the potency of juju corroborated his statement. Some stated that their police profession and Nigerian criminal justice's stance on juju usage and potency may be responsible for some officers' denial in the existence and potency of juju. However, they opined that in truth, almost all officers are wary of juju and deploy different methods and beliefs to counter the effect of juju's supernatural powers.

Experiences and encounters with juju-using criminals  
Twenty-three participants that expressed their belief efficacy of juju as a result of their personal encounters with juju using criminals were requested to share such experiences. The officers shared stories of a variety of encounters they had which all depict mysterious supernatural occurrences. A few of them expressed that they had deadly encounters with juju-using criminals which they were only able to survive by a stroke of luck. Sergeant Emeka, narrated his account which he said still had adverse psychological effect on him:

*...we went to effect the arrest of a herbalist who offers juju services to a gang of kidnapers that we caught in Aba. On getting to his shrine, we could not find him but we were hearing his voice all over. He was warning us to leave his shrine immediately or something bad will happen to us. Of course we didn't leave. Then all of a sudden, I lost consciousness and became totally unaware of events around me. I was told that my eyes were open, but I was unresponsive. This thing happened to three other officers together with me. We were there for hours. I was told it took the intervention of the village head and some juju priests who performed some appeasements before the herbalist gave antidote that set us free. I didn't recover fully from the event. I had to be taken to some other spiritualists, including Church. Up till now, I still feel the effect occasionally. One of the officers that had same experience with me later went mad.*

(Emeka, Sergeant, Sagamu)

Some other officers shared similar experiences where it took the intervention of juju priest and other spiritual practitioners for them to get saved from life-threatening encounters with criminals that used juju to attack them. Inspector Kabiru expressed that he

was once shot in the leg by an armed robber he attempted to arrest and the wound he sustained refused to heal in spite of several orthodox and unorthodox treatments. He said he finally got healed through the help of a juju herbalist man in Ijebu community. Similarly, Corporal Garuba shared his experience of when he was shot during an operation and he was rushed to the hospital for treatment. However, doctors could not locate the bullet in spite of the pains he felt about being shot. He said it took the intervention of a juju man who "rubbed the spot with a local gin before the bullet could be removed." A substantial number of the participants stated that they equally never believed in the potency of juju until they experienced the power themselves. One of those that never believed in the potency of juju before he encountered a juju-using criminal is Sergeant Adesegun, who shared his experience:

*There was this Fulani man that was arrested and handcuffed but shockingly the handcuff was removed neatly without any breakage and he disappeared leaving the handcuff on the ground. That cannot be ordinary, it is supernatural...Also, when I was serving in Kogi, we went to arrest this criminal we have been looking for, for a long time and we started shooting at him but the bullets could not penetrate into his body, I saw it with my own eyes but at the end we were able to get him.*

(Adesegun, Sergeant, Ijebu-Ode)

In all, the most common juju power that officers have witnessed criminals deploy is the bullet-repellent or spiritual bullet-proof. Majority of the officers indicated that they have experienced criminals use it to resist arrest more than once. Some of the officers hold the belief that it is the most common spiritual fortification that criminals sought from juju priests. However, despite a good number of them professing that criminals equally used disappearing powers, none of them confirmed seeing a criminal disappear before them physically. They only described situations where they rounded criminals up in rooms and found them missing. A participant in Sagamu, Adewale, gave an account of when they chased at a gang of robbers in their vehicles. In the process of trying to escape from the police, the robbers' vehicle crashed into a huge tree on the highway. The officers got out of their van to rescue and arrest, only to find out that all occupants have vanished from the car wreckage. Adewale was convinced that the gang used supernatural powers to escape the scene of the accident. He affirmed, "we were following them very closely and there was no way they could have physically got out of the car within the time we packed our car and got to the crashed car." In addition, he stated that the damage done to the car

was such that survivors would need help to be able to get out of the wreckage, as the doors were crushed and became non-functional. Other officers described various incidences of criminals or suspects disappearing, including those that disappeared from police cells where they were being detained.

### 6.2.2 Responses and strategies deployed to apprehend juju-using criminals

The participants that narrated their encounters with juju-using criminals were asked to divulge information about how they were able to overpower and apprehend those they successfully arrested. However, majority of them indicated that they were unsuccessful in their attempts to arrest the criminals on the occasions they witnessed criminals using juju, even though some of the criminals were eventually arrested. Meanwhile, a few of them, who were part of successful attempt to apprehend juju-using criminals, shared their experiences. Olayipo professed that on the occasion where a gang of kidnappers made use of bullet-repellent juju, it was one of the officers in their team that tied a red clothing to the nozzle of the guns of the officers and instructed them to point their guns first to the sky and then aim at the kidnappers and shoot. According to him, their adherence to this instruction assisted them in gunning down seven of the kidnappers, while three surrendered including their leader, and two escaped.

Notably, participants of the study generally indicated that once they are well informed that the suspects they are set to arrest make use of potent juju to protect themselves, they prepare in different ways to neutralize the juju power and succeed in their mission. Although, many of them did not divulge details of how they strategize to capture juju-using criminals, a few of them volunteered that they often have officers who, by virtue of their proven spiritual prowess, are usually designated to handle juju-using criminals. In some instances, such officers may not even be within the same police station or division with the officers in charge of such cases, but they usually seek and get help of the officers in their bid to capture such criminals.

Other participants pointed out that assistance from the public, especially those that know about the secrets of the antidote of such juju powers are often sought and received. They provided instances where members of communities that juju-using criminals reside assisted them in neutralizing the effect of their juju powers, thereby making it easy for them to apprehend them. Adeboye, an inspector, gave an account of one of such incidences:

*...there was this case of a robber that used to escape but we got a hint that the officer going for the arrest should rob himself with palm oil then, that particular criminal's juju would be neutralized and that was how we were able to arrest him.*

(Adeboye, Inspector, Abeokuta)

A few other participants also told stories of how they got similar help from members of the community and leadership of juju priests in such communities. Adetola, a corporal, pointed out that it is easier to get help from communities if one of the officers is an indigene of such community or lives there. In addition, they make use of informants that have fair knowledge about the workings of juju powers. According to some participants, some of such informants may be ex-convicts that made use of series of juju powers during their criminal careers. Overall, there were no definite or standard measure used collectively by police officers to confront juju-using criminals, response and strategies deployed depend on the peculiarities of each occasion and the options available to them.

### 6.2.3 Use of Juju to Confront Juju-Using Criminal?

Only four of the 23 officers that expressed believing in the potency of juju confessed to their adoption of juju as a counterforce to confront juju-using criminals. This is in spite of several officers confessing to having sought and got healing help from juju priests and herbalists in the course of their police career. One of the officers that refuted the use of juju to confront criminals went ahead to provide information that may explain why many officers deny using juju of their own when they go in battle with juju-using criminals:

*...the use of juju is forbidden by the Nigerian law. Also, juju related evidences are not tenable in the court of law. Therefore, it will be difficult for officers to be giving you information about how he has been using juju either for good or bad. Meanwhile, don't forget that many of these officers have their own [orthodox] religions. How can they claim to be Christians or Muslims and still confess to you that they worship and practice juju? That is part of the deep secrets of officers that make use of juju to fight criminals. I do not see how you can get that [information] out of them...*

(Morenike, Corporal, Abeokuta)

Ironically, even though majority of the officers denied the use of juju in fighting juju-using criminals, almost all the officers that participated in the study

indicated that they knew fellow officers that made use of supernatural powers to protect themselves and confront criminals. However, only a few of them conceded that the so-called 'supernatural powers' were obtained from juju practice. In particular, respondents that physically witnessed the capturing of juju-criminals told similar stories of how their fellow officers used "superior powers," "special powers" "supernatural might," "strange powers" among others, to fight criminals to submission. In describing the measures deployed by their colleagues to confront and overpower the criminals, participants mainly avoided to categorically state that their colleagues deployed the use of juju. Only three of the 11 officers that indicated witnessing the overpowering of juju-using criminals by their colleagues conceded that such colleagues used juju power to subdue the criminals. They premised their reluctance to concede that their colleagues made use of juju on the secrecy and denials of the officers to having used juju. Some of them said that such officers often claim that their ability to capture juju-using criminals is premised on their "self-confidence" and "natural powers." They also reported that some officers often give credit to the spiritual fortifications that their parents did for them when they were young.

#### **6.2.4 Perception about Non-recognition of Juju by the Nigerian Criminal Justice System**

All the officers expressed their awareness of the position of the Nigerian criminal justice system on the use of juju or spiritual means to cause harm. They know that such claims are non-permissible under the law and untenable as evidence in court. However, majority of them decried the non-recognition of juju by laws in the country. They mainly premised their protestations on the peculiarity of the sociocultural environment of Africa and Nigeria where the use is very prevalent and should not be ignored if the realities of the country's social environment are to be considered. One of such officers that strongly hold on to this idea retorts:

*...It is because of the people that colonized us that made our government not to recognize juju. We have seen criminals using juju on a number of times, but there is no way we can prove that in the court of law. There was a case where a female detainee escaped from her prison cell after her boyfriend visited her. The officers on duty were all charged for negligence and conspiracy with the suspect. Meanwhile, we were told by the suspect's neighbour that her boyfriend was a herbalist and he must have given her something to effect her disappearance from the cell.*

*In fact, one of them confided in us that he must have given her onions to rub under her slippers...*

(Adesegun, Sergeant, Ijebu-Ode)

The position of Adesegun is representative of that of majority of the participants who bore their minds on the challenges they are confronted with due to the non-recognition of juju in the country's justice system. They mostly attributed the non-recognition of juju by the laws to the origin of Nigerian legal system which is based on the English Common Law. However, some of them blamed the hypocrisy of Nigerian legislative and judiciary leaders for their refusal to amend Nigerian laws to appropriately accommodate the existence of juju as a compelling influence on the country's social environment.

In advocating the recognition of juju and making appropriate provisions for verifying spiritual claims in court, a police officer was quite emphatic in his submissions:

*...it is only hypocritical of us to claim that juju cannot be recognized under Nigerian laws. The court judges that refuse to acknowledge juju, many of them use juju for different purposes. The lawyers that speak against juju in court and emphasize its non-acceptability, many of them patronize juju. Some of the occurrences facilitated by juju like criminals disappearing, or using traditional bullet-proof, many of them know that these stories are real. Yet, they sanction officers that are in charge of criminals who disappeared under their care. Some of these officers are sent to jail with accusation that they colluded with the criminals for them to escape. This is Africa not Western countries; juju practice and power are real and this must be acknowledged.*

(Bamishe/Inspector/Sagamu)

Bamishe went further to narrate that court judges sometimes deploy the use of juju to protect themselves against some plaintiffs and accused persons in court that may want to use juju powers to manipulate cases in court. He retorted: 'if they do not believe in juju, why bother protect themselves in such cases?' Similarly, another officer, Olayipo, pointed out that several actors in the criminal justice system, especially the Nigerian judiciary, are members of a number of occult groups and organizations that make use of diabolical powers similar to that of juju to give themselves some spiritual edge over others in different scenarios.

In furtherance of their support and argument in favour of the recognition of juju by criminal laws in Nigeria, some of the participants advocated for the government to support officers that believe and

decide to adopt the use of juju in prosecuting their policing duties. However, the few officers that spoke against the recognition of juju by legal system in the country premised their opposition to difficulties that will arise in verifying claims of juju powers and their usage, as well as the potentials of abuse of such provisions by officers and the public. As one of them puts it: “in this scientific world, how do we prove juju claims, how do we separate genuine juju powers from misconception and deception?” Even though, some of those in this category acknowledge that there is juju power, they believe giving official and legal recognition to it will bring more harm than good to the criminal justice system of the country.

## 7. Discussions

The purpose of this study was to present the perception of police officers in Nigeria to a supernaturally-inclined challenge of combating criminals that deploy diabolical and spiritual powers embedded in juju rituals to perpetrate crime. This is in response to avalanche of news media reports of criminals’ use of juju for invincibility and avoiding arrest which apparently is on the increase in the country (Information Nigeria, 2013; BBC News, 2014; Mirror, 2015; Oyemwinmina and Aibieyi, 2016; Punch, 2018). Using data from a qualitative study of investigative police officers in selected divisional offices within Ogun State, Nigeria, the awareness, belief and perception of the officers about juju practice, its use in criminality, encounter with juju-using criminals and opinions about the non-recognition of juju in the Nigerian legal system were examined. Four key findings emerged from this current study.

First, in spite of a generally high acceptance and adherence to orthodox religions, the level of awareness, belief and positive perception of police officers to juju practice is quite high. Officers sampled in the study expressed appreciable belief in the power and potency of juju in facilitating supernatural occurrences in physicality. This finding supports previous research by Abioje (2013) and Van der Watt and Kruger (2017) that acceptance of Christianity and Islam in Africa has not eradicated beliefs and patronage of juju rituals in the continent. However, what was not previously found in the literature review was the perceived high level of impact that juju plays in criminalities and crime control in the country. Meanwhile, the sample of officers engaged in the study was evasive in declaring their patronage of juju rituals in spite of their positive perception towards it.

Second, in spite of the non-recognition of juju usage by the criminal justice system, officers’ perception and conviction of juju deployment by criminals to resist arrest is very high. The sample of officers engaged in the study revealed encounters and experiences that indicate that they were psychologically bonded to the powers and potency of juju usage for criminalities. This finding equally lends credence to news media reports of a growing concern among the rank and file of Nigeria police on the use of juju by criminals to terrorize the public and resist arrest (BBC News, 2014; Mirror, 2015; Punch, 2018). In such reports, offenders’ confessions of the use of juju for criminal operations prior to their apprehension are often presented. In addition, police parade of captured criminals at press conferences often includes the exhibition of their juju amulets, charms and other paraphernalia alongside their arms and ammunitions (Information Nigeria, 2013; Punch, 2018). Also, increasing number of studies have been looking into the rising effects of juju in controlling the minds of trafficked women and children and its implications for criminal investigators (Van der Watt and Kruger, 2017; Dunkerley, 2018; Spyropoulos, 2018).

Third, there is a high level of adoption of juju practice among police officers in responding to the menace of criminals that use juju to evade arrest. The sample of officers of the study divulged information on how their colleagues made use of juju to neutralize the magic power of criminals in different bids to arrest them. This is a finding that is not too often found in policing literature. However, Harnischfeger (2003; 2006) and Smith (2004) have previously reported the use of juju powers by vigilante groups and ethnic militias to clampdown on the nefarious activities of criminals and their juju priests. On the other hand, the non-recognition of juju in the Nigerian legal system and non-approval of orthodox religions of the tenets of juju practice, however, makes it difficult for officers to publicly declare their adoption of juju for crime fighting. Extant literature have however posited that the condemnation of juju practice by orthodox religions is responsible for the denials and covert engagement in juju practices in Africa which make the actual number of adherents of traditional religion to be shrouded in obscurity (Bisikay, 2011; Abioje, 2013; Odogwu, 2018).

Finally, police officers perceive the need for a review of Nigeria’s criminal law over its non-recognition of juju powers and potency. This is premised on the sociocultural peculiarities of the Nigerian society and the significant value that juju practices hold in its past

and recent histories (Abioje, 2013). As posited by empirical studies, several traditional rites and juju practices have survived into modernity (Harnischfeger, 2003; Smith, 2004). In addition, the potency of juju or black magic has been acknowledged by historical literature and contemporary studies (Ojo, 1981; Bisikay, 2011). The non-consideration and accommodation of juju practice in the Nigerian legal system has been attributed to the challenge of verifying juju claims under the scrutiny of judicial proceedings (Ojo, 1981; Chinwokwu, 2013; Dunkerley, 2018). The participants submitted that non-recognition of juju powers poses a greater and unique risk to policing Nigeria where deployment of supernatural powers by criminals is commonplace.

### 8. Policy, Practice Implications and Future Research

The findings of this research highlight the need for more positive considerations of the significance and influence of traditional belief system in bringing about social order in Nigeria. In particular, perceived potency of juju involvement in criminality is likely to adversely affect officers' psychologically and hamper their confidence and willingness to combat violent criminals. The recorded successes of vigilante and militia groups who adopted juju powers in confronting juju-using criminals where police officers are seen to have failed is a pointer to this notion. Indeed, the Nigerian criminal law accords limited recognition to the existence and potency of juju or criminal charm, where it is apparent by proof that juju or witchcraft was used to commit crimes against persons or property. However, the burden of proof to establish the use of juju for criminal purposes which weighs heavily on the police, can be reviewed and lightened with government's considerable recognition and regulation of juju practice in the country. The successes recorded by vigilante and militia groups in reprimanding juju-using criminals can be consolidated and their informal means of subduing criminals can be further explored.

The government should also recognize the religious and business activities of juju priests with the aim of regulating the services they render to their clientele. In order to stop the provision of diabolical powers to criminals, government's intervention into the activities of juju priests is required. This will enable the introduction and sustenance of ethical practices into juju rituals which will facilitate the screening of clients by the juju priests. In addition, recognizing juju priests will pave ways for their engagement by

government authorities to help unravel spiritually-included cases, while they will provide supernatural powers to police officers that believe in the potency of juju powers. On the part of police authorities, there is need to continue to enhance police-community partnership. This will help in assuring officers of the assistance of community members in tackling juju-using criminals. Since the benefits of such partnership have been evidenced in the current study, a further exploration of this partnership is required in unravelling mysteries behind juju powers and potencies in criminalities.

Future research needs to triangulate perspectives of law makers, legal practitioners and judicial officers with that of police officers so that the myths and realities of juju practice and use in criminalities are considered from multiple viewpoints, broadening our understanding around juju powers and potency, its use in perpetrating crimes, and the merits and demerits of enshrining it in the Nigerian criminal justice system.

### 9. Conclusion

The decline in social security occasioned by upsurge in criminality since the turn of the millennium has placed Nigerians in a situation where they have to scamper for safety within available physical, spiritual and extra-terrestrial realms. Meanwhile, the apparent deficiency of the police in containing the growing rate of criminality in the country has buttressed peoples' belief in the potency of juju which is widely reported to be the fortress of criminals in ensuring their invincibility. The lack of recognition accorded to the potency of juju in enabling criminals to evade arrest leaves police officers to resort to self-help in tackling juju-using criminals in their bid to successfully perform their primary responsibilities. This research has captured rich descriptions of experiences of police officers on influences of spirituality and supernatural occurrences in the process of rendering their services to the society, and findings indicate that they have high perception of juju powers and its use in criminalities. Therefore, the study submits that the full recognition of juju practice, power and potency as factors militating against policing and social security in the Nigerian environment is inevitable.

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