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Police Treatment of the Public in Police Stations: Evidence from Zaria, Nigeria

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Abstract The police occupy a very important position in the entire criminal justice system in Nigeria. The nature of police relationship with the people and the manner in which the public were handled at the station and on the street daily within the community affects the way the people perceive them and the level of cooperation they get from the people in curbing crime in the society. The study took place in Zaria, Kaduna state, Northern Nigeria. A study population was the police in Zaria. Three police stations (Zaria City, Sabon Gari, and Samaru police stations) were purposively selected reflecting the socio-cultural and demographic backgrounds of Zaria residence and population. The Divisional Police officers and police officers in-charge of crime were interviewed. The police crime and incidence records were examined while the general conduct and social atmosphere of the police and police stations were observed. Using in-depth interview, observational method, and police records, it was discovered that the socio-economic status of suspects affected how they were treated by the police in the police stations studied. Also, the environment suspect lives affected how they were treated too by the police. It was recommended that the police make the rule of law their guide in the handling of suspects in the police stations irrespective of socio-demographic variable or area of habitation of the suspects. Police brutality and violations of citizen's rights should be checked by senior police officers, while community-policing style should be implemented across communities in Nigeria.

Introduction

Every society needs a form of social control or the other, so as to promote peaceful co-existence and maintenance of order within the society (Cheng and Long, 2018). Policing therefore started as a communal effort to maintain order and protect properties, such as farm lands and animals (Miller and Hess, 1998). However, other violent crimes like armed robbery became rampant in Nigeria

shortly after the end of the Nigerian civil war (Marenin and Reisig, 1995). For instance, in Calabar southern part of Nigeria, gunshot wounds were rare before the civil war (Udosen *et al.*, 2006). So with increased violent crimes came increased police use of excess force and brutal powers in handling suspects in Nigeria (Alemika, 1988). There has been a global attention on police militarization, due to the way the police handled George Floyd

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incidence and the black lives matter protests in America (Koslicki *et al.*, 2021). In Nigeria, the End SARS protests and government deployment of soldiers to brutally disperse the peaceful protest of youths in Lekki toll gate Nigeria captures the perception of youths who constitutes major victims of police brutality, how both the police and the government treat the youths in Nigeria (Mmonu *et al.*, 2021). The ENDSARS protests revealed the use of repressive and brutal force against the citizens by the Nigerian government and her security apparatus (Amadasun, 2020).

The police have been assigned the task of crime prevention, crime detection, and the apprehension of criminals (Manning, 1978). In Brazil, women police stations are created in municipals to aid victims of intimate partner crimes such as domestic violence and rape (Perova and Reynolds, 2017). In carrying out their daily routine services, the police station can be contaminated with illicit drugs (Doran *et al.*, 2017). In the USA, for instance, despite so many laws enacted against use of phones while driving, some police officers rely on their personal belief to determine when driving and using phones constitute danger (Rudisill, 2020). So there are other barriers to enforcing enacted laws (Nevin *et al.*, 2017).

In Nigeria, the police are the most proximate to crime. Apart from that, it has the power, and discretion to determine who gets arrested, how he is treated in the station, and sometimes which case is charged to court or settled in the police station (Arisukwu, 2012).

In carrying out these duties, are there excesses in the way people are handled in the police stations either as suspects or complainant? Also, in treating people are there other variables used by the police in clearing and attending to suspects and complainants respectfully? The Nigeria police as a bureaucratic organization are supposed to be guarded by laid down procedure, but sometimes these laws even make it possible for the police to employ their own discretionary power in dealing with certain situations or circumstances. Also,

sometimes police may suspend or deliberately neglect the rules in the process of carrying out their law enforcement profession (Arisukwu, 2012).

It is important to note that it is not just enough to make good laws, but how such good laws are enforced by the police have a lot of implications on the attainment of justice in the society. Police decision to choose who to suspect, arrest, and detained is influenced by many factors including police use of discretion (Skinns, 2019). However, unfettered discretion often poses a threat to due process of law (Kadish, 1962). The police therefore have the ability to make or mar its reputation, and public perception, depending on how they conduct themselves while dealing with people in the station and on the street (Arisukwu and Okunola, 2013). In fact Manning (1978) posited that the present form and function of any police organization is linked to the history of its development. In the light of this, the Nigeria police emerged therefore to protect the commercial interest of the colonial masters (Tamuno, 1970). The history of police forces in colonial Nigeria was rift with brutality, lack of accountability to community, arbitrariness, ruthlessness, and corruption (Alemika, 1988). This colonial policing has been upheld even in post-colonial period.

Post-colonial policing often disregards indigenous systems of social control that reflects the values of the people (Okafo, 2007). This policing gap still constitutes a major challenge for public partnership or support for the police. Police officers after training are deployed in communities; they have no understanding of the norms, values, and even language of the people. It is in an attempt to reduce this gap and decentralize Nigeria police that calls for state and community policing are high now (Arisukwu *et al.*, 2020).

The police are seen only as agents of the ruling class used to enforce their 'ruling class' polices and ideologies at all times in the society. The police therefore have the power to criminalize the actions or activities of certain individuals or groups in the society, especially when such actions or activities

are perceived as being in conflict with the interest of the ruling class by the police. In his view, [Eric \(2009\)](#) argued that it is the type of training the police receive that influences their attitudes and actions towards the public while carrying out their duties in the community. The Nigeria police still practice colonial police training ideology with much emphasis on law enforcement against service to the community ([Arisukwu *et al.*, 2020](#)). Equally, it is important to note that reactive policing especially in a modern 'risky society' has implications on police use of discretion ([Skinnis, 2019](#)).

The role of the police in preventing crime and ensuring the maintenance of law and order cannot be over emphasized in the society ([Cheng and Long, 2018](#)). As the leading agents in the law enforcement process occupy a unique position in the community ([Leanne, 2011](#)). Not only the police serve as a gateway into the entire criminal justice system, they determine whom to suspect, arrest, detain, and sometimes which case actually gets to the court for trial ([Arisukwu, 2017](#)). Study has shown that there exist a relationship between police station's physical environment and public perception of police conduct ([Clinton and Devlin, 2011](#)).

In view of this, the police ought to be a means for the people especially underprivileged to obtain justice in the society. It was in light of this that Sir Robert Peel, the founder of English police hoped that, the police might reduce crime but would nonetheless avoid the use of repressive legal sanctioning and a military-like presence in society. In fact he hoped that the police might manage public order non-violently and perhaps control the possible discord that might arise between them and the public ([Manning 1978](#); Nigeria Police Community Policing Training Manual, 2007; [Arisukwu, 2012](#); [Arisukwu and Okunola, 2013](#)). Some nations have formally established the way their police relate with members of the public. For instance, the police in England and Wales are guided by the evidence Act of 1984, which stipulates the rights of suspects and codified police powers ([Dixon, 1992](#)).

However, sometimes police seem to turn themselves into the end itself and no longer the means of achieving justice and peace. Sometimes people are arrested without the intension of prosecuting them. In some other cases, those who are arrested are either made to suffer more than the punishment their offences would have warranted in the court, or they are manhandled in the process of questioning. This they were able to do because they more likely than other agents of social control exercise force and authority directly upon citizens. The physical conditions of police stations are stressful and make detained suspects particularly first timers to demand medical attention ([Vincent *et al.*, 2015](#)). Most Nigerian police stations are congested with detained suspects, making the station to be dirty and filled with unpleasant odour. In fact, the first welcome you get when you approach police stations in Zaria is a stench oozing out from the congested cell.

Such negative treatment usually causes the public to have wrong impressions of the police in particular and the government in general. So how are people affected by the police display of discretionary power in the stations and on the streets? Are there excesses or rule violations by the police in the process of carrying out their duties of law enforcement and maintenance of order? What are the social-demographic variables influencing the way the police treat people in the police stations either as suspects or complainants.

Do the police deliberately engage in bribe and other corrupt practice or are they spoilt or corrupted by the same public who complain about police corruption in the stations? How fair and equal is the bailing system in the police stations in Zaria? Is a bail a right to same individuals and a mere privilege to others with respect to their social-economic status in the society? Are the public even aware when their rights are being violated by the police, or do they willingly co-operate with them? Dose police brutality and unnecessary delays in station affect the reporting of suspects to the police by the public? Finally, to what extent

can one say that the Nigeria police are upright, neutral, and protective to all? The search for answers to these questions formed the specific focus of this study.

Aim and objectives of the study

The main aim of this study was to assess the socio-cultural factors responsible for the way people were treated by the police in Zaria, Nigeria. The specific objectives include:

To find out the category of suspects and complains that were commonly found in Zaria police stations.

To find out the way such complaints, suspects, and complainants were handled in the police stations in Zaria.

To find out what guides the police in taking decisions at work.

To examine the strength of the stations in terms of man power and equipment.

Significance of the study

This study aims at unveiling some of the shortcomings if any of the Nigeria police in their day-to-day operations in Zaria police stations. It will therefore have both theoretical and practical significance. At the practical level, it will provide information to the government on the need to recognize the important roles the police play in the society by improving their working conditions so as to make them (the police) to change and have a better public perception and co-operation in turn.

Theoretical framework

This study adopted a combination of Tom Tyler's procedural justice theory and John Dullard's frustration and aggression theory to cover police maltreatment of suspects and the perception of the public towards the police. John Dullard, who is the main proponent of frustration and Aggression theory, used the theory to explain the cause-and-effect relationship between the suspects, members of the public, and the police. The way the public

were maltreated by the police affects the way the public will in turn relate, trust, and support the police in their community. The treatment the people get from the police has reflected in some names the public give to the police. For instance, in the Yoruba ethnic group in south west Nigeria call the police *olopa* meaning the one that wields the baton. The Hausa in the northern Nigeria call the police *yan sanda* depicting the tough or brutal one, while the Igbo in south east Nigeria call them *eke*, meaning python that swallows people. All these local nicknames for the police reflect both police treatment of the people and the way the people in turn perceive them. The people are alienated from the police making it difficult for the public to give credible information to the police about crime in their community.

Tom Tyler's procedural Justice theory emphasizes on the way police treatment of suspects and members of the public will affect the trust and confidence the public will have on the police. Fairness, equity, and regards for human rights of the people while carrying out policing duties encourages trust, hope, and support of the people to the police (Tyler, 2003). The police in Nigeria claim to be 'the people's friends', this assertion can be proven by the way the police treat members of the public they come in contact on the streets or police stations.

The major factor shaping the behaviour and perception of the public towards the police is how fair they were treated by the police on the streets, police stations, as suspects or complainants. Studies have shown that there is a relationship between legitimacy and law-abiding behaviour through procedural justice. This procedural justice captures all the quality of police decision-making procedures and treatment of individuals fairly (Bottoms and Tankebe, 2012). This legitimacy explains how police wield their power in public trust and to promote public good and social order. However, police deployment of their legitimacy has shifted to protect government and the rich in the society. The youths and other vulnerable members of the society, such as women are often

treated as guilty even before trial or investigation (Alang *et al.*, 2017).

This theoretical framework throws more light on the conflicts, differences, and preferential treatment people receive from the police in the stations. It equally explains why the less privilege suffers more in the hands of police men in the stations than their privileged counter parts because they were able to influence police handling of their cases through bribes. It is through the application of these theories that one can understand why most police cells are usually filled with youths and poor members of the society. So, in spite of the severe white-collar crimes and corruption committed by the rich and educated, most of them go uninvestigated and unpunished by the police. How else can you explain the different treatment people receive in the station even when they committed the same offence? Though the frustration and aggression theory explains the negative responds and attitudes the police get from members of the public, it should be noted that both the police and members of the public are important in safe guarding the safety of their community. There should be a synergy between them to effectively prevent and control crime in their community. The primary purpose of government is the welfare and security of lives and property of the people. This fundamental purpose of government cannot be realized by the police alone. The members of the community therefore constitute a social capital that can be harnessed through community-policing and better treatment at police stations by the police authorities.

Methodology

Study area

Zaria is located inside Kaduna state of the Northern part of Nigeria. It is located along Kaduna–Kano route on the one hand and Kaduna–Sokoto route on the other hand. The inhabitants are predominantly farmers. Even those

with other occupations still practice subsistence farming. Zaria is made up of other smaller towns with various distinctive features, they include Zaria city which is dominated by Hausa Muslims who are the original settlers with the Emir of Zaria as the Political/Religious leader.

On the other hand, Sabon Gari is dominated by traders and other artisans from all parts of Nigeria who are not Muslims. The distinctive feature here is the high commercial activities that take place here, and the freedom the people living there enjoy, such as drinking and sale of alcohol which ordinarily are not allowed inside the Zaria city.

Samaru is unique because, it is the place where Ahmadu Bello University (ABU) main campus and the institute of Agricultural research are located. These tertiary institutions constitute pull factors which make it possible for people from various tribes in Nigeria and Africa to migrate in to samara for either work or study in the institutions. These diversities are capable of creating problems of crime and therefore the need for policing.

So apart from few Hausa farmers, Samaru harbours mainly ABU workers and their families. It equally harbours students too. Unlike Zaria city where Islam held sway, both Islam and Christianity abide in samara. Other areas include Government Reserved Area (GRA), and Tudun Wada which has increased social and commercial activities. These areas have various classes of people in the society. So it gives the researcher the opportunity to find out how the people were handled in the station either as suspects or complainants. Zaria was chosen as a case study because of its cosmopolitan nature and the variety of people found there.

Sampling

This study dwelled much on qualitative research methodology. Purposive sampling technique was used to select three police stations which covered different segments of the demographic characteristics of the population of study. Zaria city Divisional police station, Tudun Wada Divisional

police station, and Samaru Divisional police stations were purposively selected for this study. The Divisional police officers (DPOs) and officers in-charge of crime were purposively selected for in-depth interview sections from each police station. A total of 12 officers were interviewed, representing four officers per police station. The structured in-depth interview guide covered questions on common crime reported to the station, who constituted common suspects and complainants and how suspects and cases were handled by the police. The police did not give the researcher permission to interview detained suspects in police custody, however, the researcher had access to and interviewed six of the complaints and detained suspects after they were released and their cases 'settled' in the police station. They willingly shared some of their experiences while in custody with the researcher. So, in all 12 officers and 6 civilians making a total of 18 respondents were selected for IDI. The duration of the study was 3 weeks, 1st–3rd weeks of September 2019.

Data collection technique

The researcher used non-participant overt observation method to study the three police stations selected for 3 weeks. In this case, the researcher disclosed his identity to the police, but did not take part in their activities.

Direct observation, in-depth interview, and examination of documents (crime register) were used to collect data in each of the police stations under study. The direct observation enabled the researcher to see things even as they take place in the stations. The crime register was used to collect data on common crimes reported, who the suspects and complainants were and how reports were processed by the police. The researcher observed police interactions with suspects or complainants in the police stations. The police officers were aware of the researcher; the observation took place within 3 weeks; and covered morning, afternoon, and night shifts. The researcher did not

enter into police cells or detention areas to interact with detained suspects, but the detention areas were open for the researcher to see the category of people inside and the sanitary condition of the cells through the iron bars at the door.

Data analysis method

The analysis dwelt much on description, transcription, and narration of things observed in the station. For the in-depth interview, simple transcription of respondents responses was done and thematic content analysis was used. In case of documents examined, the researcher described the type of documents examined and things found in them. The units of analysis were the police stations, and their suspects or complainants. The recorded interview was transcribed before using content analysis method to analyse them. Content analyses of the interview and observations were done in line with the objectives and focus of the study.

Summary of findings

It was discovered that male youths mainly constituted the suspects found in the police stations studied. This male dominance in police cells demonstrates the police perception of crime as a male dominated issue in Nigeria. Often police choose to suspect and arrest males during patrols leaving females who equally have the capacity to commit heinous crimes in society. It must be pointed out that not all crimes require physical energy or strength to execute. It is important to note that the current insurgency, terrorism, and banditry going on in northern part of Nigeria are perpetrated mainly by male youths, thereby making them major suspects in the community by the police. The common crimes reported were suspected to be committed by youths. These youths were accused of criminal offences such as house breaking, theft of household property, robbery, belonging to a gang of suspected criminals, and cheating or defrauding others of money and property. This finding contradicts with the finding in a study in

Police stations in Ethiopia which reported that fatalities from road accidents constituted the common reported cases (Hordofa *et al.*, 2018). This finding equally excluded the dark figures of crime, which were made up of unreported crimes like rape and domestic violence (Melo *et al.*, 2020). The true crime records should consist of a combination of reported crime and records of dark crime which can be obtained from hospitals where victims go for treatment (Melo *et al.*, 2020). It was equally observed that the criminals' complaints were lodged mainly by privileged individuals in the society. The reports of the young and under-privileged members were mainly treated with levity.

During the interrogation process most of the suspects were usually hand cuffed, harassed, and beaten with baton and rifle butt. As a result of these torture and intimidation, some of the suspects usually confess their crimes, while a few others stood their ground of innocence. Those that confess their crimes often do so under duress and to avoid continuous beating and torture by the police. False confessions often result from Reid technique of interview used by the police (Gudjonsson and Pearse, 2011). Memory distrust can result from pressured internalized type of forced confession, in this case suspects rely more on external forces rather than their own memory during forced interview (Gudjonsson, 2017). False confession is bad and condemnable as it distorts crime and criminal realities on ground in a society. Most of the serious cases were usually charged to court at the end of investigation while the trivial ones were usually settled in the police stations. One of the respondents said:

The police in my area are not friendly at all they are only interested in what they will get from you. Even when you bring complaints to them, without giving out money, nothing happens.

'Male complainant at Samaru' 2019

This was a common complaint from complainants on how their complaints were treated by the police. In fact, some complainants have gotten used to this that always bribe the police to do their job when they make any report. Though the police are the budgeted agency of government, it was observed that some of their patrol vehicles were in bad shape if not totally abandoned. Members of the public were made to pay for fuel/transportation to make arrest and papers which they write their statements on. It was equally observed that friends and family members of suspects in police custody had to bribe the officers on duty each time they bring food for their detained ones. Such food will then be tasted by the person who brought them before such food could be given to detained suspects. This was observed in all the police station under study in Zaria.

On the other hand, a police respondent had this to say when asked how they treat suspects in their station:

As a trained police officer, I treat suspects and other members of the public with respect, I also know that some of these bad boys deserve tough handling before they will cooperate and say the truth. So it is only the suspected bad criminals that see the hard side of the police during interview

Police DPO, Zaria city police station 2019

Another respondent said this when asked what guides their suspicion and arrest of suspects on the street.

In this area we know all the black spots where these criminals usually hang out. For instance they have where they meet to smoke Indian hemp others hang out with prostitutes in hotels. We occasionally go out for raiding and any person found in those dark spots is treated as a criminal.

Crime officer/Sabo Police station/2019

From the response, what makes one a suspect is beyond looks or the criminal act itself, where and who you are with could make you a suspect by the police and this will unleash other treatments one gets from the police at the station.

These responses equally show how police use appearance or socio-economic features and location of suspects to determine how to treat them in the police station. This stigmatization of some youths as dangerous or bad has been the main cause of police brutality and abuse of discretion. It was observed that male youths who dress shabbily and others who copy hip hop dressing culture (such as colouring of hair, wearing ear rings, and tattoos among others) of rap artists often attracted more maltreatment from the police. This shows that suspects were treated not just according to crimes committed but how they physically appear and police judgement or impression of them.

This revealed the way the people were treated by the police. The less privileged members of the society were the common victims of police maltreatment and brutality. The police just like other social institutions and agencies of government were meant to serve and preserve the rich and inequality existing in the society. This 'two type of the society' were created by colonialism, neo-colonialism and capitalism, and bad governance (Ekeh, 1975; Chabal and Daloz, 1999; Van de Walle, 2007; Adebani, 2017). The inability of the Nigeria police to provide law and order to citizens led to the emergence of different groups and non-state actors seeking to provide safety to the people (Lar *et al.*, 2017). These vigilante groups and other non-state actors often abuse the fundamental human rights of their suspects (Arisukwu *et al.*, 2020). The constitution of Nigeria equally guarantees some of these fundamental human rights (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2000). The changing policing context and crisis of abuse of power and legitimacy in a 21st century has brought to the fore the issue of police ethics. The police ethics will help professional police officers to adapt in a fast-changing world where the police officer sees

their efforts as just a part of the overall policing and security efforts in a society is just a part of (Neyroud and Beckley, 2001). This police ethics focuses not only on what the police but also how they do them, especially where police actions borders on or affects individuals' fundamental human rights (Neyroud, 2008). Police ethic aims at enhancing and sustaining police legitimacy (Neyroud, 2019).

The police were mainly guided by the penal code and police act in taking decisions at work. The penal code and police acts cover the Northern and Southern regions of Nigeria respectfully. The penal code covered the Islamic religious norms operational in the north through the sharia courts and the police act reflected the customary norms operational in the southern part of Nigeria. These different policing codes for the same country exacerbate the tribal and religious differences in Nigeria (Nwauche, 2014).

The duties of the Nigeria police derive from the Police Act and Regulations CAP 359 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria, 1990 as amended (Ojo, 2014). Study has shown that some of the challenges faced by the Nigeria Police include Corruption, police brutality, bad discretion during investigations, stress, questionable recruitment and promotion, and poor police-community relations (Adegoke, 2014; Ojo, 2014). These challenges have affected the police integrity and perception by the public. However, the police equally use their discretionary power to dispose of and settle certain cases which they consider minor. Though the use of discretionary powers helps to decongest the criminal justice systems, it was most often abused by the police. Financial inducement often influences how police handle cases reported regardless of its seriousness. The researcher equally discovered that the police stations did not have adequate equipment and staff strength. The stations were lacking in proper sanitation and detained more suspects than its capacity. A bad stench is what welcomes you into the police counter as a visitor. None of the stations has a patrol vehicle,

Walkie-Talkie, and a descent residential quarter for the police officers. Similarly, stationary items were not available in the stations. Most often complainants were forced to pay for stationary or fuel before their reports were processed. A released suspect from police custody has this to say when asked the conditions of the cell and how he was treated by the police

The cell was terrible, we urinate, bath and defecate in the same place. We sleep on bare floor and sometimes on top of each other especially on week-ends. Inside custody you face extortion by gang leaders to avoid being beaten and harassed. Finally when it's time for bail, the police officer on duty collect bribe, though it is written conspicuously that bail is free on their notice boards.

Released suspect from Sabo Police station/2019

The above response reflected the daily experiences of some detained and released suspects from the police stations under study. It shows the inhuman treatment and conditions under which suspects were kept in police custody in Nigeria. The experience is sufficient to make such a person dread the police and not to trust or support them in crime prevention efforts in the community.

Discussion of findings

Most of the suspects in police cells were found to be male youths. They were poor folks from poor family backgrounds. The fight against insurgency and banditry in the north has put such youths under police search light and profiling. They were mainly unemployed too. As a result of this denial of employment they were left to struggle for survival on their own. This social disorder (unemployment and poverty) coupled with other social forces, such as police brutality and unequal access to government jobs and resources make

them to take to crime and behave in a rude and disrespectful manner to the police as argued by frustration and aggression theory. On the other hand, the wealthy, educated, and property owning class constituted the major complainants in the police stations. This privilege few reported mainly of stolen goods and other property crimes committed against them to the stations. They enjoy police respect and protection. This is in agreement with Mulcahy (2015), who argued that in a divided society, the police tend to be closely aligned with the dominant social group and their actions focus on maintaining state security rather than providing routine policing services.

The police therefore like the state is a product and manifestation of irreconcilability of class contradictions (Gough, 2004). It is used to protect the economic interest of the privileged class always. The poor and lower class members of the Nigerian society lack access to financial resources needed to fund companies in manufacturing sector of the economy (Asaley *et al.*, 2018). This explains why there are a lot of property crime complaints in the stations. Contract fixing, and other white-collar crime which were committed by the educated, and ruling class members in the society were not recorded in the police stations studied. It should be noted that the researcher did not find any member of the upper class who was detained for any offence in the stations. This does not mean that they were saints. It is rather because the police as an apparatus of the ruling class were used to protect their interests and actions no matter how criminal and injurious such actions may be in the society. So the rich and privileged class was regarded as being above the law by the police.

The private ownership of property and the inherent class conflicts in a capitalist society like Nigeria create a criminal environment. This is because the actions and activities of the privileged class were rewarded and tolerated by the state (police), while the masses were made targets and scape goats of government laws through the police. The police as a coercive instrument of the state was

unequally applied to individuals and groups in the society depending on their socio-economic positions in the society.

The researcher found that the complaints of the privileged class received swift and urgent attention from the police, because they were able to influence their way through in the station. As a result of injustices in the station the underprivileged classes were unfairly treated by the police simply because they cannot influence the police. Thus, the underprivileged constituted the suspects who were detained in the various reported offences. This class of people, who were dominated by the unemployed male youths, were tortured, and detained in the police stations. In fact, the police saw the unemployed youths as targets in their investigations of criminal offences.

It was discovered that the police neglected or deliberately abandoned certain portions of the police code and rules which was supposed to guide them in taking decisions at work for selfish and personal gains. For instance, bail which ought to be free was often given to suspects that can pay for it. As a result of this, the police sometimes by-pass due process because of what they stand to gain from the case reported, or from the person reporting it.

In the study conducted by [Maliki, \(1993\)](#) and [Bogunjoko \(1978\)](#), it was found that members of the public especially the rich influence police decisions in the stations by offering gratification or bribe to them. In a similar study conducted on police treatment of street hawkers in Nairobi, Kenya by [Dragsted \(2019\)](#). The result showed that police collect bribe from hawkers in order to allow them to operate in the streets of Nairobi Kenya. The police equally take bribe to allow informal cross border trade to go on in Benin, West Africa ([Bensassi and Jarreau, 2019](#)).

Conclusion

The daily practices of the police in the stations are a reflection of the existing social-economic and

political inequalities and deprivations in the society, ([Arisukwu, 2017](#); [Maliki, 1993](#); [Mawby, 2010](#); [Chukkol, 1998](#), & [Goold, 2004](#)). The underprivileged class should realize that the police is created to serve mainly the interest of few elites in the society. So, the assertion that the police protect all in the society is wrong because even the law which the police claim to enforce is made by the privileged class to favour and protect their interest in the society. This explains why the less privilege are commonly found in police cells as suspects and accused. They may not be able to afford the price of 'justice' and fair treatment by the police.

The police can hardly perform its function effectively and efficiently without reference to wider contexts in which it operates. So, no matter how good the police may seem to be, it cannot isolate itself completely from the people it supposed to protect. Also, in as much as police need assistance of members of public in order to achieve remarkable results, it should not allow itself to be corrupted and used by the same public illegally. Police cannot be isolated from the community in which they operate, so through a synergy supported by community policing can the police function better and treat people in a friendly manner.

In conclusion, for there to be just police that enforce just rules equally in the society, the individuals especially the underprivileged should be given access to the making of law in the society. They should collectively determine which actions or activities are injurious to the society and what form of punishment to give offenders. The police therefore should be publicly created, supervised, and directed by members of the community to ensure that it protects all and promotes peace, justice, and equality in the society. Democracy and community policing will offer this recognition and empowerment of all in the community to participate and contribute to crime control and prevention. Good governance, economic empowerment, and equitable distribution of resources within a

society will foster development, peace, social inclusiveness, and justice.

Recommendations

As the nature and function of the police are the reflections of the socio-economic order in the society, the recommendation of this work is channelled towards the reduction of those crime generating structures in the society. This crime generating structure includes marginalization and deprivation of the weak and poor. The government should discourage socio-economic and political exclusion of minority, youths, and women in the scheme of things in the society. Good governance at all levels of leadership (local, state, and federal) will help create jobs and inspire public trust and confidence on the government. This trust and confidence will reduce the gap of mistrust and lack of confidence on government by the people.

Community policing strategy should be adopted to encourage a better police public synergy in crime prevention in the community, and prevention of human rights abuse of the suspects in police stations. Members of the community, traditional, and religious leaders should be mobilized to be part of policing in their various localities and intelligence duly supplied to the police officers about nature of crime and how police officers are performing.

All suspects should be treated equally in accordance with the law irrespective of their demographic variables and status in the society. The people should constitute the eyes and voices of the oppressed and maltreated by the police in police stations. Regular visits by local, traditional, religious, and state leaders to police stations to observe the state of the stations and conditions of suspects detained should be undertaken regularly to reduce police abuse of discretionary powers and improve welfare and conditions of police and suspects.

Corruption and other white-collar crime and suspects must be adequately apprehended and

punished to deter others and promote good governance in the society. Police intelligence gathering should be enhanced with constant training and retraining by the government.

Police stations should be provided with relevant equipment's to operate with by the federal government.

Police remuneration and welfare should be improved to motivate them to serve better by the police service commission and the federal government of Nigeria.

Police stations and cells should be connected with CCTV cameras and erring officers punished accordingly, by the local, state, and federal government.

Data availability

There is no data associated with this study.

Authors' contributions

O.A. conceived and designed the study. C.I. and T.A. contributed materials/data collection. F.A. and O.A. did data analysis. C.I. wrote the manuscript.

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