

# **THE NIGERIAN POLICE, SAFETY AND PUBLIC POLICING; AN OVER VIEW**

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## **Abstract**

**This paper is a study on the Nigerian police, considering the historical origin of the police and the communal responsibility of promoting its entire citizenry, the paper takes an analytical assessment of the Nigerian police, safety and policing of the Nigeria people. The study used the questionnaires instrument of research methods to carryout the study and made several findings amongst which include the fact that the Nigerian people have lost confidence in the police force as a result of several antecedents of the force which include brubery and corruption. the paper finally made some recommendations such as inproved welfare package for the police force**

**and the effective use of the media to enlighten and erase the bad feeling of the people towards the police, the paper is of the opinion that, if the various suggestions are implemented it will go along way to improving the safety situation among the police and the good people of Nigeria**

**keywords : police, safety, Nigerian people, communal policing and bribery and corruption**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The police play important roles without which the sustenance of order, legality, development and democracy may be difficult. Therefore, any pro-people change initiative must take account of the facilitative and inhibitive roles of the police in society. The primary role of police is policing-securing compliance with existing laws and conformity with precepts of social order. But the police are not the only agency involved in policing, in the broad sense of the term. Policing has always been necessary in all societies for the preservation of order, safety and social relations. The necessity of policing becomes even more evident in modern societies characterized by diversities, and contradictions arising from population heterogeneity urbanization, industrialization, conflicting ideologies on appropriate socio-political and economic form of organization. However, the emergence of the police, a body of men recruited and paid by the state to enforce law and maintain order, is a recent development in human history (Reiner, 2000).

Traditionally, policing was the responsibility of all adults in community. In medieval society, all adult males were obliged to contribute towards the prevention and control of crime and disorder under the systems of 'hue, cry and pursuit' and the 'watch and ward that preceded the emergence of specialized police force as organs of the state. But the emergence of the state, with its vast bureaucracies anchored on centralization, hierarchical authority/power structure, and professional staff. (Weber 1968) changed the traditional policing philosophy rooted in the idea of policing as everybody business.

The emergence of the state as an entity with claim to the monopoly over the means of legitimate violence in society. (Weber 1968) resulted into the creation of specialized agencies such as the police and the armed forces for controlling the use of violence by other groups. According to Susan Martin (1990:6):

*Police work involves a variety of tasks and responsibilities. Officers are expected to prevent crime, protect life and property, enforce the law, maintain peace and public order, and provide a wide range of services to citizens.... A common trend unifying these diverse activities, however, is that potential for violence and the need and right to use coercive means in order to establish social control (Bitner, 1970). Understanding that the police act as the representatives of the coercive potential of the state and the legitimate users of force helps explain a member of their attitudes and characteristics.*

Little wonder did Sir Robert Peel, 1829 state that:

*The police are the public and the public are the police. The police being the only members of the public that are paid to give full-time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen, in the interest of community welfare and existence.*

Broadly, modern police forces are assigned the primary duty of law enforcement and order maintenance. But the content of law and what constitute order vary widely across time and nations, and are determined by the political economy of societies. The concrete roles played by the police are defined by law and conception of order in accordance with the political and economic interests of the dominant or ruling groups in society.

The work environment of police and detectives can be very dangerous and stressful. This fact is proved further by the U.S Department of Homeland Security, Washington, DC in 2006 when they stated that:

*In addition to the obvious dangers of confrontations with criminals, police officers need to be constantly alert and ready to deal appropriately with a number of other threatening situations. Many law enforcement officers witness death and suffering resulting from accidents and criminal behaviours. A career in law enforcement may take a toll on their private lives. The jobs of some Federal agents such as U.S. secret service and DEA special agents require extensive travel, often on very short notice. They may relocate a number of times over the course of their careers. Some special agents in agencies such as the U.S. Border Patrol work outdoors in rugged terrain for long periods and in all kinds of weather. Uniformed officers, detectives, agents, and inspectors are usually scheduled to work 40-hours a week, but paid over-time is common. Shift work is necessary because protection must be provided around the clock. Junior officers frequently work weekends, holidays, and nights. Police officers and detectives are required to work whenever they are needed and may work long hours during investigations. Officers in most jurisdictions, whether on or off duty, are expected to be armed and to exercise their authority when necessary.*

In view of the work environment of the police, it is without question that provision be made for the safety of police. In line with this, the Australian Institute of Criminology under Adam Graycar as director in 2001 said:

*Protection of the health and safety of police officers is fundamental to good operational policing. As shown in Trends and Issues paper number 196, the patterns of injury, illness and homicide amongst police officers are often predictable. Knowledge about high-risk situations and offenders enables appropriate prevention strategies to be implemented to reduce the risks.*

Although generally considered an attractive career, the Nigerian Police Force experienced endemic problems with recruiting, training, inefficiency, and indiscipline as well as lack of expertise in specialized fields. Corruption and dishonesty were widespread, engendering a low level of public confidence failure to report crimes and tendencies to resort to self-help ([www.globalsecurity.org](http://www.globalsecurity.org)).

In view of all the above, this research will focus on police safety and public policing while aiming at finding out the problems associated with police safety and public policing in Nigeria, measures that have been put in place to enhance efficiency and effectiveness as well as the way forward. The study will however be carried out on the Nigeria Police, Abakaliki in Ebonyi State.

### **STATEMENT OF PROBLEM**

Bitner (1970) maintained that police work involves a variety of tasks and responsibilities. Officers are expected to prevent crime, protect life and property, enforce the laws, maintain peace and public order and provide a wide range of services to citizens.

However, this has not been the case as according to Alemika and Chukwuma, (2000): For decades, the police in Nigeria have betrayed their responsibility to protect Nigerian citizens and have instead preyed on them for economic gain. Indeed, the relationship between citizens and the police is very often characterized by brutality, confrontation and exploitation. Research conducted in 2000 by the centre for Law Enforcement and Education (CLEEN), a Lagos based NGO, found that the use of violence by the police against citizens in Nigeria was widespread. Of 637 respondents to a survey carried out in fourteen states, 14.8% said they had been beaten by the police, 22.5% said police had threatened to shoot them in the past, and 73.2% said they had witnessed the police beating another person. A sample of 197 prison inmates, revealed higher figures of police abuse; 81% of respondents said they had been beaten or slapped and 39% burnt with hot objects.

### **A combination of factors has contributed to this situation.**

Firstly, like many government institutions, a history of neglect has left the Nigerian Police Force under-resourced (Human Rights Watch Interview, 2000). Since 1999 the government has sought to address this by progressively increasing the Federal allocation to the force. In 2003 this was 8.3 billion naira (\$63 million) for capital expenditure (Human Rights watch telephone interview, 2005). Despite these increases, a Nigerian Police reform expert explained to Human Rights Watch that poor budgetary planning and processes mean funds are misspent or wrongly allocated. The centrally planned budgeting process allows little input from state and divisional commands and so often their most basic resource needs are not met (Human rights, 2005).

At a practical level, this has affected the physical infrastructure of the force. When Human Rights Watch researchers visited police stations in Lagos, Kano and other parts of the country, they observed poorly maintained buildings, with an intermittent power supply and lacking basic office equipment such as telephones computers or filing cabinets (CLEEN, 2003).

Like many other state employees in Nigeria, police officers are poorly trained, ill-equipped and poorly remunerated. The average take-home salary for a constable is approximately \$61 per month, slightly less than the average wage for a school teacher which is approximately \$77 per month. Indeed partly because of their poor pay and conditions, corruption within the force is rampant as the lower cadres try to supplement their meager incomes. At the other end of the scale however, is a more gratuitous form of

corruption, appeared to be motivated purely by greed (Alemika et al, 2004). This extends to the very highest levels, allegedly including the former Inspector General of Police who in January 2005 resigned and was subsequently accused of stealing \$98 million of public funds (Agence France-Presse, 2005).

Rising poverty, high unemployment and the breakdown of traditional social structures have led to an upsurge of violent crime in recent years which the Nigerian Police have been ill-equipped to address (Settima, 2002).

The police have often been unable to meet the safety and security needs of local communities and are often overpowered by well-armed and often violent criminals. According to the police reform experts, the police force has insufficient well-trained manpower to adequately address policing needs (CLEEN, 2002). It is therefore as a result of the above problems and many more, that the research is conducted in order to find out reasons for the problem associated with police welfare and safety, measures put in place to boost effectiveness and efficiency of the police in policing, etc, with reference to the Nigerian Police of Abakaliki, Ebonyi State.

### **OBJECTIVE OF STUDY**

The objectives of this research work are as follows;

1. To create and increase the level of awareness of the police as well as the populace pertaining to police safety and public policing.
2. To expose and identify factors that affect police safety and public policing with particular reference to the problems associated with police safety, public policing as well as measures put in place to ensure efficiency and effectiveness.
3. To identify and suggest solutions that will help curb problems associated with police safety and public policing in order to promote sustainable development in the safety.

### **POLICE IN NIGERIA**

In Nigeria, police are described more in negative terms by major segments of the population. According to Dr. Olusegun Fakoya (2008), a routine tragedy passed with little fuss on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> July, 2008 on the part of a nation numbed with tragedies. The Tribune Newspaper reported the killing of a commercial driver who failed to give to policemen at a check point the required twenty naira settlement fee. This helpless driver fell down while being pursued by men of the police force, hit his chin on the ground, apparently sustaining head injuries that led to his untimely death. This was an incident that elicited only a cursory mention in a nation battling with so many vices, political rebellion and socio-economic handicaps. To so many Nigerians, police-induced death is a regular phenomenon.

In fact, it is becoming an acceptable norm that the Nigerian Police must routinely kill citizens. That the Nigeria Police Force is a harbinger of sorrow, agony and untimely death to its citizens is a stale fact. This view of the Nigerian Police is not confined to our borders alone. In the year 2000, the United States Department of State in its Nigeria. Country Reports on Human Rights Practices confirmed that the Nigerian Police, along

with the army and other security forces, commit extra-judicial killings and use excessive force to quell civil unrest even under the democratic (Obasanjo's) government.

History is replete with the contradiction that the Nigerian Police Force has turned to. Tales abound amongst numerous families of woes, anguish and sorrows, directly induced by men and women of that organization that has become synonymous with murder, violence, brutality and state oppression of its citizens. On 7th February, 2001, a plain clothes policeman, Corporal Rabin Bello attached to Kaduna State Criminal Investigation Department (CID) requested a young apprentice, Haliru Slau Agaba to buy a stick of cigarette for him. Haliru responded that he could not afford it. Corporal Bello "pulled out a pistol and pumped bullets into the young apprentice, who slumped" (The News, Lagos, 30.04.2001). Another incident in February 2001 involved three policemen from the Central Kogi State Police Command. The threesome; Benhamin Oyakhire, Jimo Michael and Gershon Soba mounted an illegal road block, robbed some traders (an equivalent) of 100,000 US Dollars, and set two of the traders ablaze in a brazen attempt to cover their tracks (PANA Press, 03.04.01). The P.M. news reported in March of 2001 that a Lagos woman, Mrs. Iroh, while roasting plantain (a local delicacy of the poor) by the roadside was killed by the bullets from the gun of policeman. The Police merely described the incident as an accidental discharge, and nothing whatsoever was done to contact the family of Mrs. Iroh. No apology was rendered and no compensation was contemplated.

Policemen perpetuate brutality and also sponsor violence. Many policemen have been implicated in armed robberies. They have equally supplied weapons to armed robbers. Notorious robbers have found comfort and solace in the arms of police officers. The dignity of this pathetic force has been so battered by elements within it that one wonders why it still exists in the first instance.

It has been a fairly long journey for the present day Nigerian Police Force. Prof Etanbi et al of CLEEN Foundation, Lagos in their Analysis of Police and Policing in Nigeria, maintained that policing has always been necessary in all societies for the preservation of order, safety and social relations. Thus the primary role of the police remains that of securing compliance with existing laws and conformity with precepts of social order. Bitner (1970) maintained that police work involves a variety of tasks and responsibilities. Officers are expected to prevent crime, protect life and property, enforce the laws, maintain peace and public order and provide a wide range of services to citizens. Robert Reiner (The Politics of the Police, Oxford University Press) stresses this point further by stating that the police are the specialist carriers of the state bedrock power. The monopoly of the legitimate use of force. Thus the dangers of abuse on partisan interests or on the part of the police themselves are clear and daunting, if not very frightening!

The Nigerian Police Force was created in 1930 but co-existed with Local administration police force between 1930 and 1966. The local forces served the regional powers in both in the North and Western parts of Nigeria. These local forces were eventually abolished because they were perceived as being poorly trained, corrupt and misused for partisan political ends, including brutalization of opponents. Ostensibly, the newly formed Nigeria Police Force was meant to be a reformed unification of local regional forces with the bad ingredients whittled away. Journey over the decades has shown that this altruistic aim is far from being attained. Though larger and supposedly

modern, the Nigeria Forces is still arcane, largely uneducated, still poorly trained extremely corrupt and still serves parochial ends politically.

The egregious brutality and hostility of the police force in Nigeria brings into question the need for survival tactics in a no man's jungle called Nigeria. The populace has no known defense against police brutality. Police kill innocent citizens and put tags of armed robbers to cover themselves. Innocent Nigerians have paid the price for crimes they never committed. The Nigerian Judiciary to date has not been a reliable defender of the people. So, how does one survive police brutality? Is it to run, duck or jump? To date, no method has been proven effective in Nigeria. It even got so bad that the police force in rejecting one of their own demonstrated its primordial brutality and dangerous lack of discipline and proper orientation. I am referring to the treatment meted out to former Inspector General Tafa Balogun. The most pertinent question remains; where then shall we run to? What then shall we do to escape the brutality of a sovereign force behaving like an occupying force? What could be done to transform the Nigeria Police Force? (Fakoya, 2008).

#### ***Nigeria Police and demands of Democratic Policing.***

The Nigeria Police Force has not met the minimum demands of democratic policing which cardinal elements are "justice, equality, accountability and efficiency" (Law Commission of Canada 2002). These elements imply the following:

*Justice means that all individuals ought to be treated fairly and their "rights are respected. Equally means, first that all.... Ought to receive policing service sufficient to feel in their community. Equality also means that there ought to be representative participation from all members of society in the delivery of policing services, i.e. that it requires equal and inclusive security force. Accountability means that the actions of a body are subjected and that there are formal channels than individuals can use to lodge a complaint. Finally, efficiency means that services are provided in a cost effective manner (Law Commission of Canada 2002:5).*

As regards equality and justice available information show that the police have not fared well. In 1993, women constitute 4.8% (6,900) of the 137,734 officers in the Nigeria Police Force. Further broken down, women constitute 4.1% and 8.0% of the junior and senior officer cadres. Women officers suffer statutory discrimination in the areas of marriage and posting. Unmarried women must seek and obtain approval to marry a man undermine police control efforts. Women also suffer discrimination in respect of posting to command posts. They are prevented from bearing arms, through recent a female wing of the anti-riot squad known as the Mobile Police Force has been created. In a study of gender relations and discrimination in the Nigeria Police Force, 44.6% and 57.6% of male and female police respondents reported that there are discriminations in the Force. Gender and ethnic discriminations were the most frequently cited (Alemika and Agugua 2001). Members of the police also experience discrimination in their relation to the police, Alemika and Chukwuma (2000) discovered that highly educated persons were less likely to report arrest by the police. Commercial drivers reported the highest level of arrest, detention and brutality. More than two-thirds of the respondents have ever observed the

police receiving bribe, abusing, beating and kicking citizens (Alemika and Chukwuma 2000). Police officers in the study corroborated the public response as 43% of them admitted to have ever insulted, beaten and slapped citizens. Members of the public do not trust the police because of brutality and corruption (Alemika 1988; Alemika and Chukwuma 2000).

### TARGET POPULATION

The target population of study was focused on the Nigerian Police Force Headquarters, Abakaliki. The population being the number of people who make up the organization in which the research was carried out.

The staff strength of the police as at the time of the research was six hundred and thirty (630).

The Nigeria Police Force, Abakaliki is made up of five (5) departments, namely:

- 'A' Department
- 'B' Department Operations
- 'C' Department Tailoring
- 'D' Department
- 'F' Department Works

The distribution according to the various departments is as follows:

• 'A' Department	=	58
• 'B' Department Operations	=	417
• 'C' Department Tailoring	=	40
• 'F' Department Works	=	16
<b>Total</b>	=	<b>630</b>

Therefore, giving a staff strength of six hundred and thirty(630) people.

### SAMPLE SIZE

The study used a sample size of 100 respondents to represent the entire population. This was gotten from the staff strength of the police force for the research.

	<b>Department</b>	<b>No of Staff</b>	<b>Sample Size</b>
1.	'A' Department	58	20
2.	'B' Department Operations	417	20
3.	'C' Department Tailoring	40	20
4.	'D' Department	99	20
5.	'F' Department	16	20
	<b>Total</b>	<b>630</b>	<b><u>10</u></b>

### DATA ANALYSIS/ findings

In the analysis of data collected, the responses to each question was tabulated. The researcher however, used simple percentages

**TABLE 1: Distribution based on rank status**



<b>OPTIONS</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
SENIOR OFFICER	45	56.25%
JUNIOR OFFICER	35	43.75%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the above table based on rank status, the senior officers were in majority are they formed 56.25% while the junior officers were 43.75%.therefore, majority of the respondents were senior officers.

**TABLE 2: Distribution based on duration in the force**

<b>OPTIONS</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
6 MTHS – 1 YEAR	Nil	Nil
2 YEARS – 5 YEARS	20	25%
6 YEARS – 10 YEARS	40	50%
11 YEARS AND ABOVE	20	25%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>

In terms of duration on service in the force from the above table, those who have put in 2-5years of service were 25%, 6-10years 50% making the majority and 11 years and above 25%.

#### **Thematic Analysis**

**TABLE 3: Distribution based on perception of police safety**

<b>OPTIONS</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Protection of all spheres of the police officer in the discharge of duties	40	50%
Provision of welfare services for police officers.	Nil	Nil
Provision of adequate security gadgets for police officers as they go about combating crime.	20	25%
All the above	20	25%
Others Specify	Nil	Nil
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the above table, majority of respondents were of the view that police safety entails protection of all spheres of the police officer in the discharge of his duties and they formed 50% of responses while 25% each went to responses to options c and d.

**TABLE 4: Distribution based on view of public POLICING**

<b>OPTIONS</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Social control of the public	Nil	Nil
Provision of security for the public in times of social disorder	Nil	Nil
Social control as stipulated in the constitution	60	75%
Others	20	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the table above, majority of the respondents are of the view that public policing entails social control as stipulated in the constitution while the option of 'others' which formed 25% are of the view that it includes all of the above options in the table.

**TABLE 5: Distribution based on discharge of duty and safety**

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Excellent	Nil	Nil
Good	40	50%
Satisfactory	40	50%
Poor	Nil	Nil
Others	Nil	Nil
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the above table, it was a draw as all respondents fell into two equal category of 50% each whereby they are of the view that the discharge of their duties are satisfactory and good.

**TABLE 6: Distribution based evident security welfare**

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
YES	80	100%
NO	Nil	Nil
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>

All respondents from the above table are of the view that security welfare is indeed evident in the force, the reason why all respondents made up the yes which accounted for 100%

**TABLE 7: Distribution based on effectiveness in implementation**

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Excellent	Nil	Nil
Good	20	25%
Satisfactory	60	75%
Poor	Nil	Nil
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>

In answering the question how effective it is in its real sense, 75% of respondents were of the satisfactory view while 25% were of the view that it was good. However, satisfactory option made up the majority.

**TABLE 8: TO WHAT EXTENT HAS ADEQUATE PROVISION BEEN MADE AS REGARDS YOUR WELFARE AND SAFETY?**

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
30-40%	20	25%

41-50%	40	50%
51-70%	20	25%
71-100%	NIL	NIL
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>

In response to the question asked above, the table depicts that 25% accounted for 30-40%, 50% for 41-50% and 25% for 51-70%. From the above, it shows that 41-50% is the extent to which adequate provision has been made as regards police officers welfare and safety which made up 50%.

**TABLE 9: Distribution of kind of welfare and safety package made available to police**

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Salary increase	20	25%
Accommodation	10	12.5%
Vehicles and communication systems	5	6.25%
Others	45	56.25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the table above based on the kind of welfare and safety packages made available to the police, 25% of respondents acknowledged salary increase, 12.5% accommodation, 6.25% vehicles and communication systems to aid combat crime while the others option made up 56.25% where they were of the view that it entails all the above options. Therefore, majority of respondents are of the view that all the above options are kinds of welfare packages made available to the police.

**TABLE 10: Distribution based on factors affecting public policing and safety**

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Corruption	40	50%
Poor remuneration	Nil	Nil
Inadequate equipment.	Nil	Nil
Poor or lack of welfare packages.	Nil	Nil
Lack of trained personnel	20	25%
Others	20	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>

Based on the distribution in the table above, 50% of the respondents are of the view that corruption is the factor affecting public policing and safety; while 25% each made up lack of trained personnel and others option. The others option however are of the view that all the above options affect public policing and safety.

**TABLE 11: DISTRIBUTION BASED ON POLICE OFFICERS ATTITUDE TOWARD DISCHARGE OF THEIR DUTIES**

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Enthusiastic	40	50%
Nonchalant	Nil	Nil
Fair	40	50%
Others	Nil	Nil
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>

Based on police officers attitude toward discharge of their duties, the above table depicts that 50% are enthusiastic while the remaining 50% are fairly ok in terms of attitude as regards discharge of their duties.

**TABLE 12: WHY IS THIS SO?**

OPTIONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
The police is bound to serve the nation	37	46.25%
No proper positive reward for deceased police officer in line of duty	43	53.75%
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>

In response to the question the reason for their various views on attitude to discharge of their duties, the above answers abound and 53.75% of the responses were that no proper positive reward for deceased police officer in line of duty while 46.25% are of the view that the Police are bound to serve the nation.

**Recommendation.**

The paper recommends that governments at the various levels invest more in the provisions and materials and equipments of the police force in order to effectively carry out its legitimate duties of the protection of lives and properties of its teeming population

**conclusion**

The paper concludes that the following measures should be put in place for effective policing of lives and property of the teeming population of Nigerians.

- \* the mass media should be effectively used in the proper propagation of the role of the police
- \* the people should be convinced that the police is your friend
- \* that the responsibility of protecting lives and property is a collective responsibility of all and sundry
- \* the government at all levels should invest more in the provisions of improved remunerations for the police
- \* and finally that an improved pension scheme be made available for the police officers themselves who daily risk their own lives to save the nation

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