

THE NIGERIAN POLICE ACT 2020 AND HUMAN SECURITY IN NIGERIA'S SOUTHEAST GEOPOLITICAL ZONE

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Abstract

Following the youth-led 2020 #ENDSARS protest demanding the disbandment of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) and broader reform of the police, the Nigerian government enacted a new Police Act (2020) to address the challenges of police brutality in Nigeria. Section 19 of the Act states that the Inspector General of Police should ensure that all police officer undergo training despite the existence of numerous police training institutions, inadequate or poor training largely persists in these institutions. This has been implicated in corruption and abuse of human rights by police officers. This study examines the impact of Police Act (2020) on the capacity of Police Officers for security provisioning in Nigeria's Southeast zone. The specific objective is to unravel how inadequate training programmes for police officers lead to professional misconduct that undermine human security in the Southeast. It adopts the human security theory propounded by Mahbub ul Haq as a framework of analysis. Mixed method research design guides the collection of data involving documentary and survey methods. It gathers primary data through key informant interview and questionnaire and subjected to qualitative descriptive analysis. The findings show how insufficient training programs for police officers have undermined human security in Southeast Nigeria. It recommends, among others, the overall of training curricula and packages in police institutions in accordance with international standards and best practices and the implementation of a robust accountability mechanism to track and redress abuse of human rights by police officers in line with the rule of law.

Keywords: *The Nigerian Police Act, Nigerian Police Force, Southeast geo-political zone, Nigeria, Police Brutality, Human Rights Abuses*

Introduction

The Nigerian Police Force (NPF) is a legally recognized institution, designated by Nigerian law as the entity responsible for ensuring peace and order. The 1999 Constitution, in Chapter 6, Part 3, Section 214, stipulates that the establishment of a police force for Nigeria, known as the Nigeria Police Force, shall be exclusive, with no other police force being permitted for the Federation or any part thereof. Consequently, Ogbo et al (2014) argue that it is the responsibility of the police to ensure both human and material security through all necessary means at all times. Hence, it becomes incumbent upon the Police to effectively handle protests, apprehend criminals, maintain law and order, uphold and advance human rights, as well as safeguard the

nation against internal and external security threats. Shehu (2014) already captured that, despite the significant roles and positions held by the Nigeria Police, it has garnered the highest level of criticism among all the law enforcement agencies and forces. The force has been heavily tainted to the extent that a majority of Nigerians, including state officials, lack confidence in its ability to effectively carry out its institutional duties. This lack of trust is primarily rooted in allegations of strained relationships and tarnished reputation, corruption, extrajudicial killings, coerced confessions, politicization of functions, and other related issues.

In 2020, an extensive movement opposing police brutality, extrajudicial executions, unauthorized incarcerations, coercive financial demands, and intimidation perpetrated by members of the Nigerian police brought numerous states in Nigeria to a standstill. Due to this, there was a wide call to revisit the police Act of 2004. This gave birth to the 2020 Nigerian Police Act. The demand for a re-evaluation of the Police Act 2004 and the establishment of the Nigerian Police Act 2020 received extensive backing from a significant number of Nigerians, all of whom sought a transformation in the operational methods of the Police.

The Police Act 2020 represents an enactment by the National Assembly of Nigeria with the objective of annulling the Police Act CAP P19 LFN 2004. The aforementioned legislation aims to establish a police force that is characterized by enhanced efficiency and a well-structured framework, while concurrently upholding transparency and accountability in the management of its resources. Moreover, the Act of 2020 strives to ensure the protection of human rights, as well as the eradication of police brutality and ensuing protests, by fostering collaborative relationships between the police and diverse communities (The Nigeria Police Act, 2020). The 2020 Act, as explicated by Ole, et al (2023), was embraced as a rejoinder to protracted years of advocacy for reformation, prompted by the vehement objection to the overt transgressions of human rights perpetrated by law enforcement. It abrogates the Police Act of 1943, which had undergone an amendment in 2004.

The Nigerian Police Act of 2020 was established with the intention of establishing a proficient and contemporary police force that adheres to the principles of responsibility, openness, and safeguarding human rights within Nigeria. According to section 1 of the Act:

The objective of this Act is to provide for a more efficient and effective police service that is based on the principles of; (a) accountability and transparency; (b) protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms; and (c) partnership with other security agencies.

Section 2 went further to state that;

The specific objectives of this Act are to: (a) provide for a Police Force that is more responsive to the needs of the general public and has entrenched in its operations the values of fairness, justice and equity; (b) reposition the Police Force to uphold and safeguard the fundamental rights of every person in Nigeria in its operations; (c) bring about a positive change in the public perception of the Police Force by ensuring that its functions are performed in a manner sensitive to the needs and well-being of the

general public; (d) empower the Police Force to effectively prevent crimes without threatening the liberty and privacy of persons in Nigeria; (e) strengthen the Police Force in the performance of its functions, including safety and security of all persons, communities and property in Nigeria; (f) ensure that the police performs its functions by creating enabling environment to foster cooperation and partnership between it and the communities it serves to effectively prevent, reduce or eradicate crimes; (g) develop professionalism in the Police Force by providing relevant training in all police formation in Nigeria for enhancing performance; and (h) respect for rights of victims of crime and an understanding of their needs.

But recent development seems to prove otherwise, about adherence to the Act, and effectiveness of the Police force in Nigeria. The police force remains unchanged, whether it takes the form of SARS, which led to the #EndSARS protests in October 2020, or manifests as roadblocks, extortion, illegal displays of suspects, or extrajudicial killings. For researchers such as Ole et al (2023), whose investigation centered on the collaboration between the police and host communities, the primary aim of the Act is to provide a solution to the widespread issue of police brutality.

A decade ago, Ogbo, et al (2014) in their work on strategic restructuring for effective police system in Nigeria, they discovered that, In spite of the alluring structures and programs of the Nigeria police force, the image has largely not resonated with the kind of police force desired by the civil populace- a force that eschews inappropriate use of lethal force, illegal arrest and detention, extortion, intimidation, corruption, sexual violence and extra-judicial killings, robbery collaboration and exploitation.

Consequently, Adediran (2020) states that advocates for better policing in Nigeria have been calling for the Nigerian Police Act 2020 to be fully domesticated and implemented in order to achieve its intended purpose of ensuring co-operation and partnership between the police and host communities in maintaining peace, protecting liberties, lives, and property. This is because, despite the Act's commendable provisions for human rights protection and preservation, police brutality reports in Nigeria have not decreased. Other scholars like, Augustus-Daddie et al (2023); Ole et al (2023), did their study referencing the new Act, but failed to extensively analysed how the new Act has reduced police brutality in Nigeria. And none of the study made particular reference to the Southeast. This study against this background attempts to analyze some provisions of the Act with a view of identifying key opportunities and challenges there-in, consequent upon which recommendations that can help in domesticating the Act in the various states in Southeast Nigeria was made. The focus of this study was to examine The Nigeria Police Act 2020 and Police brutality in Southeast, Nigeria. This study raised the question; Does poor adherence to section 19 on training of police officers account for abuse of police power in Southeast Nigeria?

Literature Review

The Nigerian Police possess the primary authority to uphold law and order as stipulated in The Police Act, 2020. Furthermore, they possess the subordinate powers to apprehend based on reasonable suspicion, conduct searches, confiscate, detain, and initiate legal proceedings in specific circumstances as prescribed by legislation. One cannot overstate the importance of the Nigeria Police Force to the country's internal peace, stability, and law and order. Like any other police apparatus in the world, it faces many difficulties. In particular, Nigerian society perceives it negatively and frequently accuses it of corruption, disproportionate use of force, crimes against defenseless civilians, inaction, politicization of operations, corruption, and general incompetence (Shehu, 2014). The study by Shehu (2014) although been an old study focuses on the Nigeria Police Force: its foundation, credentials, history, authority, and public perception among Nigerians. According to the study, the kind, make-up, and recruitment practices of the police force have a significant impact on the roles played by the force as well as the proper use of its authority. These also have a significant impact on how well and efficiently it performs. These attributes could change depending on the state's desire to have such attributes, the level of development, the makeup of the society, and the leadership.

In the exercise of their powers, the police are expected to adhere to the principles of safeguarding fundamental human rights (Madubuike-Ekwe & Obayemi, 2019). Nevertheless, whenever the police transgress the boundaries of the law by resorting to torture, cruelty, emotional manipulation, and homicide against individuals, instances of brutality arise. Unquestionably, police brutality has become a pervasive issue in Nigerian society, manifesting itself through acts of torture, emotional manipulation, extrajudicial killings of suspects, and homicides (Ole et al, 2023). The latter has become prevalent in all aspects of police operations in Nigeria (Akinlabi, 2020). Indeed, the 2020 crisis of the End SARS protest, which was characterized by widespread killing and violence against civilians exercising their constitutional rights in a democratic setting, represents yet another appalling instance of police brutality in Nigeria (SARS refers to the Special Anti-Robbery Squad, a unit within the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) tasked with combating robbery and armed robbery in Nigeria), for more on the #ENDSARS protest, consult Iwoha & Aniche (2022); Ole et al (2023).

According to Akinsulore (2020), it doesn't seem unusual for a developing African nation like Nigeria to have police carry out operations that go against the common understanding of justice or even against legal precepts as stated in the current laws that support the criminal justice system. In his work also, Akinsulore (2020) captured that, the idea of a Nigeria policing philosophy that can be deduced from these documents refer to idealistic police that work to fulfil its mandate of providing security to the citizens of Nigeria with a well-trained force that is ready to partner "other relevant security agencies", to deliver quality police service that is "accessible to the generality of the people", while building in the members of the public "lasting trust in the police." according to him, The police hope to be able to achieve this feat by operating on a Code of Conduct and Professional Standards for Police Officers which provides "Nigeria Police Force with a set of guiding principles and standards of behaviour while on or off-duty.

This Code inscribes on all Nigeria Police officers the philosophy of impartiality in the conduct of their official duties as an official representative of the government. It imposes the principle of circumspection in the use of force and negatives the attitude of "unnecessary infliction of pain or suffering and will never engage in cruel, degrading or inhuman treatment of any person." (Akinsulore, 2020). The effectiveness of a crime-controlling agency in achieving its objectives and deterring criminal intentions and acts is reflected in its ability to detect crime through investigation and the use of specialized tools. If the capacity of such an agency deteriorates, its officials may resort to easily obtainable methodologies to justify their role as a crime-fighting organization. This is evident in the way the Nigeria Police obtains extra-judicial confessional statements from suspects, which, if accepted as evidence by the court, can alone secure a guilty verdict against the defendant.

The objective of the research conducted by Ogbo et al (2014) is to uncover the potential methods of positioning the Nigerian Police force for the purpose of efficient provision of services through strategic reorganization. According to the authors, in order to achieve effective service delivery, which is evident in the protection of life and property through efficient prevention, detection, and prosecution of crimes, it is crucial to restructure the Nigerian Police force through proactive strategies that are designed to address national issues such as the lack of strict law enforcement against corruption, detection and prosecution of cybercrime, corporate fraud, and insecurity in the country. This cannot be ignored, especially in the present circumstances. In their study's conclusion, the authors find that the majority of the force's inefficiency can be attributed to a lack of information. Despite the appealing structures and programs of the Nigeria Police force, it has not adequately aligned with the type of police force desired by the civilian population - a force that refrains from employing inappropriate use of lethal force, engaging in illegal arrests and detentions, extortion, intimidation, corruption, sexual violence, extra-judicial killings, as well as collaboration and exploitation in robberies.

The Nigerian Police's ability to effectively fulfill its designated responsibilities as outlined in the Police Act is greatly undermined. The challenges can be attributed to both structural and institutional factors. Structural factors include over-centralization, historical neglect of the agency, particularly during military regimes, economic exploitation, poverty, and widespread corruption, which have deeply affected the nation's social fabric, among other issues. Akande (2018) observed that Nigerian police personnel often engage in public extortion, especially from market vendors, sex workers, and drivers. "A person who refuses or fails to pay a bribe is likely to suffer a range of negative treatments". These treatments can include protracted delays at checkpoints, detention at the agency office, threats of arrest and/or other violation charges, vehicle impoundment, or tyre deflation (Hofman & Patel, 2017).

According to Akinsulore (2020) the eight principles for officer conduct are summarized as follows: the ideal officer follows the law, performs his duties with integrity and impartiality, and conducts himself in a way that upholds the force's honor, treats the public with decency and respect, and handles information in a professional and private manner to protect everyone in the nation. The Nigerian police have a reputation for treating people violently and for upholding the "you are guilty until you prove yourself innocent" mentality with impunity. According to a recent

poll, political actors view the Nigerian police as a dependable weapon, crooked, and haughty (PLAC, 2022). According to Akinsulore (2020), this survey destroyed whatever high standards that the Nigerian police would have wanted to promote as its guiding principles.

The study by Ole et al (2023) was on the need to rely on the new Police Act to address brutality through community initiatives. According to the scholars, the prevalence of police brutality can be attributed to various factors, although the primary cause lies in the stark division between the individuals within Nigerian society and the police force. This division consequently gives rise to opposition against the police, making it the foremost reason for such incidents. The estrangement between the two groups can be attributed to their limited interaction, which is mostly confined to enforcement situations where individuals are either suspects or victims. Consequently, the public perceives the police as encroachers on personal freedom. To them, "Ensuring partnership between the police and host communities in maintaining peace, combating crime, protecting liberties, life, and property" is the foundation of the 2020 Act.

Amusan and Saka's (2018) study looked at Nigeria's policing crisis throughout the country's democratic transition. The political economy explanation serves as the study's foundation. Using secondary data from Nigerian media, journals, books, book chapters, reports, and other online material sources, the study employs a qualitative methodology. Using these statistics, the study examined violence, extortion, and brutality committed by Nigerian Police Force (NPF) officers. According to the scholars, The Nigerian police force has earned a negative image due to the acts of extortion committed by its officers. This perception is reinforced by the belief that the force has failed to prioritize public safety. A study conducted by Akinlabi in 2017 reveals that public cynicism towards the law is influenced by experiences and perceptions of police abuse and corruption, as well as procedural injustice.

The study conducted by Madubuike-Ekkwe and Obayemi (2019) explores the role played by the Nigerian Police Force in the advancement and safeguarding of human rights within Nigeria. It delves into the concept of human rights as outlined by both international and domestic law. Furthermore, it sheds light on the authority vested in the Nigerian Police Force by the Police Act and the Administration of Criminal Justice Act of 2015. It also acknowledges that while the police exercise discretion to uphold human rights, it is the misuse of this discretion and power that leads to the violation of the rights of individuals. This paper identifies the rights most prone to abuse by the police, namely the right to life, human dignity, personal liberty, fair trial, privacy, and family life. Additionally, it examines several factors that contribute to the ineffectiveness of the police force. The study provides solutions and recommendations for improvement to bring the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), its personnel, and its standards up to par with the policing systems of western nations. Critiques the role, function, and effectiveness of the NPF within the local and international legislation governing effective policing in democratic societies and similar common law jurisdictions.

Theoretical Framework

To place this study in a strategic position, we are going to situate the study around the human security theory. This is to enable us capture and make the readers understand the security implications of police brutality in Southeast, Nigeria, as we will show them in the course of this study. Human security was first propounded by Mahbub Ul Haq (1934-1998). Supporting this claim, Ogata (2005) wrote that, in the 1994 United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Development Report, Mahbub ul Haq introduced human security as a novel and unique development concept. In a tribute for Mahbub, Baru (1998) wrote that, The HDR (Human Development Report) has drawn more attention and generated more controversy than any previous UN agency study. Nearly all of the credit for the report's "notoriety" and popularity goes to Haq.

The idea of human security was a shift from state-centered concept of security to people's centered concept of security. The state centered concept of security which is known as national security focused only in the protection of external aggression, and national integrity, without considering the threat to people's life. Thus, human security, addresses issue like poverty, health threat, and human rights. We situated this study around this theory, because at the heart of human security is human rights, and police brutality is a violation of human rights. "For far too long, the concept of security has been interpreted narrowly: as global security against the threat of a nuclear holocaust, as protection of national interests in foreign policy, or as security of territory against external aggression." (Baru, 1998, p2277). It has more to do with nation-states than individuals. McDonald (2002) states that an implicit premise of human security is that pressing issues like economic inequality, environmental change, and human rights to the level of security will give them more importance and increase the likelihood that decision-makers will take meaningful action on them.

Human security was characterized as protection against long-term risks including famine, illness, and repression as well as defense against abrupt and harmful interruptions in everyday routines, whether in homes, workplaces, or communities (Baru, 1998). Secretary-General Kofi Annan promoted creating a world that embodied the twin values of "freedom from want" and "freedom from fear" during the 2000 United Nations Millennium Summit. The Secretary-General took the initiative to designate an independent Commission on Human Security (henceforth, the Commission) to investigate the entire spectrum of security concerns and to suggest policies to define and promote human security in collaboration with Prime Minister Yoshiro Mori of Japan (Ogata, 2005). "Protecting the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfillment" is the definition of human security in another dimension (Ogata, 2005, p. 12). This included "protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations," "preserving fundamental freedoms," and enabling people and communities to build the capacity to make informed decisions and decide their own well-being.

The Nigerian Police Force is meant to protect human security and national security. But in recent time, they have been used by state actors to threaten the security of lives of the people, through

repression, bullying, and several brutalities. No matter the amount or changes made to the 2020 Police Act, the relationship between the police and the people must be people centered in order to ensure that the standard of human security is maintained. Addressing human security threats is the focus of this study.

Methodology

For the purpose of the data collection for this study, we relied on both primary and secondary sources of data collection. For our primary source, we relied on the survey method of data collection through key informant/elite interview and questionnaire. Primary source of data was relied on, in order to get first-hand information from respondents. Hence, we sourced for our primary data by carrying out key informant/elite interviews on officers of the NPF and few stakeholders of the general public, to ascertain adherence and applications of the stated sections and subsections of the Nigerian Police Act, and how it has brought about effected the promotion of human right in Southeast Nigeria.

We also distributed 50 questionnaires to 50 former inmates in police custody. The questionnaires were distributed in Enugu, Anambra, and Imo state. The choice of Enugu, Anambra, and Imo is because of the rate of human rights abuse recorded in these states in recent times. We adopted the snowball sampling technique, whereby we identified former inmates, who helped us locate another former inmate in the locality, until we got our 50 respondents. Our choice of Snowball was because there was no other way to identify a former inmate in an area, than making an inquiry.

For our secondary sources of data collection, we adopted the documentary method of data collection, which relied on official and gazette publications, newspaper, journals and other internet materials. Data gathered from these aforementioned sources was used to evaluate the performance of the Act in reducing police brutality in the Southeast Nigeria. We adopted the qualitative descriptive method of data analysis so as to be able to do justice to the data heterogeneously generated. The qualitative descriptive method was used to analyze data generated from the interviews conducted, as well as other data gotten from documentary sources. Asika (2006) noted that qualitative descriptive method of data analysis is used to thematically summarize the information gathered in research using the technique of content analysis. Through the qualitative descriptive analysis, descriptive explanation is given to data gathered on our research work, in order to establish the relationship between the variables under study. It goes a step further into the domain of interpretation because effort is made towards understanding not just the manifest but also the latent content of data with a view to discovering pattern or regularities in the data.

Discussion of Findings

Provision of the Nigerian Police Act on Training of Police Officers

Law enforcement is a diverse job that calls for the highest levels of moral behavior, empathy, and effective communication in addition to physical stamina and technical skill. Based on this, one must be properly trained before he or she is shortlisted as a member of the NPF. The intended training is designed to highlight the importance of respectful and compassionate interactions with members of the public. It also aims to improve interpersonal skills, conflict resolution techniques, cultural sensitivity, and de-escalation strategies with the goal of fostering trust and cooperation between law enforcement and the communities they serve. The training program incorporates scenarios and simulations that replicate real-life situations, enabling officers to practice critical decision-making skills while considering the potential impact on community relations (Anichukwueze, 2023). The Nigeria Police Force is increasingly reliant on reactive security measures since they lack the tools, expertise, and resources necessary for preventing and detecting crime, according to a number of publications, findings, and data. Risk, threat, and resource waste with little possibility of recovery are the reasons behind reactionary policing (Nwogwugwu, 2015). In this vein, there should be continuous training of the police officers. It was based on this that Section 19 of the Police Act (2020), provided that the IGP should ensure that every police officer undergoes periodic training and retraining. This training will help in basic policing, ethics, code of conduct, standard operating procedure, crime detection and law enforcement, investigation and gathering of evidence, and many others (The Police Act, 2020). In this training, the old and new police officers will further be integrated into the police philosophy and principles.

One of the identified problems of the NPF is poor training; this has affected the way police relate to the ordinary citizens. One of the Nigeria Police Force's seven departments is the Department of Training and Development. It organizes and plans every activity to satisfy the Force's training requirements. The department oversees the hiring of new officers and men for the force, as well as staff and manpower development, training, and retraining programs. To keep the force in line with the changing needs of society, it is primarily tasked with developing and implementing policies on manpower development and training. Through its operations, the department diligently seeks to guarantee that the force fulfills its fundamental duties of preserving peace and order in society and protecting life and property (NPF, 2018).

Given the significance attributed to training within the Nigeria Police Force, particularly concerning standards and consistency, the department differs from other departments at the zonal and state command levels as it is not duplicated. Consequently, it assumes the responsibility of coordinating all force-related activities pertaining to training and human resource development from the Force Headquarters in Abuja. Operating at this level, the department consists of three sections overseen by Commissioners of Police, namely: 1. Administration 2. Training 3. Inspectorate.

Although there are training institutions available for different levels of police training, like Police Staff College, Jos; Police Academy, Kano; Police Training School, Ikeja; and many

others, the issue at hand is what the available programs for the training are, and how recent in accordance to international standard are these program. The training and professional development opportunities available to police officers in Nigeria are insufficient. Based on this in 2023, Kayode Egbetokun mandated the creation of a thorough curriculum and training program for training schools and universities (Anichukwueze, 2023). In a statement, the Force Public Relations Officer, CSP Oluwayiwa Adejobi, said that in addition to physical and technical fitness, these would place more focus on behavioral and attitude improvements. Adejobi claims that the decision is based on IGP Egbetokun's dedication to raising the caliber of law enforcement officers' professionalism, efficacy, and public trust (Anichukwueze, 2023). When we went to the field, we interviewed our respondents on the level of available training program for the NPF, and the responses are presented in the table below. In relation to this, we conducted interview with few officers of the police on this matter, and got the response which we recorded in Table 1 below.

Table 1: KII Report on the level of available training program for the NPF

Respondents	Responses
A	Available training program for the police are minimal, and this is due to poor funding of the police.
B	The NPF have different training programs, but they are still limited and time bound, due to the large nature of the force.
C	The available training programs of the NPF are obsolete and even not sufficient for the whole force.
D	Yes, there are available training programs for the NPF, but is not sufficient for the police force.

KII (2025)

From the responses from our field work, majority of our respondents agreed that although there are available training program for the NPF, but the issue is the available program is insufficient for the whole police force. Thus, there is need for improvement, extension and more seriousness in the training of the force. The IGP recognizes the necessity for training by pointing out that law enforcement is a complex profession requiring not just physical stamina and technical proficiency but also mental alertness, the highest standards of moral behavior, empathy, and effective communication (Anichukwueze, 2023).

In response to a question about the constitutional responsibilities of the Nigerian police, a responded listed some of the fundamental obligations of police officers to the people and the community. These obligations include preventing and detecting crimes, apprehending offenders, maintaining law and order, safeguarding people's lives and property, and properly enforcing all laws and regulations that they are directly charged with, as outlined in the Police Act (CAP 359 of the Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2020), particularly section 4 and the

federal constitution as amended in 1999. He went on to clarify that when performing their tasks, police officers are supposed to uphold the rule of law with strict humanity (KII, 2025).

Section 19 stipulates that it is mandatory for all members of the police force to undergo regular training sessions encompassing essential law enforcement and policing competencies, along with specialized courses focusing on various aspects such as law enforcement procedures, evidence collection, human rights, gender equality, prosecution, and defense. The non-attainment of this provision can be attributed to instances where certain police officers have been observed performing their duties below the expected standard, primarily due to their inadequate law enforcement expertise and training, breeding corruption among officers of the Nigerian Police.

Police Corruption in Southeast, Nigeria.

According to Sign (2022) 32% of Nigerian who have had contacts with the NPF has been asked to pay bribe. Many police officers, lawyers and representatives of civil society organizations have described the problem of the illegal detention of citizens by Nigerian police officers as apparently a motivation to extort money. This breeds corruption in the police force. An understanding of the broad definition of corruption is necessary in order to comprehend police corruption.

We define police abuse of authority as blatant evidence of police corruption in Nigeria based on this. From a logical standpoint, Singh (2022) defines police corruption as when a police officer intentionally disobeys the law in order to obtain material or financial gain. A police officer who takes a bribe or steals from a crime scene would be considered corrupt under almost all definitions of the term. However, police deviance extends to more unlawful behavior when officers break accepted laws, norms, ethics, and standards without directly harming anyone.

Section 38 confers upon a law enforcement officer the authority to apprehend a suspect without the need for a warrant under specific circumstances, such as when there exists a reasonable basis to believe that the individual has committed a criminal offense, when the offense has been committed in the officer's presence, or when there is interference with the officer's lawful duties. It explicitly stipulates that in the absence of meeting any of the aforementioned criteria, an individual cannot be detained without a warrant. However, a pressing issue arises whereby certain officers, influenced by prejudice, cultural associations, religious ties, or personal beliefs, detain individuals they perceive as adversaries due to the extensive powers vested in them to effect arrests without the need for a warrant (Lambo, 2021). Police corruption is the genesis of police brutality and abuse of human rights in Nigeria. In the next section we will treat cases and evidence of police brutality and abuse of human rights in Southeast, Nigeria.

Abuse of Human Right

The present understanding of human rights originates from the theory of natural law, which asserts that individuals in society possess certain rights that are inherent, inalienable, and fundamental to their existence. This theory was advanced by philosophers such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke (Salihu, 2019). Consequently, these rights cannot be unjustifiably taken away. The conceptual formulation of human rights began with the United States Bill of Rights and further developed into a universal concept in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Subsequently, these rights were expounded upon in various international human rights instruments following the UDHR (Madubuike-Ekwe & Obayemi, 2019). Civil and political rights, which can be both cognizable and justiciable in Nigeria, are primarily located in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and Chapter four of the Constitution. Madubuike-Ekwe and Obayemi (2019) concluded their analysis by noting that one of the worst human rights violators in Nigeria is the police.

According to Muhammad (2021) The Nigerian Police have, for the most part, abused their legal authority, particularly with regard to making arrests. In general, police detention authority is only warranted when there are good reasons to believe that a crime has been committed or is likely to be committed. While ensuring effective crime prevention and detection is the goal, it is a general assumption that the police would like to use their powers covertly. This was untrue, though, as the most common misuse of police authority came from the ability to make an arrest. The disposition, mindset, and training of the Nigerian police force have been devised to subdue and instill fear in the Nigerian populace. This configuration was inherited from the colonial era, where the police force was established with the objective of subduing and intimidating the indigenous people through a "Primitive Impulse and Criminal Intent." Regrettably, these dispositions, mindsets, and training have remained unaltered throughout the years.

The Nigerian police have increasingly strayed from their constitutional role of upholding law and order and protecting human rights to engaging in human rights abuse and violation, as evidenced by instances of brutality, extrajudicial killing, harassment, molestation, and torture. The study by Ajeli and Iloakasia (2020) is an exposé of the numerous violations of human rights committed by the Nigerian police on the defenseless people in the country's southeast geopolitical zone. According to them, Nigerians in the southeast geopolitical zone are well-known for their aptitude for business, spirit of entrepreneurship, and level of expertise and professionalism across a wide range of industries. In order to achieve this, they participate in a variety of enterprises that support the growth of their local communities. However, armed police officers regularly harass try circle drivers, bus drivers, mechanics, market traders, and shopkeepers—including those who sell sachet water—in their desperate attempts to make ends meet. These officers demand bribes and violate their human rights, particularly when the workers disobey their orders. The officers usually threaten arrest and bodily harm to those who do not pay as requested. Frequently, these threats are carried out in a way that is very visible straight away, such when they seize a driver's automobile or shoot them dead

We discover few recorded cases from online newspaper of people who were killed in different

states of the Southeast by police officers. Just on the 26th of October, 2024, a police officer killed one Okezie Mba, an Ogene musician known as Igbo-Jah (Ede, 2024). According to Ede (2024), On October 25, 2024, at approximately 8:10 p.m., the incident took place in the headquarters of the Tactical Squad, Enugu. For unknown circumstances, the police officer shot the victim with his gun as the singer was apparently leaving the squad's headquarters following a cordial visit. He was taken right away to the hospital, where the doctor pronounced him dead.

There was also another report of a police man killing a man by name Chinedu Edeh at Nsukka in Enugu state on the 23rd of June, 2024. According to the report by Igwe (2024) the incident happened at Echara Road in Nsukka, according to police authorities in the South-East state. Also in November 20, 2024, police operative killed a laborer and injured three others in Ebonyi state. According to Eze (2024) the incident happened at Ugwuechara Junction in Abakaliki, when the police operative pursued a man on his motorcycle, who they accused of being a fraudster, and then shot the man. When the man resist their arrest, the police operative open fire on the air, thereby hitting a nearly laborers and injuring three other persons nearby.

At a check point in Otucha in Anmbra East LGA of Anambra state, a police officer shot a bus driver to death over ₦100 bribe in November, 2024. According to Obianeri (2024), A fight between the young man and the police officers over the payment of a N100 bribe resulted in his shooting death. One of the policemen promptly pulled the trigger during the altercation, killing him. Also in Anambra, 3 police officer shot a young man for refusing to provide answers to them. According to Okonkwo (2023) the police squad commanded by Jude Utazii shot and killed Nwakor, who is now deceased, because he allegedly refused to answer their inquiries when they confronted him at the site. Nwakor lived at No. 15F Hakuna Street, Odoakpu beside Sokoto Road Junction, close to the Onitsha Main Market. The report claims that after the victim was taken to a nearby private hospital in White Chapel for medical attention, The doctor demanded a police extract and, terrified by the extent of the bullet wounds, sent his friends and neighbors to another nearby private hospital called New Hope, where he was pronounced dead upon arrival.

In Abia state, one Emmanuel Okocha was shot dead by a police corporal named Njoku on the 17th of April, 2024. This incident according to Ikokwu (2024) was because the deceased refuse to give the police man money at a check point. In another report, a trader named Ebere Chibuike was shot dead by a police officer in Owerri, Imo state on 28 of August, 2023 (Shehu, 2023). These cases are presented in the table below.

Table 2: Cases of extra-judicial killings in Southeast, Nigeria

Date	Case of Human Right Abuse	Place	Source
November 20, 2024	A laborer killed, and three injured	Abakaliki Ebonyi state	https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/755829-police-operatives-kill-labourer-injure-three-in-ebonyi.html?tztc=1
November 2, 2024	A bus driver was gunned down	Anambra East, in Anambra state	https://punchng.com/policeman-kills-driver-over-alleged-n100-bribe-in-anambra/#google_vignette
October 25, 2024	Killing of an Ogene musician by a police officer	Enugu state	https://punchng.com/protest-rocks-enugu-as-policeman-kills-musician/
June 23, 2024	Police killed a man	Nsukka, Enugu state	https://www.channelstv.com/2024/06/27/police-officer-allegedly-shoots-man-dead-in-enugu-cp-orders-probe/
April 17, 2024	A police corporal killed a businessman	Abia state	https://punchng.com/corporal-arrested-for-killing-abia-businessman/
October 13, 2023	Policemen killed a young man	Onitsha, Anambra state	https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/10/police-detain-3-officers-in-anambra-over-alleged-murder-of-young-man/
August 28, 2023	A trader was shot dead by police officer	Owerri, Imo state	https://www.thecable.ng/trader-shot-dead-by-police-officer-in-imo/

Compiled by the Researcher (2025)

The table above represents only few recorded cases of such killings in Southeast, many of such cases are never recorded. Such reports can be evident in other zone of the country. Although most victims arbitrarily arrested are detained for hours, those who cannot or do not want to pay are usually detained at night in a police cell and can remain in detention for days or even weeks. The manner in which the Nigeria Police handle detainees who have only been charged and are awaiting a court ruling. 80.3 percent of our respondents in the police custody reported being mistreated or insulted upon being detained; 81.0 percent reported being beaten or slapped; 73.2 percent reported being threatened with weapons; 77.5 reported being tortured in a police cell; 56.3 percent reported being denied food and water in the cell; 56.8 reported being denied contact with family members and attorneys; 39.7 percent reported being burned with hot objects; 33.3 percent reported being shocked with electric current; and 50.8 percent reported being pricked with a needle or sharp object (KII, 2025).

Section 35(3) also indicates that in the event of an officer apprehending a suspect, it is imperative for the relatives or family members of said suspect to be notified. This particular provision signifies a positive advancement, mandating the police to initiate communication with the suspect's family devoid of any financial implications. Nonetheless, it is frequently observed that suspects are detained for extended periods without their family members being informed of their whereabouts. Building on this notion, Onanuga (2020) asserts that the legislation explicitly prohibits law enforcement officers from engaging in the torture of suspects or employing any form of inhumane treatment, while concurrently emphasizing the importance of upholding the fundamental human rights of all individuals. The entitlement to human dignity, a cornerstone right enshrined in the 1999 Constitution, must be safeguarded even for individuals under arrest, ensuring they are not subjected to any form of torture, cruelty, inhumanity, or degrading treatment.

The use of excessive force or threats by the Nigerian Police is a tactic used to obtain resources from the populace that the government has neglected to provide (Andrew et al, 2022). Based on long detention and torture we distribute our questionnaires to former inmates in the police custody, the social-demographic characteristic of our respondents are presented in the table below.

Table 3: Socio demographic characteristics of the Respondents

Details	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	48	96
Female	2	4
Total	50	100.0
Age		
18-24years	13	26
25-34years	24	48
35-49years	9	18
50years and above	4	8
Total	50	100.0
Length of stay in Custody		
6 weeks	9	18
1 month	8	16
2-3 months	21	42
6 months and above	12	24
Total	50	100

Field Work (2025)

Table 3 illustrates that 96% of the participants were male, whereas 4% were female. This distribution can be attributed to the higher presence of male inmates in police custody facilities, as opposed to females, due to the limited capacity to accommodate the latter. Furthermore, the table indicates that 48% of the respondents belonged to the 25-34 age group, 26% were aged between 18-24, 18% fell within the 35-49 age bracket, and 8% were 50 years and older. These findings demonstrate a diverse representation of age groups in the research, providing a comprehensive insight into the phenomenon under investigation. Additionally, the data reveals that the table indicates that 42% of the respondents had been in police custody for 2-3 months, 24% for 6 months or more, 18% for 6 weeks, and 16% for 1 month. These results indicate the participation of inmates across different durations of stay in the study.

Table 4: Encounter with the Nigerian Police

Details	Frequency	Percentage
Abuse by Police		
Yes	32	64
No	18	36
TOTAL	50	100
Slapped by Police		
Yes	31	62
No	19	38
TOTAL	50	100
Kicked by Police		
Yes	36	72
No	14	28
TOTAL	50	100
Beaten by Police		
Yes	36	72
No	14	28
TOTAL	50	100
Injured by Police		
Yes	33	66
No	17	34
TOTAL	50	100
Police pointed gun at you		
Yes	31	62
No	19	38
TOTAL	50	100
Police threatened to shoot you		
Yes	35	70
No	15	30
TOTAL	50	100
Sexually assaulted by Police		
Yes	2	4
No	48	96
TOTAL	50	100

Field Work (2025)

Table 4 illustrates that 64% of the participants concurred that they were subjected to physical abuse by the Nigerian law enforcement officers during apprehension and while in detention. Furthermore, 62% of the respondents reported been slapped by the police during their interactions with the Nigerian police, with an additional 72% admitted to been kicked by the police. The data also reveals that 72% of the individuals confirmed been beaten by the police, while 66% admitted to been injured. Moreover, 62% of the respondents disclosed been intimidated with the gun and the prospect of being shot, whereas 4% reported incidents of sexual assault. These findings highlight the systemic human rights violations perpetrated by the Nigerian police, disregarding both domestic legislation and international agreements condemning such acts of brutality and maltreatment. The research further delved into the types of weapons employed by law enforcement personnel in the abuse and mistreatment of detainees, beginning from the moment of arrest to their release. The ensuing section, Table 5, delineates the detainees' responses to these incidents.

Drawing upon extensive reports indicating that the Nigeria Police predominantly employ a confession-centric methodology in the execution of their investigative procedures, this research endeavor sought insights from individuals who have been in custody regarding the armaments and techniques employed to extract admissions from them. The findings presented in Table 5 delineate the accounts provided by detainees concerning the utilization of coercive measures during the course of their interrogation.

Table 5: Weapon deployed by the Police for eliciting information from those Arrested

Details	Frequency	Percentage
Baton		
Yes	33	66
No	17	34
TOTAL	50	100
Knife or other sharp object		
Yes	32	64
No	18	36
TOTAL	50	100
Rope, wire or horse whip		
Yes	32	64
No	18	36
TOTAL	50	100
Electric Iron, or Boiling Ring		
Yes	28	56
No	22	44
TOTAL	50	100
Others		
Yes	10	20
No	40	80
TOTAL	50	100

Field Work (2025)

Table 5 illustrates that 66% of the participants concurred with the assertion that the Nigeria police employ batons in their engagements, while 64% acknowledged the utilization of knives and other sharp implements such as machetes to elicit confessions prior to court proceedings. Additionally, 64% confirmed the use of materials like ropes, wires, and horsewhips during the investigative phase of their cases. The tabulated data further reveals that 56% of the respondents confirmed the presence of electric irons and boiling rings during their interactions, with 20% reporting instances of being suspended in the air by the Nigeria police during questioning. These findings demonstrate the varied arsenal of tactics employed by the Nigeria Police Force to extract confessions from individuals under arrest.

The types of injuries detainees received throughout their interrogation and stay in police detentions are shown in Table 6. Next, we looked at the psychological and physical repercussions of the police's ways of questioning arrestees.

Table 6: Injuries sustained by the Inmate in Police Custody

Details	Frequency	Percentage
Minor Scratches		
Yes	30	60
No	20	40
TOTAL	50	100
Severe cut or wound on the body		
Yes	34	68
No	16	32
TOTAL	50	100
Difficulty in breathing		
Yes	27	54
No	23	46
TOTAL	50	100
Serious head injury		
Yes	32	64
No	18	36
TOTAL	50	100
Broken arms and leg		
Yes	26	52
No	24	48
TOTAL	50	100
Lasting physical scars		
Yes	26	52
No	24	48
TOTAL	50	100

Field Work (2025)

Table 6 illustrates that 68% of the participants experienced severe lacerations or injuries on their physique following an interaction with law enforcement, while 54% encountered breathing difficulties and some even lost consciousness during the said encounter. Moreover, 64% of the respondents reported sustaining head trauma subsequent to their engagement with the police. The data further indicates that 52% of the individuals confirmed fractures in their limbs due to police involvement, 60% exhibited minor abrasions, and a considerable portion displayed enduring physical marks on their bodies. The table highlights the fact that a significant percentage of the respondents have been burdened with persistent physical and health complications as a result of the actions of the Nigerian police towards inmates.

This are just few evidences that we could get on issues bordering on police brutality of inmates. There are numerous cases of police brutality and human right abuse that goes on in the Southeast zone, unnoticed and off record. It is shameful that a country like Nigeria, is still laden with such menace, despite the promulgation of the new Police Act. The issue then is not in new Act, but in proper orientation of these men in uniform. Training packages for the police should be upgraded to make sure that ethics and values are probably inculcated in the mind and heart of every police officer in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Despite the enactment of the new Police Act in 2020, and the dissolution of the controversial SARS, Nigerians still experience untold brutality from the hands of officers of the Nigerian police force on regular basis, at checkpoint, in the market, and even at the police custody. This study focused on examining how the Nigerian Police Act of 2020 have reduced police brutality and human right abuse in Southeast, Nigeria. The study posed the question, Does poor adherence to section 19 on training of police officers account for abuse of police power in Southeast Nigeria? The study discovered that there is first limited training programs for the Nigerian police and also there is continues police brutality in the Southeast geo-political zone, even after the enactment of the new police Act.

Recommendation

In the light of the findings of this study, we recommend that

- The Police personnel need to be better trained, equipped and motivated. Better training will upgrade them to the standard of international best practices. If Nigeria fails to do that, they will keep rebranding the Act, without rebranding the people, and therefore getting the same result.
- The Nigerian Police officers and men who violate human rights should be held fully accountable by the legal system. The federal government should use its authority under the 1999 Constitution and the Police Act, which specify the responsibilities of the Nigeria Police and the consequences for breaking the rules, to take the necessary legal action.

Failure to do this, can led to a more aggressive reaction from the masses, like the #EndSARS protest. This is because tension have started building already.

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