

'POLICE IS YOUR FRIEND': A MYTH OR A REALITY IN NIGERIA?***Abstract**

The police are the principal law enforcement agency responsible for maintaining public order, enforcing laws, preventing and investigating crimes, protecting lives and property. The police play a crucial role in ensuring public safety and upholding the rule of law. The slogan 'Police is your friend' is widely used in Nigeria to project a positive image of the police force. However, persistent reports of police misconduct, brutality, and corruption raise questions about the authenticity of this claim. This paper explored the origins and intended purpose of the slogan, which aim to promote a positive image of the Nigeria Police Force and foster trust and cooperation between the police and the public. The paper also explored the relationship between the police and the public by analyzing factors such as police misconduct, corruption, abuse of power, and human rights violations, which contribute to widespread distrust in law enforcement. This study aimed at examining whether the slogan is a genuine reflection of the Nigeria police force commitment to public service or a myth that fails to capture the prevailing issues in Nigerian policing. This paper found out that there is a complex and nuanced reality that highlights a significant gap between the idealized image of the Nigeria Police Force and the lived experiences of many citizens. The paper recommended that there should be a transformation of the slogan 'Police is your friend' into a practical reality. It further recommended that there should be a proper police reform with enhanced police training focused on human rights and community-oriented policing, increased transparency and accountability within the Nigeria Police Force, and strengthening community-police partnerships.

Keywords: Police, Police Reform, human right, Abuse of Power

1. Introduction

The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) is an important security outfit of the federal government of Nigeria,¹ saddled with the responsibilities of taking charge of the internal security of the country, maintaining order and enforcing the laws as contained in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999(as amended). The Nigeria Police Force was established to protect lives and property, uphold the rule of law, prevent and detect crime.² The Police are entrusted with extensive powers in Nigeria, which can have far reaching effects or consequences on the lives of individuals. These powers if misused can result in severe human rights violations. Despite its mandate, the force has struggled with issues of trust and public perception. The slogan 'Police is your friend' was introduced to improve this image. Studies have shown that many Nigerians perceive the police as corrupt and prone to violence.

Incidents of extrajudicial killings, extortion, and harassment have further damaged the reputation of the NPF. The EndSARS³ protests in October 2020 brought global attention to these issues, highlighting widespread dissatisfaction with the police. Nigerians are highly distrustful of the police, with many people viewing them more as 'predators than protectors.'⁴ The Nigeria Police Force's reputation among the people is in tatters and has been so for many decades. Citizens do not trust in the police abilities to protect them; rather they are confident that their rights would be abused by the Police. Policing is critical to the safety of the society; the task of the Police is maintaining law, order and general cohesion in the state. The Police in executing its detecting and preventing crimes are also required by domestic and international law to protect and preserve the human rights of citizens.⁵ The gap between the slogan Police is your friend and the lived experiences of many Nigerians raises concerns about police conduct, accountability, and the effectiveness of reforms aimed at addressing these issues. This paper is set to explore whether 'Police is your friend' is a reality in Nigeria or remains a myth. It addresses public perceptions, instances of police misconduct, and the impact of reforms, offering insights into ways to improve police-public relations in Nigeria.

2. Conceptual Clarification**The Police**

The police is an indispensable institution of social control and maintenance of peace and stability.⁶ The police are a body of officers representing the civil authority of government.⁷ Police has been defined as the governmental department charged with the preservation of public order, the promotion of public safety, and the prevention and detection of crime.⁸

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¹ JU Eke, 'State Police: A Prerequisite for Effective Security in Nigeria' (2021) (8) (3) *Uzu Journal*, 45

²² Police Act 2020, s 4 and 5

³ A Uwazuruike, 'An Evaluation of Successes and Failures One Year Later' (2021) *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, 1

⁴ O Fatoyinbo, 'Psychology of Transformation: Torture and the Nigeria Police' (2019) <file:///C:/Users/NCC/Downloads/ssrn-3593532.pdf> accessed 31st October 2024

⁵ *Ibid*, p 1

⁶ A J Olusegun, 'Crime Control in Nigeria: The Odds against the Police' (2013) (3)(5) *Research Journal of Social Science and Management*, 20

⁷ WF Walsh and EJ Donovan, 'Private Security and Community policing: Evaluation and Comment' (1989) (17), *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 188.

⁸ B A Garner, T Jackson and J Newman (eds), *Black's Law Dictionary – 8th Edition* (St. Paul MN: West, 2004) p.1196.

The Nigeria Police Force a creation of the Constitution. The constitution says; there shall be a police force for Nigeria, which shall be known as the Nigeria Police Force, and subject to the provisions of this section no other police force shall be established for the Federation or any part thereof.⁹

Abuse of Power

The Police are entrusted with extensive powers in Nigeria that can have far-reaching effects or consequences on the lives of individuals. These powers if misused can result in severe human rights violations. Abuse of power is the misuse of power by someone in a position of authority who can use the leverage they have to oppress persons in an inferior position or to induce them to commit a wrongful act¹⁰. Over the years, Nigeria has experienced numerous serious incidents of police abuse of power, reflecting deep-seated issues within the law enforcement system. These abuses often involve violations of human rights, corruption, arbitrary arrests, unlawful detention, and extrajudicial practices. According to Barker¹¹ police abuse of power or authority conferred on them by the state refers to: 'any action by a police officer without regard to motive, intent or malice that tends to injure, insult, trespass upon human dignity, manifest feelings of inferiority and/or violates an inherent legal right of a member of the police constituency in the course of performing police Work.'

3. The Scope of Police Powers and Duties

By scope of police powers and duties we mean the range or the limit,¹² the extent of the jurisdictional competence of their powers and duties. The same laws that entrust duties on the Police also vest them with the powers with which to carry out those duties. The duties of the Nigeria Police refer to the specific roles and responsibilities the police force is expected to carry out to maintain public safety, enforce laws, and uphold justice. These duties are legally defined and are essential to the functioning of society. The duties of the Nigeria Police Force cover a broad range of responsibilities essential for maintaining law,¹³ order, and security across the country. The legal framework provides a basis for these duties and this duty demands that the police compel the citizens to obey laid down laws.¹⁴ The duties of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) are prescribed by the Constitution of Nigeria and various statutes such as the Police Act, which outlines the roles and responsibilities of the police in maintaining law and order.

General Duties and Responsibilities -

Under the Police Act 2020¹⁵, the Nigerian Police Force is entrusted with several general duties, which include:

- 1) **Prevention and Detection of Crimes:** The primary responsibility of the Nigerian Police is to prevent and detect crimes. This involves taking proactive measures to reduce crime rates and conducting investigations to identify and apprehend offenders.
- 2) **Protection of Lives and Property:** The Police are empowered to protect the lives and property of all citizens. This responsibility includes responding to emergencies, preventing violence, and maintaining public order.
- 3) **Maintenance of Public Order:** The Act mandates the Police to ensure that public order is maintained. This includes managing protests, public gatherings, and other activities that may disrupt peace.
- 4) **Prosecution of Offenders:** The Police have the authority to prosecute offenders in court. This includes gathering evidence, preparing charges, and representing the state in criminal proceedings.
- 5) **The due enforcement of law regulations with which they are directly charged.**

The major powers of the Police are: Power to conduct prosecution;¹⁶ Power to arrest with or without warrant;¹⁷ Power to serve summons;¹⁸ Power to grant bail;¹⁹ Power to search suspected premises;²⁰ Power to take fingerprints;²¹ Power to conduct identification parade;²² Power to conduct investigation and to question anybody in relation to a crime committed;²³ Power to prevent crime;²⁴ Power to control and regulate traffic;²⁵ Power to regulate public order, procession and assemblies;²⁶ and Power to use force and firearms.²⁷

⁹CFRN 1999, s 214(1)

¹⁰B A Garner, *et al*, *Black's Law Dictionary* (8thedn, St. Paul MN: West,2004), p.1347

¹¹T Barker, *Police ethics: Crisis in Law Enforcement* (2006, Illinois, USA: Charles C. Thomas Publishers Ltd), 120

¹²Merriam Webster, *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of English Usage* (Springfield, Mass: Merriam-Webster Inc 1994) 506

¹³T Akuul, 'The Role of the Nigerian Police Force in Maintaining Peace and Security in Nigeria' (2011) (3) *Journal of Social Science and Public Policy*, 19

¹⁴NJ Madubuike-Ekwe and OK Obayemi, 'Assessment of the Role of the Nigerian Police Force in the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Nigeria' (2019) (23) (1) *Annual survey of International & Comparative Law*, 27

¹⁵Police Act 2020, s 4

¹⁶Police Act 2020, s 66

¹⁷*Ibid*, s 32 & 38

¹⁸Police Act 2020, s 65

¹⁹*Ibid*, s 62&63

²⁰Police Act 2020, s49

²¹*Ibid*, s 68

²²AF Afolayan, *Criminal Litigation in Nigeria* (3rdedn, Enugu: Chenglo Law Publication Ltd, 2016),32

²³Police Act 2020, s 31

²⁴*Ibid*, s 4

²⁵Police Act 2020, s 4 (g)

²⁶*Ibid*, s 83(1)

²⁷Police Force Order 237, s 3, Firearms Act, s 38, Nigeria police Regulation 41

4. Human Rights Violations by the Police

Human Rights are rights possessed by all persons by virtue of their common humanity to live a life of freedom and dignity, they constitute those rights which one has precisely because of being a human.²⁸ However, the police in the application of their powers, human rights are often violated. The Nigeria Police is fast becoming viler than the menace which it was created to combat. Ranging from extortion and physical assault to extrajudicial killings, the enormity of Police misuse and abuse of their powers cannot be overemphasized.²⁹ The Nigeria police have been seen in numerous human rights violations, often under the pretext of maintaining law and order. Particularly during law enforcement activities such as arrests, detentions, interrogations, and crowd control. These infringements often involve violations of constitutional rights, as well as rights protected under international human rights instruments. The consistent pattern of these violations has drawn criticism from both national and international human rights organizations, which have called for reforms to ensure that the police operate within the bounds of the law and respect the fundamental rights of citizens. The police are required to balance the freedom of the individual with the need to prevent and detect crime and, the preservation of law and order.³⁰ The police abuse of their discretion and mandated powers invariably results in the violation of the human rights of citizens. Below are the rights most subjected to wanton abuses and infringements by the police in Nigeria:

The Right to Life: The right to life is provided for under the 1999 Constitution,³¹ stating that no one shall be deprived intentionally or arbitrarily of his life. The right to life is the mother of all rights and the foundation for the enjoyment of all other rights. Without life, the pursuit of other rights would be in vain. It ranks highest as against any other right.³² The Nigeria police have been involved in extrajudicial killings, where individuals are killed by law enforcement officers without lawful justification. These killings often occur during protests, police raids, or while in police custody. These violations range from extra-judicial killing to torture and unlawful detention. An example is the EndSARS protests in 2020 which highlighted widespread cases of police brutality, including unlawful killings by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS).

Right to Freedom from Torture, Inhuman, and Degrading Treatment: The right to dignity of the human person is provided by the Constitution.³³ It specifically prohibits torture, inhuman or degrading treatment. The Constitution forbids slavery or servitude and all forms of forced or compulsory labor. There have been numerous reports of the Nigeria police using torture and other forms of inhuman or degrading treatment to extract confessions from suspects or as a form of punishment, like in the case of *General of Police v. Ezeanya*.³⁴ In this case, the Supreme Court of Nigeria addressed issues related to the unlawful detention and degrading treatment of the respondent by the police. The court reaffirmed the importance of respecting human rights and condemned the inhuman treatment meted out by the police.

Right to Personal Liberty: Nigerian Constitution guarantees the right to personal liberty, stating that no one shall be deprived of their liberty except in accordance with the procedure permitted by law.³⁵ The constitution in protecting the lives of persons means that no person shall be deprived of his liberty by confinement in prison or otherwise except by due process of law. The provision recognizes the occasional need for detention of persons pending trial, but places a limit on the duration of such detention.³⁶ It also requires quick disposition of cases.³⁷ Also a person accused of an offense is entitled to be brought to trial within a reasonable time.³⁸ Reasonable time is defined to mean a period of one day if there is a court of competent jurisdiction within a radius of forty kilometers or a period of two days in other cases.³⁹ Although the police are empowered to arrest persons suspected of committing criminal offences, evidence shows that this power is widely abused by them. For example, the case of *Eze v. Inspector-General of Police*,⁴⁰ the appellant was detained for an extended period without being brought before a court. The Court of Appeal ruled that this detention violated his right to liberty and awarded damages for the breach. The police have over relied on constitutional exceptions to indiscriminately arrest and detain innocent citizens. In Nigeria, most arrests effected by the police are hardly based on any reasonable suspicion of the victims having committed a criminal offence. All the constitutional safeguards provided in Section 35 are obeyed in breach.

²⁸R Mamta, *Burning Issues of Human Rights* (Delhi: Kalpaz Publications 2001), 37.

²⁹J Emerson, 'Corruption and Human Rights Abuses by the Nigeria Police Force' (2010) Human Rights Watch <https://www.hrw.org/report/2010/08/17/everyones-game/corruption-and-human-rights-abuses-nigeria-police-force> accessed on 31st October 2024.

³⁰A Madaki, *The Nigerian Police Force and the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Nigeria*, (2012) *COM. & INDUS. L.J.* 302

³¹ CFRN 1999, s 33

³²BG Ramcharan, *The Right to Life in International Law* (1985) < https://books.google.com.ng/books/about/The_Right_to_Life_in_International_Law.html?id=m-ClrnLNj-8C&redir_esc=y > accessed 28th October 2024.

³³ CFRN 1999, s 34

³⁴ [2021] LPELR-55647(SC)

³⁵ CFRN 1999, s 35(1)

³⁶*Ibid*, s 35 (4)(a)-(b)

³⁷ CFRN 1999, s 294(1)

³⁸ CFRN 1999, s 35 (4)(a)-(b)

³⁹*Ibid*, s 35(5)(a)-(b)

⁴⁰ [2017] LPELR-41988(CA).

Right to Fair Hearing: The right to fair hearing is contained in the Constitution⁴¹, it provides that: 'In the determination of his civil rights and obligations including any question or determination by or against any government or authority a person shall be entitled to a fair hearing within a reasonable time by a court or other tribunal established by law constituted in such a manner as to secure its independence and impartiality.'

Under this right, the twin pillars of justice are established: that a man must be given an opportunity of presenting his own side of a case (*audi alterem partem*) and that a man should not be the judge of his own cause (*nemo iudex in causa sua*). In the performance of their duties, the police have to some extent violated some or most of the attributes of this right. For example, the police have powers of bail regulated by the Constitution⁴² and the ACJA.⁴³ The police officers do not abide by this provision of the law. Although there are posters and signs indicating that bail is free, accused persons or their relatives are made to pay money to police officers in order to secure bail. In spite of such warnings, corruption of the bail process at the police stations still persists.⁴⁴ Section 36(6) requires any arrested person be informed promptly in the language that he understands and in detail of the nature of the offence, and that he be given adequate time and facilities for the preparation of his defense. Unfortunately, research conducted by the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies shows a gross abuse of this right by the police. The report, therefore, reveals that 73.6% of those arrested were not informed of the details of the nature of the offence at the time of their arrest.⁴⁵

Right to Freedom of Expression: Freedom of expression is universally recognized as a fundamental human right of great importance. It is paramount in every civilized society as its protection by a state is a yardstick for sustainable democracy.⁴⁶ Freedom of expression promotes democracy rule of law, accountability in governance and protection of human rights. The Constitution⁴⁷ of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended), apart from outlining the role of the press, guarantees freedom of expression as a fundamental right. The Nigerian police have frequently targeted journalists and bloggers who publish content of the government or its officials. These arrests are often carried out without due process, violating the individuals' right to freedom of expression. Example on 26 October 2020 the National Broadcasting Commission fined three television stations, namely Channels Television, Arise Television and Africa Independent Television, each three million naira for unprofessional coverage of the end SARS protests and On 10 September 2020 the police in Lagos had arrested four journalists, alongside 14 protesters, during a peaceful protest.⁴⁸

5. Public Perception of the Nigeria Police

The police institution is a generic human service establishment saddled principally with the task of safeguarding internal security and safety in almost civil societies. In Nigeria, the police are officials of government and society, responsible for the prevention and control of crimes and disorders as well as the detection, apprehension and prosecution of perpetrators of crimes and violence in the country.⁴⁹ The police service is a delicate balancing act between maintaining law and order as mandated by the government for employers towards safeguarding the public interest of the citizens. As such, there is probably no other security control organization that has an intimate dealing with the large segment of the Nigerian populace as the police. However, the police and police work present an alternate image to the generality of the people in the country. This is because the police in Nigeria have always been viewed and characterized as brutal, corrupt and ineffective.⁵⁰ The relationship between the police and the public in Nigeria is characterized by deep-seated mistrust and fear. Widespread reports of harassment, unlawful arrests, extortion, and excessive use of force contribute to a negative perception of law enforcement. High-profile incidents, such as the EndSARS protests in 2020⁵¹ against the Special Anti-Robbery Squad's (SARS) abuses, brought global attention to the systemic issues within the police force. These events have fueled skepticism about the authenticity of the claim that the police are indeed 'friends' of the people.

Thus, the prevailing belief is that the police are not likely to be effective in crime abatement, prevention and control or at least reduce the incidence of crime in the community at large. On account of these, the Nigeria public is unwilling to cooperate with the police. The police have no good rapport with members of the public whose support and co-operation is necessary for effective law enforcement. There is also the problem of widespread corruption. It is commonly believed that the Nigerian Police performs their lawful duties to members of the public only after they have been bribed or paid to do so. One dangerous consequence of this is the frequent perversion of justice through the suppression of cases of

⁴¹ CRFN 1999, s 36

⁴² CFRN 199, s (35)4

⁴³ ACJA 2015, s 30(1)

⁴⁴ VA Mpmugo, 'The Role of the Nigerian Police in Human Rights Protection and Enforcement' (1996) *Abia State Law Journal*, 43

⁴⁵ NJ Madubuike-Ekwe, and OK Obayemi, 'Assessment of the Role of the Nigerian Police Force in the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Nigeria' (2019) *Academic Journals at GGU Law Digital Commons*, 34

⁴⁶ IJ Udofia, 'Right to Freedom of Expression and the Law of Defamation in Nigeria' (2011) 2 *International Journal of Legal Studies & Governance*, 80

⁴⁷ CFRN 1999, s 39 (1)

⁴⁸ OM Okpodu, 'Evaluation of Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists in Nigeria' (2022) *American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research (AJHSSR)*, 128

⁴⁹ EEO Alemika, 'Colonialism, State and Policing in Nigeria: Crime (1993) *Journal of Law and Social Change*, 205

⁵⁰ JO Ajayi1 and O Longe, Public Perception of the Police and Crime Prevention in Nigeria (2015) *British Journal of Education, Society & Behavioural Science*, 146

⁵¹ M Jones, 'Nigeria's EndSars protests: What happened next' (2021) <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-58817690>> accessed 6th November 2024

persons who are unable or unwilling to settle them.⁵² The police is accused of extra-judicial killings, abuse of human rights, falsification of evidence, extortion, bribery, and non-challance toward the public.⁵³ An instance is the case of *Inspector General of Police (IGP) & Anor v. Agbinone & Ors.*⁵⁴ This is a significant case heard by the Court of Appeal in Nigeria, focusing on issues of unlawful arrest and detention, police brutality, and the enforcement of fundamental human rights. The Court of Appeal upheld the decision of the lower court, finding that the arrest and detention of the respondents by the police were indeed unlawful and a clear violation of their fundamental rights under the Nigerian Constitution. Public perception of the Nigeria police is generally negative due to persistent issues with corruption, brutality, and inefficiency. Efforts to improve this image are ongoing, though many citizens remain skeptical, especially in the absence of deep structural changes and accountability reforms.

6. Police Reforms in Nigeria

Police reform refers to changes and improvements made to a police force to address issues such as misconduct, inefficiency, corruption, and lack of accountability. Several reforms have been proposed and implemented to address the challenges facing the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), though the impact of these reforms are yet to be seen. The focus of these reforms includes reducing corruption, increasing accountability, improving training, and fostering a more community-oriented approach to policing. Efforts to reform the NPF and improve its relationship with the public have been ongoing. For instance, the introduction of community policing initiatives, reforms in the Police Act 2020,⁵⁵ it makes provision for both divisional and state community policing committee. The Act encourages community policing as a way to foster trust between the police and citizens. Also the disbandment of SARS⁵⁶ represents attempts to align police practices with the values embodied by the slogan. While reforms such as the disbandment of SARS have been welcomed, their impact on police behavior has been limited. Despite these efforts, the extent to which these reforms have succeeded in changing public perception and curbing police excesses remains unseen. Also the establishment of **Police Trust Fund Act** on 24 June 2019, this law aimed at securing adequate funding for police operations, training, and equipment.⁵⁷ The fund is supported by contributions from federal allocations, private sector contributions, and other sources.⁵⁸ Also the **National Human Rights Commission, 2010 (NHRC)**, The NHRC oversees human rights violations, including those involving police officers.⁵⁹ Section 6(1) of its enabling law gives the Commission the power to conduct its investigations and inquiries in such manner as it considers appropriate on any human right abuses. While numerous reforms have been implemented, public skepticism remains high, with many Nigerians viewing these changes as surface-level or inadequately enforced. For true transformation, reforms must go beyond announcements and into actionable, transparent policies that consistently hold officers accountable, improve working conditions, and prioritize human rights. Sustained political will, funding, and independent oversight are also essential for meaningful change within the NPF.

7. 'Police is your Friend': A Myth or Reality?

The slogan 'Police is your friend' has been a longstanding motto of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), aimed at portraying the police as protectors and allies of the public.⁶⁰ This phrase is meant to encourage citizens to see the police as approachable, trustworthy, and committed to ensuring public safety. However, the reality for many Nigerians often contradicts this ideal, as numerous cases of police misconduct, corruption, brutality, and abuse of power have been reported over the years. Instances are, on the 20th of June, 2021 when a Police Inspector stormed a residential estate in Enugu State and indiscriminately opened fire on the people and the incident led to the passing of five while four persons were seriously injured. Also, in 2023 two police men were seen in viral video demanding money from a Dutch woman rider at Ojongbodu area along Iseyin Ogbomosho Road in Oyo State.⁶¹ Also a case of Onyeka Ibe, who was killed on 5 April 2023 in Delta state for refusing to pay hundred-naira bribe to the police and so many reported and unreported cases.

The attitude of the police and the way it carries out its activities therefore form part of the criteria by which they are judged, the Nigeria Police Force falls short of optimum performance.⁶² Consequently, in the course of performing its statutory functions to the larger community, the Nigeria police have often been indicted in several ways. This is manifest

⁵² O OLUKU, 'Public Perception of the Nigerian Police' (2023) <<https://publications.jostar.org.ng/sites/default/files/-12/pdf>> accessed 6th November 2024

⁵³ JC Onwunirima, 'Police Brutality and Violation of Human Rights in Nigeria- Causes and Implications' (2022) 10(2) *Global Journal of Politics and Law Research*, 19

⁵⁴ [2019] LPELR-46431(CA)

⁵⁵ Police Act 2020, s 113

⁵⁶ BBC News, SARS ban: Nigeria abolishes loathed federal special police unit (2020) <<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-54499497>> accessed 6th November 2024

⁵⁷ O Sani and M Ekewenu, 'The Nigerian Police Trust Fund (Establishment) Act: Matters Arising and Way Forward' (2024) <<https://www.mondaq.com/nigeria/tax-authorities/1501824/the-nigerian-police-trust-fund-establishment-act-matters-arising-and-way-forward>> accessed 6th November 2024

⁵⁸ Police Trust Fund Act 2019, s 4 (1)(a) and (b)

⁵⁹ National Human Rights Commission of Nigeria

<file:///C:/Users/PC/Downloads/NHRC-Nigeria_UPR17_NGA_E_Main.pdf> accessed 2nd November, 2024

⁶⁰ Tolu, Throwback Thursday: The Police is your Friend (2018) <<https://unravelwithtolu.com/throwback-thursday-the-police-is-your-friend/>> accessed 6th November 2024.

⁶¹ Punch Newspaper, 'Cops Demand Money from Foreign Female Biker' (2023) <<https://punchng.com/video-cops-demand-money-from-foreign-female-biker/>> accessed 6th November 2024

⁶² A Ogunwale, 'Victims Propensity to Report Crime to the Police: A Case of Masaka in Karu Local Government Area of Nasarawa State' (2004) 2 (1) *Journal of State and Society*, 76

in the widespread inefficiency, corruption, unfairness in dealing with suspects, occasional over-use of legitimate force, bad temper, bullying and other abuses of citizen's rights with impunity. Till date, despite the constitutional powers granted the police to maintain public tranquility, safety and general security in Nigeria, the quality of crime prevention and control is nothing to write home about. Police officers are accused of brutality, abuse of human rights, aiding and abetting of criminal activities and engaging in bribery and corruption.⁶³ The police institution in Nigeria still has a long way to go in meeting its expectations especially in the areas of crime prevention and detection.⁶⁴ The police are often not polite to victims of crime, because they are treated as mere sources of crime evidence and not as human beings. Most violent conflicts had occurred due to the ineptitude and inefficiency in the performance of police statutory duties. The ordinary man on the street greets them with fear and hatred, perceives them as inept and high-handed and never sees them as allies or friends of the people.⁶⁵ Presently, Nigeria is suffering from a growing crime-problem, which is progressively threatening its sovereignty, security and development.⁶⁶ Despite the constitutional powers granted the police to maintain general security, public safety and peace, the quality of security provided by them has nothing to be proud of. Their roles in many cases denigrate the law, endangering the citizens and blotting the institutional reputation of the police that they represent.

The slogan 'Police is your friend' is widely perceived as more of a myth than reality and this is due to persistent issues with corruption, brutality, and lack of accountability. Until a proper police reform occurs, the slogan may continue to feel like empty words for many Nigerians.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

The slogan 'Police is your friend' remains more of a myth than a reality for many Nigerians. The gap between public expectations and police conduct indicates a need for more comprehensive reforms that go beyond slogans. The slogan Police is your friend continues to face challenges in becoming a reality in Nigeria. While some reforms have been made, systemic issues within the NPF hinder progress. Implementing more robust accountability measures, addressing deep-rooted issues such as corruption, adequate training is crucial for transforming the NPF, embracing technology, and fostering community-oriented policing are essential steps towards transforming the police into a true friend of the people. The paper makes the following recommendations:

- i. Strengthen Accountability Mechanisms: Establish independent bodies to investigate and prosecute police misconduct.
- ii. Adopt Technology to Monitor Police Conduct: Implement the use of body cameras, AI surveillance, Forensic Technology, Public complaint system and digital reporting systems for tracking police activities.
- iii. Reform Police Training Programs: Include ethics, human rights, and community engagement in police training curricula.
- iv. Enhance Community Policing Efforts: Foster partnerships between the police and local communities to rebuild trust and encourage collaborative crime prevention.
- v. Increase Public Awareness of Rights: Educate citizens on their legal rights when interacting with law enforcement.
- vi. The police should work relentlessly towards redeeming their public image of underperforming, immodest brutality and use of predatory force and ineffective policing strategies.
- vii. Reward System: Finally, the police should put together a proper reward system to encourage honest and diligent members of the Force. Same measure should go to members of the public who are bold enough to provide useful information that can help in addressing the security and criminal issues in the society.

⁶³O Oluku, 'The Public Perception of the Nigerian Police Force: A Study of Uvwie Local Government Area of Delta State' (2023) <<https://publications.jostar.org/ng/sites/default/files/-12/pdf>>accessed 6th September 2024

⁶⁴DI Okoye, 'Nigerian Police and Competence Challenge in Tackling Insecurity in the Country (2024) Vol 4, *Journal of Psychology and Behavioural Disciplines*, 41

⁶⁵NOI Polls, 'Police Brutality Poll' (2020) <<https://noi-polls.com/police-brutality-poll/>> accessed on 4th November 2024.

⁶⁶EEO Alemika, 'Rethinking Crime Prevention and Crime Control Approaches in Nigeria' (2012) *Journal of the Nigerian Sociological Society*, 86