

**AWARENESS AND DISPOSITION OF NIGERIAN POLICE TO
FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE
PROTECTION OF NIGERIAN CITIZENS**

**YAYI Timothy Opeyemi, YUSUF AbdulRaheem, AKINSEMOYIN Lasbat
Salewa and IYEKOLO Alexander .O.**

Department of Social Science Education, University of Ilorin

And

ABILAGBO, Joel Temitayo

College of Education, Ila Orangun, Osun State

Abstract

Human rights, which lends credence to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, aims at protecting the rights of every individual regardless of age, race, religion and sex. Several indices, today point to the fact that these rights are being violated especially by the Nigerian Police. This study, therefore, investigated the awareness and disposition of the Nigerian citizens. A descriptive survey research method was employed for the study. The sample size of 120 Police men and women were selected through simple random sampling techniques. 20 Police officers were selected each from divisions A-F in Ilorin. An instrument tagged “Questionnaire on Awareness and Disposition of Nigerian Police to Human Rights Protection of Nigerian Citizens (QDNPHRPNC)” was used. Findings of the study reveals that the majority of the police are aware of human rights issues while they have a bid attitude to it. Qualification influenced their disposition to human rights protection of citizens while working experience did not influence their disposition to it. Based on the findings, it was recommended that there is the need to orientate and re-orientate the police on civic learning, especially, human

rights should be published and made available to police officers and human rights commissions should also intensify their efforts in checkmating the excessiveness of police on human rights protection of citizen.

Keyword: Human Rights, Awareness, Nigerian citizens, Police Disposition

Introduction

The issue of human rights vis-à-vis its violation has been on the front burner, recently. While many believe the human rights activists are resting on their oars, some are of the opinion that the police who are meant to be the vanguard of democracy and ultimately entrench it are relenting or not even knowledgeable in it. Equality human rights (2017) viewed human rights as the basic rights and freedom that are reposed in everybody in the world, from birth until death, regardless of ethnicity age, religion or ideology. Similarly, the United Nations Human Rights (n.d) defines human rights as rights inherent to all human beings, whatever their nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. Everybody is entitled to rights without discrimination.

These rights are inalienable and they hinge on values like dignity, equality, respect, independence, etc. Human rights find provision in the law of every country and universally in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It could be in the forms of treaties, customary, international law, and general guidelines. International human rights set out standards for Government to act in certain ways or to abstain from certain deeds, so as to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals or groups. The blueprint by the international community with its 30 articles serves as the foundation for contemporary societies to enact freedom, justice/fairness and peace, thereby reducing man's inhumanity to man which has plagued the early 20th Century.

Stemming from the universal declaration, human rights, in Nigerian for instance, find expression in fundamental human rights as contained under Chapter IV, Section 33 to 44 of the 1999 constitution. These include: Right to life- Everybody has a right to life, and no one shall be deprived intentionally of his life, except in execution of a criminal offence of which he has been established in Nigerian: Right to dignity of human person- Every individual is entitled to respect for the dignity of person and accordingly, no person shall be under torture or degrading treatment. Right to personal liberty-Every person shall be deprived of such liberty; Right to fair hearing- In the determination of a person's civil rights and obligations, every person shall be entitled to fair hearing , Right to private and family life- The privacy of citizens, their homes, correspondence and telephone conversations is guaranteed and protected; Right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion – Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief; Right to freedom of expression and the press- Every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions; Right to peaceful assembly and association – Every person shall be entitled to assemble freely and associate with other persons pr political party. Right to freedom of movement - Every citizen shall in Nigeria is entitled to move freely throughout Nigeria and to reside in any part thereof; Right to freedom from discrimination- No Nigerian shall be discriminated upon on the basis of community ethnic group, sex, place of origin and political opinion; Right to acquire and own immovable property anywhere in Nigeria – Every Citizen shall have right to own immovable property anywhere in Nigeria; Right against compulsion in acquisition of property.

Nigeria Police being an instrument of the state and government are meant to protect lives and property of citizens, maintain law and order in the society, protect rights of individual and also prosecute offenders. Several reports of human rights violations by the police are reported on a daily basis in the dailies and other media.

One tends to ask questions whether the police are either not aware of these human rights issues or they just have a bad attitude to it. It is in the light of this that the awareness and disposition of Nigerian Police to human rights protection of Nigerian citizens was investigated in this study.

Statement of the Problem

Despite numerous roles of the Nigerian Police, there have been several indices of police unrest. Police is not just an establishment under the law but the vanguard of security in all ramifications within the society. The sacred position of the police has been dented with various atrocities and complacency to the rule of law. Human rights watch (2016) reports that in 2015 that there have been allegations of heavy-handed and abusive response to the insurgency by security forces. Many wounded citizens have been detained under bad conditions for suspected membership or provision of support for Boko haram. Excessive uses of force, inadequate citizens' protection have characterized the security personnel in Nigeria.

Few indications point to the fact that police and other security involved in human rights abuse are prosecuted, except for the soldiers who are prosecuted in their military tribunal for offences like mutiny, insubordination, to mention but a few. Makwerere, Chinzete and Musorowegemo (2012) all investigate human rights and policing in Zimbabwe. They found out that police officers are responsible for some of the most serious human rights and rule of law violations in Zimbabwe today. Their attitude to it is nonchalant.

Okeshola, (2013) was of the view that there has been committal human rights abuses by the police against members of the citizenry which they ought to protect and suggested that the police need training and retraining in the area of human rights. She found out that out of a lot of factors associated with police human rights abuse, poor training accounted for 21% which is the major reason for human rights violation. This boils down to their being not aware. Similarly, Ademu

(2011) posited that the Nigeria police force engage in massacre, planting evidence, burying suspects in shallow graves, poor keeping of records of people in custody whether knowing they are violating human rights issues or not.

Most police officers today are either not aware of human rights laws or they have a bad attitude to it. They sometimes fail to adhere to legally inclined modalities like telling the accused his offence before arrest, not holding persons in custody more than 24 hours before charging them for an offence, etc. supporting these claims, a study by Nigerian Human Rights Commission and the centre for Law Enforcement (2000) stated that almost 80% of inmates in Nigerian prisons claim to have been beaten by police and threatened with weapons.

Discussing human rights within the police, Helsinki Citizens' Assembly Vanador Office (2014) noted that the core reason underlying violations of human rights in the police-citizen relations is the low level of legal awareness of citizens particularly in rural communities. Safeguarding the life and property of citizens is one of the basic responsibilities of the government in all societies. By establishing and maintaining an efficient and effective police force, government provides a feeling of security to its citizens. It is against the backdrop of the traces of human rights violations by the police and literatures available that makes this study imperative. Hence, the perceived gap. Few literatures available on awareness and disposition of Nigerian police make this study of paramount importance. Some studies like Makwerere, Chinzete and Musorowegemo (2012) are foreign-based, hence the need to carry out a study In Nigeria.

Research Questions

In order to give focus to this study, the following research questions were raised:

1. What is the awareness level of Nigerian police to human rights protection of Nigerian citizens?

2. What is the disposition of Nigerian police to human rights protection of Nigerian citizens?

Research Hypothesis

To guide this study, the following null hypothesis was formulated:

1. There is no significant difference in the disposition of Nigerian Police to Human rights protection of Nigerian citizens on the basis of qualifications.
2. There is no significant difference in the disposition of Nigerian Police to human rights protection of Nigerian citizens on the basis of working experience.

Method

The study employed a descriptive survey research type. Due to the study's inability to cover all the police in Nigerian, the descriptive survey research type was adjudged suitable and relevant. The target population was all police officers in Ilorin metropolis. The study adopted a simple random sampling technique to select 120 respondents from the six police divisions (A-F) in Ilorin. Twenty police officers were sampled from each division. These respondents comprise all cadres of Nigerian police in Ilorin. The instrument that was used to elicit responses from the respondents was an item questionnaire, tagged "Questionnaire on Awareness and Disposition of Nigerian Police to Human Rights Protection of Nigerian Citizens (QADNPHRPNC)" comprising two sections. Section A sought personal information of the officers while section B focused on police awareness about fundamental human rights and section C focused on police disposition to human rights issues as regards the protection of Nigerian citizens. A Four-point Likert scale of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD) constitute the response rubrics for Section C while rating scale of 'aware' and 'not aware' were used for Section B.

The content validity of the instrument used in this study was ascertained through three experts in the Department of Social Sciences Education, University of Ilorin; One in psychology of Education and the others in Social Studies Education. Their corrections were used for the final draft of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was gotten by administering the instrument on a different sample twice at an interval of two weeks. Data obtained were subjected to PPMC yielding a correlation co-efficient of 0.61, hence, the instrument was adjudged reliable. Data were analyzed using Tables, frequency counts and simple percentages as well as for answering research questions. Mean rating and ANOVA were used to test the two hypothesis generated.

Results

Demographic Data

Table 1: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	82	68.3
Female	38	31.7
Total	120	100.0

Result on the Table 1 shows the distribution of the respondents based on gender. The result shows that 68.3% of the respondents are male while 31.7% are female. This shows that majority of the respondents are male.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents Based on Educational Qualification

Qualification	Frequency	Percentages
Primary	19	15.8
Secondary	44	36.7
NCE	28	23.3
HND/B.sc	24	20.0
Others	5	4.2
Total	120	100.0

Result on Table 2 shows the distribution of the respondents based on educational qualifications. The results show that 15% of the respondents attended primary school only, 36.7% attended secondary school only, 23.3% have NCE only, and 20% have HND/B.sc while 4.2% have other certificates. This shows that the majority of the respondents have secondary education only.

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents based on Years of Work Experience

Work Experience	Frequency	Percentage
Below 5 years	39	32.5
6-10 years	44	36.7
11 and above years	37	30.8
Total	120	100.0

Results on Table 3 shows the distribution of the respondents based on work experience. The results shows that 32.5% of the respondents have below five years of working experience, 36.7% have 6-10years of working experience while 30.8% have 11 and above years of working experience. This shows that the majority oif the respondents have 6-10 years of working experience.

Answering of Research Questions

Research Questions 1: What is the awareness level of Nigerian Police to human rights protection of Nigerian citizens?

Table 4: Percentage Distribution of Awareness of Police on Selected Human Rights Issues

S/N	Statement	Non Awareness		Awareness		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1	Citizens cannot be arrested without a warrant	26	21.7	94	78.3	120	100
2.	Any suspect can not be put in custody more than 24 hours	20	16.7	100	83.3	120	100
3.	Only citizens 18 and above years old can vote	32	26.7	88	73.3	120	100
4.	Every Nigerian is entitled to privacy	29	24.2	91	75.8	120	100
5.	Nigerians are free to practice any belief or even change anytime	25	20.8	95	79.2	120	100
6.	Every citizen in Nigeria is entitled to move freely and to reside in any part of Nigeria	31	25.8	89	74.2	120	100
7.	Rich people have more rights than the poor	97	80.8	23	19.2	120	100
8.	Children and youths have rights that must be respected	30	25	90	75	120	100
9.	It is the responsibility of the state or government to provide employment	36	30	74	70	120	100
10.	Human right means absolute freedom	78	65	42	35	120	100

The results in Table 4 show the percentage distribution of awareness of police on selected human right issues. Based on the law of the nation, no citizen can be arrested without a warrant; no suspect could be put in custody more than 24 hours. Results however revealed that 78.3% of the respondents are aware of this human right issue in item 1 while 21.7% are unaware of it. The majority of the

respondents are aware of human right issue in item 2, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 9. The majority of respondents are, however, not aware of human rights issues in item 7 and 10.

Research Question 2: What is the disposition of Nigeria Police to human rights protection of Nigeria citizens?

Table 5: Mean Response of Police Disposition to some Human Right Issues

S/N	Statement	N	Mean	SD
1.	I wish I am not on duty when armed robbers are raiding	120	2.00	1.08
2.	I can make citizens change their political parties	120	1.90	0.87
3.	I can shoot anybody that abuses the government	120	1.98	0.95
4.	Vital information of citizens can be communicated to third party when in need of money	120	2.11	0.88
5.	Torture is the best way of getting information from suspects	120	2.7	1.17
6.	I treat everyone as equal in terms of possession of human right	120	3.25	0.76
7.	I have made progress in reducing human rights violation	120	2.98	0.84
8.	I have a duty to protect my rights and others	120	3.4	0.74
9.	I arrest citizens who move when there is no curfew	120	2.92	0.84
10.	I only arrest if there are reasonable grounds for suspicion	120	3.38	0.89

Results in Table 5 show the Mean response of police disposition to some human rights issues. From the table, statements corresponding to items 1, 2,3 and 4 have means responses lesser than 2.5 which is the average (mid-point) of the scale while statements corresponding to items 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 have mean responses greater than 2.5. This implies that respondents disagreed on the statement: ‘I wish I am not on duty when armed robbers are raiding’; ‘I can make citizens change their political parties’; ‘I can shoot anybody that abuses the government’; and ‘Vital information of citizens can be communicated to third party when in need of money’. However,

they agreed with the statements: Torture is the best way of getting information from suspects, treat everyone as equal in terms of possessing human dignity; I have made progress in reducing human rights violations; I have a duty to protect my rights and others; I arrest citizens who move during curfew, I only arrest if there are reasonable grounds for suspicion.

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the disposition of Nigerian Police to Human Rights Protection of Nigerian Citizens on the Basis of Qualifications.

Table 6: ANOVE showing the difference on Distribution of Nigerian Police to Human Rights Protection of Nigerian Citizens on the Basis of qualifications.

	Sum of Square	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	68.951	2	34.475	2.357	.099
Within Groups	1711.016	117	14.624		
Total	1779.967	119			

Result in Table 6 reveals that the df (4,119) and F-value yielded 3/892 which is significant at 0.05 alpha level. Hence, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected since the P value 0.03 is less than 0.05 ($0.02 < 0.05$). This means that there is significant difference in the disposition of Nigerian Police to human rights protection of Nigerian citizens on the basis of qualifications.

Ho2: There is no significant difference in the disposition of Nigerian Police to human rights protection of Nigerian citizens on the basis of experience.

Table 7:ANOVA showing the difference on Disposition of Nigerian Police to Human Rights Protection of Nigerian Citizens on the Basis of Experience

	Sum of Square	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	212.246		53.062	3.892	.005
Within Groups	1567.721		13.632		
Total	1779.967	119			

Results in Table 7 reveal the df (2,119) and F-value to be 2.357 which is not significant at 0.09 alpha level. Hence, the null hypothesis is therefore not rejected, since the F-value 0.099 is greater at 0.05 ($0.099 > 0.05$). This means that there is no significant difference in the disposition of Nigerian Police to human rights protection of Nigerian citizens on the basis of experience.

Discussion and Conclusion

The awareness and disposition of the Nigerian police to human rights protection of Nigeria citizens was investigated in this study. It can be deduced from the results that the participants are aware of most human rights issues except for some items like 7 and 10. This finding is at variance with the findings of Okeshola, (2013) that lack of training and retraining of police in the area of human rights accounted for 21% of reasons for human rights violation. It could be inferred that Nigerian police are aware of human rights issues. Similarly, Helssinki Citizens' Assembly Vanador Office (2014) noted that the core reason underlying violations of human rights in the police citizen relations is the low level of legal awareness of citizens particularly in rural communities. He blamed the citizens for not being aware of human rights issues.

Further findings revealed that the Nigerian Police have an unfavourable attitude to human rights protection of Nigerian citizens. Based on the mean responses, the Nigerian Police have a lackadaisical attitude to human rights

protection of citizens. This finding support Ademu (2011) who asserted that the Nigerian Police Force engage in massacre, planting evidence, burying suspects in shallow graves, poor keeping of people in custody, whether knowing they are violating human rights issues or not.

Qualification of police officers did influence their disposition to human rights protection of Nigerian citizens, while experience did not account for any change in their disposition. The mean score for Primary Certificate holders was significantly different from HND/Bsc certificate holders though other groups did not differ significantly. The findings also support earlier researchers, like Ademu (2011), who posit that human rights violation is pronounced among the police. There was no significant difference in the disposition of police to human rights protection of Nigerian citizens on the basis of working experience. This goes contrary to the finding of Okeshola (2013) that lack of training both before the job and on the job have accounted for the incessant violations of human rights by the police. It will, however, be concluded that years of experience did not have anything to do with the police disposition to human rights protection of citizens.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from this study, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. Nigerian police should be orientated and re-orientated on civic learning particularly, human rights and protection of citizens.
2. Printed materials bordering on human rights and protection of citizens should be made readily available to the police.
3. Stiff penalties should be mated out to violators of human right.

4. Human rights commissioner should also intensify their efforts in checkmating the excesses of the police on human rights protection of citizens.

References

- Adedunmade, O. (2012). Our fundamental human rights. Legalnaija Blawg. Retrieved from <http://www.legalnaija.com/2012/09/yourfundamental-human-rights.html> on 30th November 2016.
- Ademu, G.O. (2011). Human rights abuse by Nigerian police in Kaduna South. In Okeshola, F.B. (2013). Human rights abuse by Nigerian police in four selected states and the federal capital territory, Abuja. British Journal of Arts and Social Sciences. ISSN: 20469578. Vol 13.No II.
- Ayodele, J. (2016). Respect for human rights can engender trust for the Nigerian police. Retrieved from <http://unodc.org/nigeria/en/respect-for-human-rights-can-engender-trust-for-the-nigerian-police.html>.
- Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Retrieved from <http://www.nigeria-law.org> Constitution of The Federal Republic of Nigeria.htm on 30th November 2016.
- Equality and Human Rights Commission. (n.d) what are human rights? Retrieved from <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/human-rights/what-are-human-rights> on 29th of November 2016.
- Helsinki Citizens's Assembly Vanadzor Office. (2014). Discussion on human rights protection issues within police-citizen relations' and presentation of reports. Retrieved from <http://hcav.am/en/events/discussion-on-human-rights-protection-issues-within-police-citizen-relations-and-presentation-of-reports/>

- Human Rights Situational Report. (2002). A quarterly publication of the human rights monitor.
- Human Rights Watch. (2016), Nigeria events of 2015. Retrieved from <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2016/country-chapters/Nigeria> on 16th January 2016
- Makwerere, D., Chinzete, G.T, AND Musorowegomo, C. (2012). Human rights and policing: a case study of Zimbabwe. International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, Vol 2. No 12.pg 129-133.
- Okeshola, FB. (2013). Human rights abuse by Nigerian police in four selected states and the federal capital territory, Abuja. British Journal of Arts and Social Sciences. ISSN: 20469578. Vol 13. No II. Retrieved from <http://www.bjournal.co.uk/BJASS.aspx> .
- Human Horizons Report. (2004). Seminar-police as a protector of human rights. Department of Criminology Correctional Administration, TISS, Mumbai Retrieved from <http://lalitreports.blogs-pot.com.ng/2004/12/seminar-police-as-protector-of-human.html>.
- Sharang, N. (2014) Tackling human rights violations in Nigeria. Retrieved from <http://nigeriaobservernews.com/2014/12/tackling-human-rights-violations-in-nigeria-2/>~~NWEZuCNlrLMw~~.
- Uganda Human Rights Commission. (2012). Police pocket book on human rights. Retrieved from <http://actvuganda.org/download/laws-of-uganda/police-pocket-book-onhuman-rights.pdf>.
- United Nations Human Rights. (n.d). Whatare human rights? Retrieved from <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/issues/Pages/WhatareHumanRights.aspx> on 30th of November 2016

Appendix

Table 8: Table showing means of groups

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Primary	19	28.6316	3.21819	.73830
Secondary	44	27.4545	4.12849	.62239
NCE	28	25.9286	3.28778	.62133
HND/BSc	24	24.6667	3.88606	.79324
Others	5	26.4000	1.51658	.67823
Total	120	26.6833	3.86752	.35305

This table shows the means and standard deviation of the cumulated scores derived from items on disposition. All the ten items are added to form a continuous score which is being used in the computation of the ANOVA.