EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION OF POLICE HARASSMENT OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN OGUN STATE, NIGERIA

Ademolu Oluwaseun Adenuga
ademolu.adenuga@uniosun.edu.ng
Department of Criminology and Security Studies, Osun State University

Abdullahi Abiodun Oyekanmi
oyekanmiaa@tasued.edu.ng
Department of Political Science, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State

Abstract

Globally, police is an important institution of established states, given the responsibility to maintain public law and order. However, in Nigeria, these roles have been overshadowed by lack professionalism and civil public engagement which have metamorphosed into undue police harassment of not only the general public, but students of higher institutions. Thus, the study "Empirical investigation of police harassment of private university students in Ogun State, Nigeria'' is undertaken. The paper is descriptively quantitative in nature with twelve (12) private universities selected in Ogun State as case study. Questionnaires were administered on the respondents and SPSS was deployed for data analysis, while social learning theory was adopted as theoretical framework. The findings of the study revealed that males students in private universities are prone to police harassment than females, that harassment has become police strategy to ease possible extortion of the students and that most cases these harassment were informed by the students bad dresses and hairstyles. The study does recommends for regular in- service training for the police on civil public engagement and respect for citizens inalienable rights; government assertiveness on good character, empathy and obedience to laws as recruitment criteria into Nigeria police; NANS affirmative action against police brutality of students and scaled- up public enlightenment through symposia on mutual respects for the law officers by members of the public.

Keywords: Brutality, Crime, Internet-Crime Syndrome, Harassment, University

INTRODUCTION

Globally, police institution is an establishment of the states in their efforts to ensure public order and protect the lives and properties of the citizens. Thus, existence of police is imperative for a secured society. However, record of police hostilities and harassment of the citizens which symbolises an abdication from their statutory roles, are now growing unabated. Sociological and criminological studies have been consistent in recent times on reporting issues emanating from policeharassment and use of force(George, 2020). Despite increasing public awareness and academic investigation of police

violence against young persons, some victims, such as undergraduates, have been mostly disregarded(Aborisade & Obileye, 2017; Akinlabi, 2021).This research analyzed how undergraduates in Nigeria, particularly those attending private institutions, are treated by police from the time they are arrested until they are released from detention. According to the available literature, many undergraduates who end up in police custody in such a situation are tortured, sexually assaulted and intimidated, deprived of basic necessities, and punished excessively(Ayodele, 2021; Soladoye & Ojo, 2020).

It is important to note that various reasons have been attributed to have fuelled police harassment of young persons in Nigeria. The studies of Adenuga, Lawal and Oderinde (2020) revealed that extortion of young persons is seen as a very profitable venture because these young chaps when intimidated with weapons, threat of jail terms and physical assualts easily give in to the dictate of the demanding police officers. Though, the study claimed that study did not interrogate any harassed individuals but police officers who gave a few reasons for extortion of motorists and categosiries of motorists that are vulnerable for exrtion, including the process undertaken to extort from them. Also, Akinyetun (2021) gave accounts of police brutality in Nigeria but was not specific on the categories of young persons harassed by the officers of the Nigerian force. The study revealed that the wasteful habits and lifestyles of young persons in clubs, parties and social gatherings are part of the motivations of police for their harassment and extortion but these findings have not been subjected to further empirical investigation which gives room for the victms of the victimisation and harassments to express their views. Hence this study.

There have been many protests organised by students in Nigerian universities to dispel unabated harassment of Nigerian police on various campuses under the guise of maintaining law and order. Often times, reaction to this police dastard act create orgy violence with negative effect on the psyche, mental and emotional sanity of the youths and students in Nigerian universities(Oyekanmi, Adebajo, & Shittu, 2023; Ibrahim, 2015).There were speculations of certain occasions where some members of the police force perceive that they are in superior position of power to students and thus, have a wrong sense of entitlement to discipline students without recourse to established laws on rights and dignity of fellow citizens (Adenuga, Lawal, & Oderinde, 2020; Kasali & Odetola, 2016). They then exploit their position of authority to threaten students, whether subtly or overtly(Adenuga, Oderinde, & Lawal, 2020). This behaviour is in direct violation of human rights and was largely part

of the build up to the agitation that birthed ENDSARS protest in several parts of Nigeria in 2020(Ayodele, 2021). In spite of the reformation by the Nigerian police force and promise to bring to book all erring police officers, police harassment still persists in several nulls and crannies of the country and most times, the victims of harassments are young adolescents, most especially undergraduates.

Universally, there is increased awareness and campaigns against all forms of violence against individuals, youth and the Nigerian undergraduates are not left out. This study is borne out of the need to provide timely information on the experiences of undergraduates who have been subjected to one form of harassment or the other by the Nigerian police officers, and to fill gap in knowledge on the diverse classes of people harassed by the Nigerian police even after the ENDSARS protest and the intense advocacy for restructuring of the nations' policing system. As such, the undergraduates of private universities which have been overlooked in many studies around police brutality, police extortion and police harassment of tertiary institution students is the unit of analysis of this study in order to add to existing knowledge on the phenomenon and beam research searchlight on private university undergraduates, the excluded category of harassed Nigerian students in existing studies.

The study's primary objective is to investigate the spate of police harassment on private universities undergraduates in Ogun State, Nigeria while the specific objectives are to:

i. Examine the factors contributing to police harassment targeting undergraduatesin the selected private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria;
ii. Evaluate the methods employed by the police to harass students in the study area; and
iii. Investigate the first-hand experiences of undergraduates on police harassment in selected private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Police harassment of university students in Nigeria has been a recurring problem for many years, and there have been numerous reports and incidents of such harassment. Police harassment of university students in Nigeria has been a long-standing issue that has gained renewed attention in recent years(Olowu & Oke, 2020). This phenomenon is characterized by the arbitrary arrest, detention, and torture of students by police officers who often operate outside the law. Police harassment of students in Nigeria is rooted in several

factors, including the lack of adequate training and professionalism among police officers, a culture of impunity, and a lack of accountability.

A notable incident occurred in December 2020, when police officers reportedly raided the hostels of the Federal University of Technology, Owerri (FUTO), and arrested several students. The police claimed that the students were involved in cybercrime, but the students denied the allegations, stating that they were targeted simply because they were young and wearing dreadlocks(Ezeanolue, 2021).In October 2020, the #EndSARS protests erupted in Nigeria, highlighting police brutality and harassment against citizens, including university students. During the protests, there were reports of police officers using excessive force against peaceful protesters, resulting in injuries and fatalities. In addition, there were reports of police officers raiding student hostels and arresting students without due process(Akinyetun, 2021). These actions further fuelled the anger and frustration of the Nigerian youth and led to calls for police reform.

Another recent incident of police harassment of university students in Nigeria occurred on November 10, 2020, at the Ladoke Akintola University of Technology in Ogbomoso, Oyo State. According to media reports, police officers allegedly opened fire on protesting students, resulting in injuries to several students(Akinlabi, 2021). The students were protesting against the high cost of tuition fees and the poor state of the university infrastructure.In February 2021, there were reports of police harassment of university students in Osun State. According to Onwunyirimadu (2022), police officers raided a hostel at Osun State University and arrested several students without any charges. The students alleged that they were beaten and tortured by the police officers, who demanded money from them in exchange for their release(Onwunyirimadu, 2022). The incident sparked outrage among the student community, with many calling for justice and an end to police brutality. Also in February 2021, there were reports of police harassment of students of the University of Ibadan, one of Nigeria's leading universities. The police reportedly stormed the campus and arrested several students who were peacefully protesting against the hike in tuition fees. The students said that while they were in police custody, they were subjected to a variety of forms of beatings and torture.

Similarly, in March 2021, there were reports of police harassment of university students in Benin City, Edo State. According to a report by Sahara Reporters, police officers raided a hostel at the University

of Benin and arrested several students without any charges. The students alleged that they were beaten and tortured by the police officers and were forced to pay bribes for their release. The incident led to protests by students and calls for an end to police brutality. Furthermore, in August 2021, the police reportedly arrested and detained 24 students of the Federal University of Agriculture in Makurdi, Benue State, for participating in a peaceful protest against the school's management. The students were accused of disrupting the peace and were detained for several days before being released on bail.

In December 2021, the police reportedly tear-gassed and shot live ammunition at students of the Federal University of Agriculture in Abeokuta, Ogun State, during a protest against the hike in tuition fees. The incident resulted in several students sustaining injuries. One of the most recent cases of police harassment of university students in Nigeria occurred in February 2022, when students of the University of Lagos (UNILAG) were arrested and detained by the police for protesting against the increase in school fees. The police officers reportedly used tear gas and live ammunition to disperse the peaceful protest, resulting in several injuries and arrests.More recently, in March 2023, there were reports of police harassment of students of the University of Lagos, who were protesting against the poor state of infrastructure and facilities in the university. The police reportedly used tear gas and other forms of force to disperse the protesters, leading to injuries and arrests. These incidents are just a few examples of police harassment of university students in Nigeria. The issue is a complex one, and addressing it will require significant reforms within the Nigerian police force, including better training, increased accountability, and the establishment of effective oversight mechanisms.

Theoretical Review

Social Learning Theory

Social learning theory posits that behaviour is learned through observation, imitation, and reinforcement.Social learning theory has been proposed by several prominent psychologists, including Julian Rotter, Albert Bandura, and Neal Miller. In the field of sociology, Albert Bandura is widely regarded as the leading proponentof the social learning theory. He has conducted extensive research on the topic, including the famous Bobo doll experiment, which demonstrated the power of observational learning in shaping

behaviour.Albert Bandura's social learning theory is based on several assumptions(Bandura, 1977), including:

- Behaviour is learned through observation: According to Bandura, people learn new behaviours by observing others, especially those who are similar to them. Individuals can learn both positive and negative behaviours from others.
- Learning can occur without direct reinforcement: Bandura believed that individuals can learn new behaviours simply by observing others, even if they do not receive direct reinforcement for those behaviours.
- Cognition plays a key role in learning: Bandura emphasized the importance of cognitive processes in learning, such as attention, memory, and motivation. Individuals must pay attention to the behaviours they observe and remember them in order to imitate them.
- Learning is an active process: Bandura believed that learning is an continuous and interactive process that occurs through a continuous cycle of observation, imitation, and feedback. Individuals actively participate in the learning process by selecting, observing, and imitating behaviours that are relevant to their goals and interests.
- The environment and behaviour influence each other: Bandura argued that behaviour is influenced by both the individual and the environment, and that these factors interact with each other. The environment can shape behaviour, but individuals also have the ability to shape and modify their environment through their behaviour.

The social learning theory emphasizes the importance of observation, cognition, and feedback in the learning process, and highlights the active role that individuals play in shaping their own behaviour and environment.Applying Albert Bandura's perspective on social learning theory to police harassment of Nigerian university undergraduates suggests that this behaviour may be learned through observation and reinforcement, both within the police force and within the broader cultural context of Nigeria.Observational learning refers to the process of learning by observing others. In the context of police harassment of Nigerian university undergraduates, police officers who engage in this behaviour may have learned it through observing their colleagues or other authority figures. For example, if a senior police officer uses violence or intimidation to control a situation, junior officers may observe and imitate this behaviour in similar situations.

In the context of social learning theory, reinforcement plays a significant role and pertains to the outcomes or consequences of behaviour that can either enhance or diminish the probability of that behaviour recurring.In the case of police harassment of Nigerian university undergraduates, the culture of impunity that often exists in law enforcement in Nigeria may serve as a reinforcement for this behaviour. If police officers believe that they can engage in this behaviour without facing consequences, they may be more likely to continue doing so.Bandura's social learning theory also emphasizes the role of cognition in the learning process. Police officers who engage in harassment of Nigerian university undergraduates may have cognitive biases or prejudices that influence their behaviour. For example, they may hold stereotypes about students or view them as a threat, which could lead them to use more aggressive tactics when interacting with them.Bandura's perspective on social learning theory emphasizes the active role that individuals play in shaping their own behaviour and environment. Police officers who engage in harassment of Nigerian university undergraduates are not passive

The social learning theory, although highlighting the significance of observation and reinforcement in shaping behaviour, faced criticism for its inadequate consideration of the social and cultural elements influencing police harassment. It falls short in comprehensively accounting for the factors such as the hierarchical structure of Nigerian society and the country's history of police brutality, which contribute to a culture of impunity and a lack of accountability among police officers.

Social learning theory may not adequately address the power dynamics at play in police-student interactions.The theory focused on individual behaviour and did not fully account for the power dynamics at play in police-student interactions. Police officers may engage in harassment not only because they have learned to do so through observation and reinforcement, but also because they hold a position of authority over students and may feel justified in using force or violence to maintain control.It did not explore the impact of institutional factors on police behaviour.While social learning theory provides valuable insights into the development of police behaviour, it did not comprehensively explain the influence of institutional factors, including the policies and procedures that govern police conduct. Police harassment of Nigerian university undergraduates may be influenced by factors such as inadequate training, insufficient resources, and lack of oversight or accountability mechanisms.

Social learning theory, although emphasizing the significance of cognition and feedback in shaping behaviour may not adequately account for the influence of individual differences in behaviour. Some police officers may be more prone to engaging in harassment than others due to factors such as personality traits, past experiences, or mental health issues.While social learning theory provided useful insights on the factors driving police harassment of Nigerian university undergraduates, it failed to sufficiently account for the complex interplay of social, cultural, and institutional aspects involved in these interactions.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive research design and it was quantitative in nature andwas conducted in 12 selected private universities in Ogun state through e-questionnaire. Study participants were purposively chosen at interval K from the study areas based on previous involvement and experience on issues relating to police harassment as undergraduates. The study participants were recruited through purposive sampling and the e-questionnaire was administered to 540voluntary participants via selected universities students'associations and cohorts' online platforms and social media. Statistical Package for Social Sciences was employed for data analysis in this study, and results were presented and discussed using tables. In accordance with ethical guidelines governing research involving human subjects, necessary approvals and consents were obtained from relevant authorities. Participants were provided with an overview of the study, including its expected outcomes and benefits on the consent form. Throughout the study, four key ethical considerations were upheld: anonymity, confidentiality, non-malfeasance toward participants, and voluntariness.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Data on the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents as presented on Table 1 revealed that majority of the respondents were females (62.4 percent) but the experience of police harassment was more prominent on their male counterparts who were 37.6 percent of the study population. Data on religion revealed that majority were Christians (60.9 percent). This is partly due to the fact that half of the schools where the study was conducted were owned by Christian missionaries (Babcock, Covenant, Crawford, McPherson, Mountain Top and Trinity universities) and that influenced the patronage of

their church members and other Christian community members. Respondents who practices Islam represented 38.9 percent of the study population. On ethnicity, data showed that majority of the respondents were from Yoruba ethnicity (72.4 percent). The distribution also included south-south (11.7 percent), Ibo (9.8 percent), Hausa/Fulani (2.4 percent) and others were from the minority ethnic groups in the country (3.7 percent).

The study considered the ages of the respondents and found out that majority of the respondents were between the ages of 16-21 years (75.1 percent), while others were between the ages of 25-27 years (8.1 percent), 28-30 years (5.7 percent) and those above 30 were 1.1 percent of the study population. Data on marital status revealed that 93.5 percent of the study population were single and unmarried. Others were married (7.2 percent), divorced (0.6 percent), widowed (0.2 percent) and separated (0.2 percent). On sponsorship of the respondents' education, data showed that 87 percent were sponsored by their parents and guardians. Others were sponsored through scholarship (5.4 percent), religious and charity organisations (3.3 percent), credit/bond (0.8 percent) while 3.5 percent funded themselves to school.

The study was conducted in twelve private universities in Ogun state. These include Babcock University (13 percent), Bells University (7.8 percent), Chrisland University (7.2 percent), Christopher University (8.9 percent), Covenant University (13.5 percent), Crawford University (9.4 percent), Crescent University (8.4 percent), Hallmark University (10.8 percent), McPherson University (6.4 percent), Mountain Top University (4.1 percent), Southwestern University (3.5 percent) and Trinity University (6.9 percent). On the year of study of the respondents, data showed that majority were between 100 and 300 levels (82.4 percent) while others were in 4th year (13.4 percent), 5th year (4.1 percent), and 6th year (1.1 percent). Data on the residency of the respondents revealed that majority of the respondents resided in the school hostel that is domiciled on campus and outside campus (97.8 percent). Others lived independently outside the school property (2.2 percent).

Table 1

SEX			RELIGION			ETHNICITY		
	Freq	**%**		**Freq**	**%**		**Freq**	**%**
Male	203	37.6	Christian	329	60.9	Hausa/Fulani	13	2.4
Female	337	62.4	Islam	210	38.9	Ibo	53	9.8
Total	**540**	**100**	Indigenous	1	0.2	Yoruba	391	72.4
			Total	**540**	**100**	South-south	63	11.7
						Others	20	3.7
						Total	**540**	**100**
AGE			**MARITAL STATUS**			**SPONSOR**		
	Freq.	**%**		**Freq**	**%**		**Freq**	**%**
16-18yrs	243	45	Single	505	93.5	Self	19	3.5
19-21yrs	158	29.2	Married	39	7.2	Parents	417	77.2
22-24yrs	59	10.9	Separated	1	0.2	Guardian	53	9.8
25-27yrs	44	8.1	Widowed	2	0.4	Scholarship	29	5.4
28-30yrs	30	5.7	Divorced	3	0.6	Credit/Bond	4	0.8
>30yrs	6	1.1	**Total**	**540**	**100**	Religious organization	18	3.3
Total	**540**	**100**				**Total**	**540**	**100**
UNIVERSITY			**YEAR OF STUDY**			**RESIDENCY**		
	Freq.	**%**		**Freq**	**%**		**Freq**	**%**
Babcock	70	13	100 level	87	16.4	School hostel (on campus)	504	93.4
Bells	42	7.8	200 level	134	25.4	School hostel (outside campus)	25	4.4
Chrisland	39	7.2	300 level	219	40.6	Living independently in residential area	2	0.4
Christopher	48	8.9	400 level	72	13.4	Living with room mate(s) in residential area	3	0.6
Covenant	73	13.5	500 level	22	4.1	Living in religious residence	2	0.4
Crawford	51	9.4	600 level	6	1.1	Living with your family	3	0.6
Crescent	46	8.4	**Total**	**540**	**100**	Living with another family	1	0.2
Hallmark	59	10.8				**Total**	**540**	**100**
McPherson	35	6.4						
Mountain Top	22	4.1						
Southwestern	19	3.5						
Trinity	37	6.9						

Total	**540**	**100**

Source: Fieldwork (2023)

Factors contributing to Police harassment of Undergraduates in Ogun State, Nigeria

The factors influencing police harassment of undergraduates in Ogun State were presented in table 2. These include Profiling based on appearance or clothing (58.1 percent), suspicion of drug use or drug trafficking (38.5 percent), strategies to extort money from undergraduates (34.6 percent), inability to pay "bail" fees when arrested for minor offenses, involvement in fraud or cybercrime (24.2 percent), involvement in cultism (19.1 percent), Night mongering (18.3 percent), racial or ethnic profiling(17.8 percent), alleged involvement in prostitution and sexual harassment (15.4 percent), involvement in illegal gambling or betting (14.4 percent), inability to provide a valid form of identification when requested(11.9 percent), disrespect or non-compliance with the rule of law(10.9 percent), targeting of specific university campuses or hostels(7.8 percent), retaliation for rejecting sexual advances from Police officers(7.8 percent), laptop, smartphone, electronics or property theft(7 percent), retaliation for reporting police misconduct or corruption(6.5 percent), involvement in political violence or protests(4.3 percent), involvement in terrorism (3.1 percent), and involvement in armed robbery or other criminal activities(22 percent).

Table 2

Statement	**Freq**	**%**
Profiling based on appearance or clothing	314	58.1
Suspicion of drug use or drug trafficking	208	38.5
Demanding payment of bribes or extorting money from undergraduates	187	34.6
Inability to pay "bail" fees when arrested for minor offenses	134	24.8
Suspicion of involvement in fraud or cybercrime	132	24.2
Suspicion of involvement in cultism	103	19.1
Night mongering	99	18.3

Racial or ethnic profiling	96	17.8
Alleged involvement in prostitution and sexual harassment	83	15.4
Allegation of involvement in illegal gambling or betting	78	14.4
Failure to provide a valid form of identification when requested	64	11.9
Disrespect or non-compliance with the rule of law	59	10.9
Targeting of specific university campuses or hostels	42	7.8
Retaliation for rejecting sexual advances from Police officers	42	7.8
Laptop and smartphone theft allegations	38	7
Retaliation for reporting police misconduct or corruption	35	6.5
Alleged involvement in political violence or protests	23	4.3
Involvement in terrorism	17	3.1
Suspicion of involvement in armed robbery or other criminal activities	12	2.2

Source: Fieldwork (2023)

Methods employed by the Police to harass undergraduatesin the study areas

The methods employed by the police to harass students include: extortion (71.7 percent), intimidation (61.9 percent), unlawful detention (59.1 percent), blackmailing (55.9 percent), inappropriate use of force (55.7percent), torture (55.4percent), and destruction of property (55.2percent). Others include false accusation (43.3percent), arbitrary arrest (42.2percent), verbal assault (38.5percent), unlawful search on the highways (34.6percent), physical assaults (24.8percent), sexual harassment involving touching of sensitive bodily parts (22.3percent), accusing students on tattoo (20.2percent), unlawful seizure of property (15.6percent), fabrication of evidence (9.6percent), planting of evidence (5.7percent), and interference with academic activities (2.6percent).

Table 3

Nature of harassment	***Freq***	***%***
Extortion	387	71.7
Intimidation	334	61.9
Unlawful detention	319	59.1
Blackmailing	302	55.9
Inappropriate use of force	301	55.7
Torture	299	55.4
Destruction of property	298	55.2
False accusation	234	43.4
Arbitrary arrest	228	42.2
Verbal assault	208	38.5
Unlawful search	187	34.6
Physical assault	134	24.8
Sexual harassment by touching of sensitive bodily parts	122	22.3
Accusing students based on tattoo	109	20.2
Unlawful seizure of property	84	15.6
Fabrication of evidence	52	9.6
Planting of evidence	31	5.7
Interference with academic activities	14	2.6

Source: Fieldwork (2023)

First-hand experiences of undergraduates on police harassment in Ogun state private universities

The study found out that 51.7 percent of the respondents have had several personal experiences of police harassment in Ogun state since they became undergraduates. Findings further revealed that 20.7 percent claimed to have been harassed by the police more than once in the state. The first-hand experience of undergraduates on police harassments includes touching sensitive parts of the female student's body when in their custody or on the high way (27.4percent), unlawful seizure of owned property such as electronics, wears, household items, etc (20.2 percent), arrest on the

highway for the purpose of extortion (16.3percent), hitting undergraduates with sharp objects (14.4 percent), forcing suspects to sign under duress to sign falsified statements (13.1 percent), hitting detained students with sharp objects to force false confession out of their mouths (7.6percent), police invasion homes and hostels to make unjustifiable arrest without warrants (2.2 percent).

Discussion of Findings

Although the socio-demographic data revealed that majority of the respondents were females but the experience of police harassment was more prominent their male counterparts who were 37.6 percent of the study population. This supports Agbola& Oladeji (2021) who expressed that the menace of polce harassment heats up more on the males than their female counterparts in their study. Adenuga, Lawal& Oderinde (2020) posited that police harassment has no regard for gender of their victims but the study was conducted on adult members of the border communities with no consideration for the experieces of younger male gender, most importantly undergraduates in the hands of the nigerian police force. This study establishes that police harassment on undergraduates irrespective of gender and age is an indicator that the menace has disregard for the gender of their victims. This claim supports the submission of Akinyetun (2012) that police brutality has no socio-demographic measure on its victim.

Christian being the dominant religion is partly significant because more of the schools where the study was conducted were owned by Christian missionaries but when cross-tabulated, more Christians experienced police harassment than their Muslim counterparts. Despite having majority of the respondents were from Yoruba ethnicity, the study found out that more than half of south-south and Ibo ethnicities have experienced police harassment more than once. This corroborates the views of Adenuga, Lawal and Oderinde (2020), Ezeanolue (2021), and Ndubueze &Nwakanma (2022)police harassment cuts across all regions of te country and it takes toll on the predominant ethnicity in any state or region of the country where it is perpetrated.

On the factors influencing police harassment of undergraduates in Ogun State,the study found out that undergraduates were harassed due to their appearance or clothing as engaging in drug use or drug trafficking,in a bid to be extorted, inability to pay "bail" fees when arrested when it is a general notion that bail is free. Olowu& Oke (2020) explained some vicitms of police harassment gave police officers suspective appearances which are usually enveloped in

frivolous lives styles, unsolicited acts of dolling out money to police officers at check points, confrontational and flagrant communication mode at high ways and others which have been identified as triggering the grievances of police officers

Other factors which influenced police harassment of undergraduates include arrests made on the ground of involvement in fraud or cybercrime, cultism, night mongering, involvement in prostitution and sexual harassment, involvement in illegal gambling or betting, inability to provide a valid form of identification when requested and all these are webbed around disrespect and non-compliance with the rule of law. Aborisade and Obileye (2017) and Aborisade, et al. (2022) have criticized the methods adopted by the officers of the Nigerian police in arresting individuals in the society because most of the arrests were stated to have ulterior motive which is largely financial benefits and other means to extort their victims.

The study found out that some of the methods employed by the police to harass students include extortion, intimidation, unlawful detention, and blackmailing, inappropriate use of force, torture, and destruction of property. This findings supports the views of Adenuga, Oderinde and Lawal (2020) that the law enforcements agents in Nigeria legalises illegal approaches to extorting mony from unsuspecting members of the society who run foul of norms in the society and instead of being corrected, they end up in the custody of the law enforcements agents.This approach towards arrest has been criticised by Onwunyirimadu (2022) who stated that the nigerian police have been very unprofessional in the process of arrest. This is because individuals suspected were usually not given the privilege to express themselves through their lawyers before being labelled criminals. Also, Ulo (2021) submitted that the process of arrest, detention and eventual prosecution by the nigerian police officersgives room for harassment of their victims. The study further revealed that beyond the public outcry of the #Endsars of 2020, the nigerian police have continued from where they stopped their harassment of young persons in the society.

The study found out that about 118 undergraduates (20.7 percent) have been harassed by the police more than once in Ogun state as undergraduates. Meanwhile a large number of the respondents in the study were still in the first three years of their studentship. This implies that they are likely to still experience more police harassments before becoming graduates. This suggests that the fight against police harassment has not yielded considerable results most especially among the youthful population as posited by Ulo (2021).

This study fills gap in knowledge because instead of identifying with the police when in desperate and challengingsituations that breaches their security, undergraduates with experiences of police harassment are not likely to trust the law enforcement agency. This further increases the gap between the police and the younger population in Ogun state.

The study further revealed that in the course of the harassment, undergraduates were subjected to horrible experiences such as touching sensitive parts of the female student's body when in police custody or on the high way. Other horrible experiences undergraduates were subjected to include unlawful seizure of owned property such as electronics, wears, household items, etc. and refusal to return these items after the individual has been vindicated, regular arrest on the highway mainly to exploit the timid arrestees. The study further revealed that police officers hit arrestees with sharp objects such as wooden or metallic objects, forced people to sign falsified statements under duress and imposing the content on such person thereafter, andinvaded homes and hostels of the selected undergraduates to make unjustifiable arrest without warrants. The above findings justifies the assertion of Akinlabi (2021) about how young people have been silenced by the brutal actions of the Nigerian police and how harassments of the innocent public has herald the utter disregard the public has for the Nigerian police force and how this eventually affect the flair for recruitment into the Nigerian police force.

Conceptually, police harassment is a relative perceived by the Nigerian youth (Agbola & Oladeji, 2021). Despite the recommendations of literature on the gross abuse of human rights by the foremost law enforcement agency saddled with the responsibility of protecting lives and property, the practice has still not subsided even after the 2020 #Endsars protest championed by youthful population of the country. In fact, police harassment has been perceived to have become the norm in Nigeria, most especially in the southwest region of the country. This study conceived police harassment as not only a gross abuse of the rights of the youthful population but as having a wider scope of subjecting tertiary institution students, most especially those who have earmarked as frivolous and rich to undefined scrutiny by the police as criminals or suspected criminals. This study also established that the appearance of the officers of the Nigerian police force is perceived in the negative light irrespective of their line of duty.

Aborisade and Obileye (2017) argued that the social learning theory justified that many police officers in Nigeria learned the act of brutality on the job irrespective of their academic qualifications but

they were unable to establish how the academic qualifications of police officers influenced their learning and eventual perpetration of the act of harassment. This study bridges gap in knowledge by identifying that police officers who engaged in the harassment of undergraduates had no university degree qualifications and had been subjected to more field assignments than office and administrative duties unlike their learned counterparts.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study concludes that police harassment, brutalization and psychological molestation of the very people they are assigned to protect have become a perennial problem in Nigeria. The paper also specifically traced the trajectory of police misconduct beyond the general poor professionalism and outlaw disposition to policing duties, into a deliberate harassment of private university students who have been profiled by many unscrupulous police officers as soft targets for extortion, physical assaults and psychological indignation.The study also concludes that the rapid growth of internet fraud syndrome among the youths and ostentatious display of wealth among the university students create a presumption that make university students susceptible to unnecessary “stop and search” on the road and on various campuses. Police harassment and controversial public engagement is not peculiar to Africa and Nigeria in specific. It is thus a global phenomenon that requires timely policy measures and deterrent by government throughout the world.

The paper recommends for regular in-service training for Nigeria police officers on civic-public engagement and respect for rule of law, including the inalienable right of the citizens, irrespective of their status. Government also should be assertive and unbending in the formulation of recruitment criteria into the Nigerian Police. The intending police officer must certify record of good character, empathy for human lives, civil conduct and adherence to enabling laws and satisfactory temperamental control. These will help to reduce police record of arbitrariness and harassment of not only university students, but the entire populace.

The National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS) and its affiliated structures must declare affirmative zero tolerance of the unabated harassments of Nigerian students by the police on many university campuses under the guise of eradicating yahoo syndrome and other illicit activities without exempting students of private universities.

The students' leadership must also scale up their nation-building efforts by organizing educative symposia in collaboration with other civil societies and security agency to stimulate new conversation on the needs for members of the public (youths and students) to accord security men the needed respect and cooperation and to also review areas of challenges in public security in the country.

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