IMPACT AND GENDER DYNAMICS OF POLICE MISCONDUCT DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON VARIOUS DEMOGRAPHICS AND BUSINESSES IN ENUGU STATE

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Abstract: This study investigates the impact and gender dynamics of police misconduct during the COVID-19 pandemic on various demographics and businesses in Enugu State, Nigeria. The research is guided by specific objectives: identifying the categories of people and businesses most affected by police misconduct, examining the influence of gender on police actions, determining the levels of misconduct, and understanding the contributing factors. Utilizing a mixed-method approach, the study draws on both quantitative data from a survey of 527 respondents and qualitative insights from in-depth interviews. The findings reveal that traders (73.8%) and drivers (77.0%) were the most adversely affected, facing extortion, harassment, and abuse, particularly at checkpoints. Both men and women experienced similar levels of police misconduct, with 63.9% of respondents indicating no gender bias. There was a notable increase in police misconduct during the pandemic, as reported by 54.6% of respondents. Key contributing factors included corruption (43.3%), lack of accountability, and the pressures of enforcing public health measures without adequate support. The research underscores the systemic nature of police misconduct and recommends comprehensive reforms focused on accountability, training, and the development of gender-

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Misconduct, particularly police misconduct, refers to behavior that deviates from accepted norms, standards, or expectations in various settings. Globally, police misconduct has been a persistent issue, contributing significantly to the negative perception of law enforcement agencies (Padersen-Henry, 2017; Worden & McLean, 2017). Instances of police brutality, corruption, and the abuse of power have been documented across the world, leading to widespread distrust and fear of law enforcement (Global Police Index, 2019; Roberson, 2017).

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in late 2019 presented a unique set of challenges to policing worldwide. The virus, which originated in Wuhan, China, rapidly spread across the globe, leading to the implementation of unprecedented public health measures (White & Fradella, 2020; Cave & Dahir, 2020).

Governments around the world mandated lockdowns, travel bans, social distancing, and the use of face masks, with the police playing a crucial role in enforcing these measures (Sheptycki, 2020; Laufs & Waseem, 2020).

In Nigeria, the enforcement of COVID-19 safety protocols by the police led to a significant increase in cases of police misconduct. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) reported numerous incidents of human rights violations by law enforcement agents during the pandemic, including extra-judicial killings, unlawful arrests, extortion, and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) (NHRC, 2020a). Enugu State, in particular, recorded a high number of these cases, placing it among the states with the most severe instances of police misconduct during the pandemic (BBC, 2020).

The enforcement of COVID-19 measures disproportionately affected various demographics and businesses in Enugu State. Vulnerable populations, including women, were particularly targeted, raising concerns about the influence of gender on police misconduct. The situation in Enugu State reflects a broader pattern of police behavior during emergencies, where the abuse of power and the violation of human rights become rampant (Odigbo, Eze & Odigbo, 2020; Amnesty International, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

The enforcement of COVID-19 safety measures by the police in Enugu State led to a significant increase in instances of police misconduct. Reports from various human rights organizations, including the NHRC, indicate that police officers engaged in a range of abusive behaviors during the lockdown, from extortion and unlawful arrests to SGBV (NHRC, 2020a; NHRC, 2020b). The situation was particularly dire for certain demographics and businesses, which were disproportionately targeted by law enforcement officers (Ogbeche, 2020).

Despite the widespread nature of police misconduct during the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been limited empirical research on the factors that contributed to these behaviors in Enugu State. Additionally, the influence of gender on police misconduct during the pandemic remains underexplored (Aborisade, 2021). Given the severity of the problem and its implications for human rights and social justice, there is a pressing need to investigate the dynamics of police misconduct during the COVID-19 pandemic in Enugu State, with a particular focus on the impact on different demographics and businesses, as well as the role of gender in these incidents (Africanews, 2020; BBC, 2020).

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this study is Impact and Gender Dynamics of Police Misconduct During the Covid-19 Pandemic on Various Demographics and Businesses in Enugu State with the following specific objectives:

1. To determine what category of people and businesses were mostly affected by police misconduct during the COVID-19 pandemic in Enugu state.
2. To identify the influence of gender or sex on police misconduct during the COVID-19 pandemic in Enugu state.

Research Questions

The following research questions are formulated to guide the study:

1. What category of people and businesses were mostly affected by police misconduct during the COVID-19 pandemic in Enugu state?
2. What is the influence of gender or sex on police misconduct during theCOVID-19 pandemic in Enugu state?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Etymology and Definition of Pandemics

The term "pandemic" originates from the Greek words "pan" (meaning "all") and "demos" (meaning "people"), highlighting its broad impact across populations. As a concept, "pandemic" has been deeply debated within the social sciences, with various scholars highlighting the complexities and contested nature of its definition. Gallie (1955) introduced the idea of "essentially contested concepts," which aptly describes the ongoing debates over what constitutes a pandemic. These debates intensified during the H1N1 influenza pandemic in 2009, where differing opinions among public health experts, international organizations, and the media emerged regarding the criteria for defining a pandemic (Morens, Folkers, & Fauci, 2009).

The definition of a pandemic generally revolves around its global spread and impact on large populations. Porta (2008) defined it as an epidemic occurring worldwide, crossing international boundaries, and affecting many people. Similarly, Lederberg (1988) and Honigsbaum (2009) described pandemics as widespread epidemics of contagious diseases affecting significant portions of the population across multiple regions. The World Health Organization (WHO) also emphasizes the novel and severe nature of pandemics, particularly when a new viral subtype emerges to which the population has little or no immunity (Qiu et al., 2017; WHO, 2010).

Historically, pandemics have been recurrent events throughout human history, with notable examples including the Antonine Plague, Bubonic Plague, Spanish Influenza, and more recently, HIV/AIDS, Ebola, and COVID-19 (Ozili, 2020; LePan, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic, in particular, has become one of the most devastating global health crises, with widespread impacts on public health, economies, and social structures.

Overview of Police Misconduct

The term "police" is derived from the Greek word "polis," meaning city or state, reflecting the role of policing in governance and maintaining public order (Osse, 2006). Policing has historically been a non-ecclesiastical function focused on safety, law and order, and service administration (Newburn, 2012). The modern concept of policing can be traced back to the Metropolitan Police of London, established by Sir Robert Peel in 1829, which set the precedent for law enforcement bodies tasked with protecting people and ensuring compliance with the law (Osse, 2006).

Scholars have conceptualized policing from various perspectives. The first perspective views policing as a mechanism for distributing non-negotiable coercive force to maintain order, with the police acting as an instrument of the state's legitimate monopoly on force (Manning, 2014; Brodeur, 2010). This perspective, which emphasizes the use of minimal and controlled force, has faced criticism for focusing on what the police rarely or never do, rather than on their actual functions (Brodeur, 2010).

The second perspective sees policing from a military and conflict viewpoint, where the police are perceived as a force applying coercion to prevent crime and maintain order (Jobard, 2014). This militarized view of policing has been criticized for pushing the boundaries of policing beyond what is legally prescribed, often leading to negative public perceptions and increasing the risk of police misconduct (Reiner, 1992; Mummelo, 2018).

Police misconduct encompasses a range of behaviors that violate official duties, including corruption, brutality, false arrest, and abuse of authority (Padersen-Henry, 2017; Lamboo, 2010). Albrecht (2019) highlighted the interchangeable use of terms like police corruption, criminality, excessive force, and misconduct, emphasizing the need for clearer distinctions in the study of police behavior.

Overview of Policing During Emergencies

The role of police during emergencies, including pandemics, has been increasingly studied, particularly in light of recent global health crises like COVID-19. Police are often tasked with enforcing public health measures, maintaining order, and providing essential services during such times (Richards et al., 2006). However, the militarized nature of policing, especially in authoritarian regimes, complicates the police-community relationship during emergencies (Laufs & Waseem, 2020).

During pandemics, police-community relations can be strained by the enforcement of health directives, such as lockdowns and social distancing measures. Effective enforcement can enhance public trust, while heavy-handed tactics can lead to distrust and confrontation, particularly among marginalized groups (Bonkiewcz & Ruback, 2012; Reicher & Stott, 2020). Communication between the police and the public during emergencies is also crucial, with social media platforms becoming important tools for disseminating information and engaging with communities (Bruns et al., 2012; Chauhan & Hughes, 2015).

Impact and Gender Dynamics of Police Misconduct During COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought significant attention to the issue of police misconduct, particularly in how it intersects with gender dynamics and impacts various demographics and businesses. The enforcement of COVID-19 safety measures by police has led to instances of misconduct, including the use of excessive force and the violation of human rights (Cave & Dahir, 2020; Amnesty International, 2020).

Gender dynamics play a crucial role in how police misconduct during the pandemic affects different groups. Women, particularly those in vulnerable situations, may face disproportionate impacts from police actions, such as harassment or violence. Moreover, businesses owned or operated by women may also be disproportionately affected by police misconduct, as aggressive enforcement actions can disrupt operations and lead to financial losses. In Enugu State, the intersection of police misconduct with gender and business dynamics during the COVID-19 pandemic warrants further investigation. Understanding how these factors interact can provide valuable insights into the broader implications of police behavior during emergencies and inform the development of policies that promote justice and equity.

Theoretical Framework

General Strain Theory (GST)

General Strain Theory (GST), developed by Robert Agnew in 1992, is a widely recognized framework in criminology that explains how stressors or strains in individuals' lives can lead to deviant behavior, including criminal activity. GST extends traditional strain theories by broadening the types of strain that might induce such behavior, beyond just economic factors. It posits that individuals who experience significant strain are more likely to engage in misconduct as a coping mechanism, particularly when they lack adequate resources to deal with their stress in a lawful manner.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, police officers worldwide, including those in Enugu State, Nigeria, were subjected to unprecedented levels of stress due to the heightened responsibilities and risks associated with enforcing public health measures. GST provides a useful framework for analyzing how the pandemic-induced stressors contributed to increased levels of police misconduct. The theory suggests that the strain experienced by officers—stemming from factors such as fear of infection, increased workload, public hostility, and organizational pressures—could have led to behaviors that deviate from legal and ethical standards.

Key Assumptions of the Theory

GST is grounded in several key assumptions:

1. **Multiple Sources of Strain**: Strain can arise from various sources, including the failure to achieve positively valued goals, the removal of positive stimuli, or the presence of negative stimuli. In the context of policing, these could include the inability to maintain public order effectively, loss of morale due to the pandemic, and the daily exposure to hostile or dangerous situations.
2. **Coping Mechanisms**: Individuals under strain may resort to criminal or deviant behavior as a way to cope with their stress, especially if they lack constructive means to address the strain.
3. **Influence of Individual Characteristics**: The likelihood of engaging in deviant behavior is influenced by individual characteristics such as temperament, past experiences, and access to social support, which can moderate the effects of strain.

Application to Enugu State During COVID-19

In Enugu State, police officers faced significant strain due to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. GST can be applied to understand how these strains contributed to the levels of misconduct observed during this period. For example:

- **Strain from Public Hostility**: Officers enforcing lockdowns, curfews, and mask mandates often encountered resistance from the public, leading to heightened stress levels. This public hostility, combined with the fear of contracting the virus, created a significant strain on officers, potentially leading to excessive use of force as a maladaptive coping mechanism.
- **Organizational Strain**: The rapid implementation of new public health mandates without adequate training or resources placed additional strain on officers. GST suggests that this organizational strain could have led to frustration and burnout, further increasing the likelihood of misconduct.
- **Personal Strain**: The personal lives of officers were also impacted by the pandemic, including concerns about the health and safety of their families. This added personal strain could have exacerbated the pressures they faced at work, contributing to lapses in judgment and ethical behavior.

General Strain Theory offers a robust framework for understanding how the unprecedented stressors of the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to increased levels of police misconduct in Enugu State. However, while the theory highlights the impact of individual and organizational strain, it must be used in conjunction with other frameworks to fully address the complex factors that lead to misconduct. This includes considering broader systemic issues and implementing comprehensive support systems to help officers manage the strains of their job effectively.

Police Subculture Theory

Police Subculture Theory explores the unique cultural norms, values, and behaviors that develop within police departments, influencing how officers perceive and react to their environment. This theory, grounded in the work of scholars like William Westley and Jerome Skolnick, suggests that the distinct subculture within law enforcement can lead to both positive and negative outcomes, including solidarity among officers and, conversely, resistance to change and accountability. The theory emphasizes that police officers, due to the nature of their work, develop a shared identity and a set of unwritten rules that govern their behavior.

The COVID-19 pandemic tested the boundaries of police subculture as officers were tasked with enforcing public health mandates under challenging conditions. In Enugu State, the pressures of the pandemic may have reinforced certain subcultural norms within the police force, contributing to an increase in misconduct. The Police Subculture

Theory provides a lens through which to analyze how these shared values and norms influenced officers' responses to the pandemic, particularly in relation to public interactions and the enforcement of new regulations.

Key Assumptions of the Theory

Police Subculture Theory is based on several core assumptions:

1. **Solidarity and Us-Versus-Them Mentality**: The theory posits that police officers develop a strong sense of solidarity, often viewing themselves as protectors against an untrustworthy or hostile public. This us-versus-them mentality can lead to a reluctance to hold fellow officers accountable for misconduct.

2. **Code of Silence**: A key aspect of police subculture is the "code of silence," where officers may be unwilling to report misconduct by their peers. This can perpetuate unethical behavior and hinder accountability within the force.

3. **Resistance to Change**: Police subculture often includes a resistance to external oversight and reforms, as officers may view these as threats to their autonomy or as undermining their authority.

Application to Enugu State During COVID-19

During the COVID-19 pandemic in Enugu State, the police subculture likely played a significant role in shaping how officers responded to the crisis. This can be analyzed in several ways:

- **Reinforcement of Solidarity**: The pandemic, with its associated risks and public hostility, may have strengthened the solidarity among officers, reinforcing the us-versus-them mentality. This could have led to increased instances of misconduct, as officers felt justified in using force to maintain order and protect themselves from perceived threats.

- **Code of Silence**: Incidents of misconduct during the pandemic may have been underreported or overlooked due to the code of silence. This subcultural norm could have prevented the exposure and correction of unethical behavior, allowing misconduct to persist.

- **Resistance to Public Health Mandates**: The enforcement of COVID-19 regulations, which were often seen as externally imposed, may have been met with resistance from officers. This resistance could manifest in the form of lax enforcement or, conversely, overly aggressive tactics to assert control and authority, reflecting the subculture's emphasis on autonomy and control.

Police Subculture Theory provides a critical framework for understanding how the unique cultural dynamics within law enforcement contributed to the levels of misconduct observed during the COVID-19 pandemic in Enugu State. The theory highlights the influence of shared values and norms on officers' behavior, particularly in high-pressure situations like a public health crisis. However, to effectively address police misconduct, it is essential to consider this theory alongside broader organizational and societal factors and to implement comprehensive reforms that promote ethical conduct and accountability within the police force.

Empirical Review

Sheptycki (2020), The Politics of Policing and a Pandemic Panic, explores the global impact of COVID-19 on policing, highlighting the pandemic as a unique event that brought police forces worldwide into the spotlight. The study emphasizes how the cultural and political contexts in different countries influenced how police enforced pandemic-related safety measures. It argues that in authoritarian regimes, where the use of emergency powers is more normalized, police misconduct may be more prevalent or accepted. In contrast, in neo-liberal societies, the enforcement of these measures led to significant public scrutiny and raised questions about the balance between public safety and civil liberties.

Okorie, Ngwu, Nwakozo and Nwokeoma (2024) investigate the rise in police misconduct during the COVID-19 pandemic in Enugu State, Nigeria, uncovering a significant increase in such behavior, with 54.6% of respondents reporting higher levels of misconduct, particularly corruption, which 43.3% identified as the most prevalent form. The study contextualizes these findings within Nigeria's socio-political environment, where longstanding issues of police accountability and corruption were magnified by the pandemic. The authors argue that the enforcement of COVID-19 safety measures exposed critical flaws in the Nigeria Police Force's (NPF) training, oversight, and community relations, calling for urgent reforms to enhance police accountability and restore public trust. The study provides crucial insights for policymakers and law enforcement agencies, emphasizing the need for systemic changes to address police misconduct and improve the effectiveness of law enforcement, particularly in times of crisis.

Reicher and Stott (2020), On Order and Disorder during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Reicher and Stott analyze the factors that contribute to social order or disorder during the pandemic, focusing on state-public relations, leadership, and policing strategies. They argue that the way in which police enforce public health measures can either foster social cohesion or exacerbate tensions, leading to disorder. The study identifies different policing typologies, such as legalistic, watchman, and service-oriented styles, and examines their impact on public compliance and social stability during the pandemic.

Thomson and Ip (2020), COVID-19 Emergency Measures and the Impending Authoritarian Pandemic. Thomson and Ip's study critiques the use of emergency powers during the COVID-19 pandemic, arguing that these measures often lean towards authoritarianism, even in democracies. The enforcement of such measures by the police can lead to the erosion of civil liberties, increased surveillance, and the use of excessive force. The study suggests that these authoritarian tendencies can manifest in police behavior, leading to abuses of power and misconduct.

Human Right Watch (2020), COVID-19 Clampdowns: Police and the Global Pandemic. The Human Rights Watch report provides a comprehensive overview of police misconduct during the COVID-19 pandemic across 60 countries. It documents instances where police forces used excessive force, conducted arbitrary arrests, and suppressed dissent in the name of enforcing public health measures. The report underscores the global nature of these abuses, noting that such actions often led to significant human rights violations.

Aborisade (2021), Accounts of Unlawful Use of Force and Misconduct of the Nigerian Police in the Enforcement of COVID-19 Measures. Aborisade's study focuses specifically on Nigeria, documenting various forms of police misconduct during the enforcement of COVID-19 measures. It uses a victim-centered approach to gather data from individuals who experienced physical violence, intimidation, extortion, and other forms of abuse at the hands of police. The study highlights the widespread nature of these incidents and calls for reforms to address the systemic issues within the Nigerian Police Force.

Research Design:

A mixed-method design was used, combining descriptive survey and qualitative exploratory approaches. This combination allows for a broad understanding of the subject matter and provides deeper insights through qualitative exploration.

Area of Study:

The study focused on Enugu State, located in the South East of Nigeria. Enugu State has 17 local government areas with a population of approximately 3.27 million (2006 census). It is located in the South East geo-political

zone. Enugu State was created on 27 August, 1991 from Old Anambra by the then Military President Ibrahim Babangida. The State shares borders with Abia State and Imo State to the south, Ebonyi State to the east, Benue State to the northeast, Kogi State to the northwest and Anambra State to the west. Enugu state has 17 Local Government Areas

Study Population:

The population of the study is 4,738,362. It is the estimated population of Enugu State gotten from the 2006 Nigeria Population Commission census data for the state which is

3,267,837 at a growth rate of 3% per annum.

The formula is Pt=Po (1+rt)

Where

Pt is the projected population at year t Po is the population for the base year r is the growth rate t is the number of years in this case:

r=3%=0.03 t=15

The table below shows the breakdown of the 2006 and estimated population of each Local

Governments Areas in Enugu State.

Table 3.1: Local Governments Areas in Enugu State 47

S/N	Name Of Local Governments Areas	Population	Population Projection 2006-2021 (15 years) by 3%
1	Aninri	136,221	197,520
2	Awgu	197,292	286,073
3	Enugu East	277,119	401,823
4	Enugu North	242,140	351,103
5	Enugu South	198,032	287,146
6	Ezeagu	170,603	247,374
7	Igbo Etiti	208,333	302,083
8	Igbo Eze North	258,829	375,302
9	Igbo Eze South	147,364	213,678
10	Isi Uzo	148,597	215,466
11	Nkanu East	153,591	222,707
12	Nkanu West	147,385	213,708
13	Nsukka	309,448	448,699
14	Oji River	128,741	186,674
15	Udenu	178,687	259,096
16	Udi	238,305	345,542
17	Uzo Wani	127,150	184,368
Total	Number of Population in Enugu State	3,267,837	4,738,362

Source: Nigerian Population Commission (2006)

Sample and Sampling Techniques:

A sample size of 600 respondents was determined using Cochran's formula, with participants selected from four local government areas (Oji River, Awgu, Udenu, Nkanu East) using multi-stage sampling. At the first stage, four

Local Government Areas from the 17 Local Government Areas in Enugu State will be purposively selected namely; Oji River, Awgu, Udenu and Nkanu East. Also, four boundary communities (Ugwu Oba, Obinwanne, Amala and Amechi Idodo) from the four selected Local Government Areas will also be purposively selected. In the second stage, proportionate stratified random sampling was used. This helped us to get a sample of 117, 180, 163 and 140 respondents from Oji River, Awgu, Udenu and

Nkanu LGAs respectively, making it a total of 600 respondents used for the study. Proportionate sampling technique is used because the populations in the four local government areas are not the same.

Table 3.2: Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling Formula

	The Four Local Government Areas				
	Oji River	Awgu	Udenu	Nkanu East	Total
Size	186,674	286,073	259,096	222,707	954,550

Source: Author Compilation

$$Proportion of the sample = \frac{Sample}{population} = \frac{n}{N}$$

Where: n = sample size (600)

Where: N =Total number of the population of the four selected LGA (954,550)

Substituting the values in the formula;

Proportion of the sample $= \frac{600}{954,550} = 0.00063$

The sample size for each stratum is computed as follows:

- • Oji River stratum   = $0.00063 \times 186,674$ = 117
- •   Awgu stratum   = $0.00063 \times 286,073 = 180$
- •   Udenu stratum   = $0.00063 \times 259,096 = 163$
- •   Nkanu East stratum   = $0.00063 \times 222,707 = 140$

Total sample size = 600

Table 3.3 List of Selected Border Communities in the various Local Government Areas

S/N	OJI RIVER (117)	AWGU (180)	UDENU (163)	NKANU EAST (140)
1	Ugwu Oba	Obinwanne	Amala	Amechi Idodo

Source: Author Compilation

In addition, 20 participants were selected purposively for in-depth interviews. Five (5) participants in Enugu Metropolis includes two (2) market leaders at Ogbete Main Market, Enugu, three (3) Peace Mass Transit bus drivers located at old park Enugu. Also, the five (5) participants in Nsukka Metropolis includes two (2) Romchi Mass Transit bus drivers and Three (3) Globis Motors Limited drivers located at Nsukka Town and finally one (1) Neighborhood Watch, two (2) Motorcyclist (Okada riders). Two (2) hawkers, one (1) artisan, four (4) police officers drawn from the checkpoints border between Abia, Anambra, Benue, Ebonyi and Enugu State.

Instrument for Data Collection:

Data were collected using a semi-structured questionnaire and an in-depth interview guide to capture both quantitative and qualitative data.

Administration of Instruments:

The instruments were administered by three trained research assistants, who were local to the selected communities and fluent in indigenous languages. In-depth interviews were conducted in settings chosen by the participants, with sessions recorded and non-verbal cues observed.

Method of Data Analysis:

A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods of data analysis was used in this study. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS 23.0, employing both descriptive and inferential statistics. Qualitative data were processed using QDA Miner5 Lite, with findings presented in tables, charts, and narrative analysis.

Result Presentation

4.1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents

Table 4.1.2: Distribution of the respondents by LGA

LGA	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Amaechi Idodo, Nkanu east	113	21.4
Amala, Udenu	141	26.8
Obinwanne	170	32.3
Ugwu-Oba Oji	103	19.5
Total	527	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2021

Data presented in Table 4.1.2 show that 21.4% of the respondents were from Amaechi Idodo in Nkanu East LGA, 26.8% were from Amala in Udenu LGA, 32.3% were from Obinwanne, while 19.5% were from Ugwu-Oba in Oji-river LGA. This is an indication that the respondents were fairly distributed across the LGAs which formed the study area, with Obinwanne having a slight higher margin of respondents.

Table 4.1.3: Distribution of the respondents by Sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Female	282	53.5
Male	245	46.5
Total	527	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2021

Table 4.1.3 presented data on respondents' sex as follows: 53.5% females and 46.5% males.

This is an indication that there were more female than male respondents for this study.

Table 4.1.4: Distribution of the respondents by Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18-28	344	65.3
29-39	90	17.1
40-50	44	8.3
51-60	37	7.0
62 and above	12	2.3
Total	527	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2021

Data presented in Table 4.1.4 show that 65.3% of the respondents are between 18-23 years old, 17.1% are between 29-39 years old, 8.3% are between 40-50 years old, 7% are between 51-60 years old, while 2.3% are 62 years and above. This implies that majority of the respondents are youth in their prime age as indicated and they occupy more than two-third of the total respondent at 82.4%.

Table 4.1.5: Distribution of the respondents by Level of education

Education	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No primary school	60	11.4
Primary school	74	14.0
Secondary school	222	42.1
University/Poly/College of Edu	125	23.7
Postgraduate education	46	8.7
Total	527	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2021

Data in table 4.1.5 shows that 11.4% of the respondents did not attend school at all, 14%, attended primary school, 42.1% attended secondary school, 23.7% attended

university/polytechnic or college of education while 8.7% acquired postgraduate degrees. This implies that a little more than half (56.1%) of the respondents acquired only basic education.

Table 4.1.6: Distribution of the respondents by Marital status

Marital status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Single	380	72.1
Married	127	24.1
Divorced	10	1.9
Separated	2	.4
Widowed	8	1.5
Total	527	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2021

Information on marital status of the respondents presented in above Table 4.1.6 show that 72.1% of the respondents are single, 24.1% of the respondents are married, 19.1% of the respondents are divorced, 0.4% of the respondents are separated, while 1.5% of the respondents are widowed. This implies that nearly two-third (72.1%) of the total respondents are single, which also aligns with data presented in Table 4.1.3 where the age distribution of the respondents show that they are mostly of youthful age.

Table 4.1.7: Distribution of the respondents by Occupation

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Acting	1	.2
Artisan	17	3.2
CEO	2	.4
Civil servant	22	4.2
Farming	42	8.0
Freelancer	6	1.1
Logistics	1	.2
Medical Practitioner	1	.2
Student	255	48.4
Teaching	27	5.1
Trading	108	20.5
Unemployed	45	8.5
Total	527	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2021

Occupation distribution of the respondents presented in Table 4.1.7 shows that: 0.2% were into acting, 3.2% were artisans, 0.4% were CEOs, 4.2% were civil servants, 8% were farmers, 1.1% were freelancers, 0.2% were into logistics, 0.2% were medical practitioners, 48.4% were students, 5.1% were teachers, 20.5% were traders, while 8.5% were unemployed. This implies that nearly half (48.4%) of the respondents were students.

Table 4.1.8: Distribution of the respondents by Religion

Religion	Frequency	Percentage (%)
African Traditional Religion	27	5.1
Christianity	434	82.4
Islam	58	11.0
Others	8	1.5
Total	527	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2021

Data on religious affiliation of respondents presented in Table 4.1.8 above shows that 5.1% practice African Traditional Religion, 82.4% practice Christianity, 11% practice Islam, while 1.5% practice other sundry religions. This implies that majority of the respondents, over two third (82.4%) in the study area are Christians. This also shows the dominant religious practice of the study area, implying that out of every 10 inhabitants of the study area, eight are Christians.

Table 4.1.9: Distribution of the respondents by length of stay in Enugu

Length of stay in Enugu	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1-5 months	24	4.6
6-11 months	9	1.7
1-5 years	164	31.1
6-10 years	80	15.2
11-15 years	92	17.5
16-20 years	80	15.2
Above 20 years	78	14.8
Total	527	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2021

Data on respondents' length of stay in Enugu were presented in Table 4.1.9. It shows that 4.6% of the respondents have only lived in Enugu for 1-5 months, and 1.7% has lived for 6-11 months, 31.1% has lived for 1-5 years, 17.5% lived for 11-15 years, 15.2% lived 16-20 years while 14.8% has lived for above 20 years. This implies that majority of the respondents have lived in Enugu for more than five years and are therefore well fitted to make valuable contribution on the issues of this study.

Table 5.1.12: Distribution of the respondents on their encounters with the police during COVID-19 pandemic

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Both positive and negative	4	.8
Negative	216	41.0
None	24	4.6
Not sure	184	34.9
Positive	99	18.8
Total	527	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2021

Data presented in Table 5.1.12 shows response on encounters with the police during COVID19 pandemic. It indicates that 0.8% of the respondents had both positive and negative relationship with the police, 41% of the respondents had negative relationship with the police,

4.6% of the respondents did not relate with the police at all, 34.9% of the respondents are not sure if they had any engagement on either side of the divide with the police, while 18.8% of the respondents had positive relationship with the police. Impliedly, four out of every 10 persons who engaged with the police during the COVID-19 pandemic are most likely to have negative encounter with them as shown by the 41% of the respondents who indicated negative relationship with the police.

Table 5.1.13: Distribution of the respondents by whether preventing movement across state borders by the police was a necessary duty of the police

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Don't know	1	.2
Fully	196	37.2
Not at all	118	22.4
Partially	211	40.0
Others	1	.2
Total	527	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2021

Data presented in Table 5.1.13 shows that 0.2% of the respondents do not know whether preventing movement across state borders by the police was a necessary duty of the police, 37.2% of the respondents indicated that it is fully police duty, 22.4% indicated that it was not police duty at all, 40% of the respondents indicated that it is partially police duty to do so, while 0.2% of the respondents indicated other sundry opinions. This implies that preventing movement across state borders by the police was a necessary duty of the police during the COVID-19.
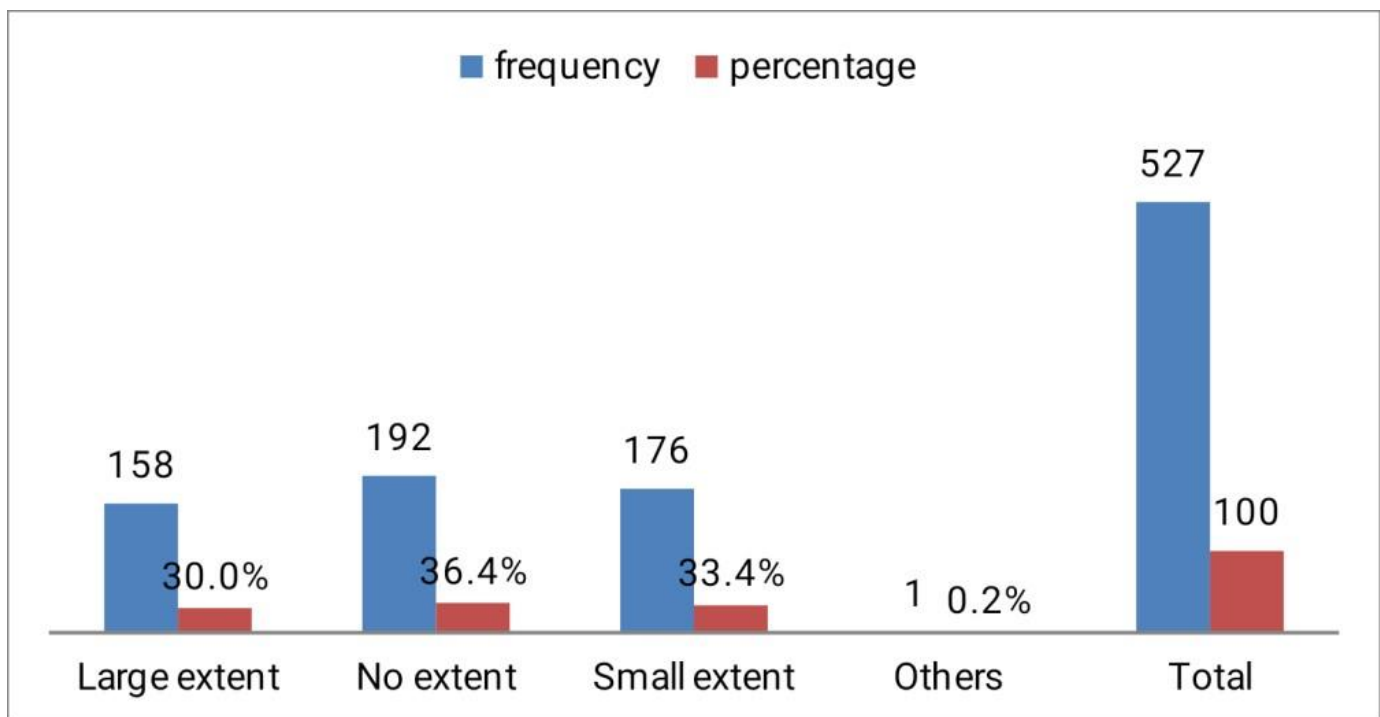

Figure 5.1.4: Distribution of the respondents by whether police were effective in enforcing the use of face mask in Enugu state

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2021

On whether police were effective in enforcing the use of face mask in Enugu State, figure 4.2.4 shows the following responses: 30% of the respondents stated that the police were effective to enforce the use of face mask, 36% did not indicate the extent police enforced the use of face mask, 33.4% of the respondents believe that the

police was effective to a small extent, and 0.2% of the respondents indicated other opinions. This implies that the police were not fully effective in enforcing the use of face mask in Enugu state during COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 5.1.14: Distribution of the respondents by whether police helped in enforcing <u>social distancing in public transport during the COVID-19 pandemic</u>

Social Dist	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Fully	125	23.7
Not at all	83	15.7
Partially	319	60.5
Total	527	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2021

On whether police helped in enforcing social distancing in public transport during the COVID-19 pandemic, data presented in table 5.1.14 shows that 23.7% of the respondents stated that the police fully helped, 15.7% stated that the police did not help at all, while 60.5% of the respondents indicated that the police partially helped in enforcing social distance in public transport during the period. This implies that the police did not partially assist in enforcing social distancing during the COVID-19 period.

Table 5.1.15: Distribution of the respondents by whether police targeted more men than women during COVID-19

Police target	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No	337	63.9
Not sure	48	9.1
women are perceived calmer	31	5.9
Yes	88	16.7
More tips are gotten from men	23	4.4
Total	527	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2021

Data presented in Table 5.1.15 show responses on whether police targeted more men than women during COVID-19. It indicated that 63.9% of the respondents opined "no", 9.1% of the respondents opined "not sure", 5.9% pined "women are perceived calmer, 16.7% opined "yes", while 4.4% opined "more tips are gotten from men". This implication of the foregoing is that no particular sex was specifically the target of law enforcement during COVID-19

Table 5.1.16: Respondents responses by whether women were sexually assaulted by the police during the COVID-19

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No	347	65.8
Not sure	77	14.6
Not witnessed	9	1.7
Yes	94	17.8
Total	527	100.0

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2021

Table 5.1.16 presents data on whether women were sexually assaulted by the police during the COVID-19. It shows that while 65.6% of the respondents answered "No", 17.8% of thr respondents answered "Yes". Also, 14.6% of the respondents are not sure whether women were sexually assaulted by the police during the period, while 1.7% of the respondents did not witness the scenario under examination. This implies that women were not sexually assaulted during the COVID-19 by the police, as majority of the respondents (65.8%) maintained.

Table 5.1.17: Distribution of the respondents by category of people and businesses mostly affected by police misconduct during the COVID-19 pandemic in Enugu state

Items	Yes	No	Undecided	Total
Traders	389 (73.8%)	106 (20.1%)	32 (6.1%)	527 (100%)
Artisans	237 (45.0%)	161 (30.6%)	129 (24.5%)	527 (100%)
Small-scale manufacturers	248 (47.1%)	178 (33.8%)	101 (19.2%)	527 (100%)
White-collar workers	237 (45.0%)	161 (30.6%)	129 (24.5%)	527 (100%)
Drivers and other road workers	406 (77.0%)	79 (15.0%)	42 (8.0%)	527 (100%)
Government workers not affected	235 (44.6%)	223 (42.3%)	69 (13.1)	527 (100%)
Religious leaders	171 (32.4%)	259 (49.1%)	97 (18.4%)	527 (100%)

Source: Author's Fieldwork, 2021

Table 5.1.17presents data on category of people and businesses mostly affected by police misconduct during the COVID-19 pandemic in Enugu state. Businesses such as Trading, Artisanship, Small-scale manufacturing, White-collar job and Drivers/road workers consistently received more percentage response on "Yes" followed by "No" and then "Undecided" responses. This pattern was reversed for the remaining two entries on government workers, in which majority of the respondents indicated that they were not affected and religious leaders in which most of the respondents indicated that they were not affected by police misconduct during COVID-19 period. The implication therefore is all businesses were affected by police misconduct during the COVID-19 pandemic at varying level drivers/other road workers, and traders were affected the most respectively in a descending order. However, government workers were not affected by police misconduct during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Discussion Of Findings

Impact on Categories of People and Businesses During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The study found that traders and drivers/road users were the most affected by police misconduct during the COVID-19 pandemic in Enugu State, as they faced the brunt of extortion, harassment, and abuse by law enforcement officers. This is consistent with previous research, such as the studies by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC, 2020a; 2020b), which highlighted the arbitrary extortion of drivers and other commuters during the pandemic. Additionally, reports from across Nigeria indicated that police officials assigned to enforce COVID-19 restrictions often acted unprofessionally, leading to the violation of human rights, including the destruction of goods and properties (Adiele, 2020; Hanafi & Affe, 2020). The targeting of traders and road users can be attributed to their frequent interactions with the police at checkpoints and during routine inspections, making them particularly vulnerable to exploitation. This pattern of abuse reflects a broader trend of systemic misconduct among Nigerian law enforcement, where those in lower socio-economic classes are disproportionately affected by corrupt practices.

Gender Dynamics in Police Misconduct During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The study revealed that there was no significant difference in the treatment of men and women by the police during the COVID-19 pandemic in Enugu State. Both genders were subjected to similar levels of misconduct, indicating that gender did not play a major role in influencing the nature or extent of police abuse. This finding contrasts with some previous studies that have documented gender-specific forms of police violence, particularly against women, in other contexts (Akinlabi, 2017; Igbo, 2017). However, the study does highlight an incident where a female police officer was killed by a colleague while enforcing movement restrictions (Akasike, 2020; Social Development Integrated Centre, 2020), which underscores the internal dynamics of gender relations within the police force itself rather than in their interactions with the public. This incident may suggest underlying issues of gender-based violence within law enforcement agencies, even if such biases were not outwardly evident in the enforcement actions during the pandemic. The equal treatment of men and women by police in Enugu during this period could be viewed as either a neutral stance or as indicative of a uniformly harsh enforcement policy that did not discriminate based on gender.

Conclusion

This study examined the impact and gender dynamics of police misconduct during the COVID-19 pandemic on various demographics and businesses in Enugu State, Nigeria, with a focus on identifying the most affected groups, the influence of gender, the levels of misconduct, and the contributing factors. The findings revealed that traders and drivers were the most impacted, facing extortion, harassment, and abuse, particularly at checkpoints, aligning with broader reports of police exploitation during the enforcement of COVID-19 measures. Both men and women experienced similar levels of misconduct, indicating no significant gender bias in police actions. The study also found that police misconduct was notably high during the pandemic, driven by factors such as corruption, lack of accountability, and the strain of enforcing new public health measures. Despite the uniform application of enforcement actions, the systemic nature of police misconduct, exacerbated by these contributing factors, highlights the urgent need for comprehensive police reforms, particularly in accountability and training, to prevent future abuses and ensure fair law enforcement practices.

Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the following four recommendations are proposed:

Enhance Accountability Mechanisms: Establish and strengthen independent oversight bodies to monitor police activities, particularly during emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic. This will ensure that police officers involved in misconduct are held accountable and that there are clear consequences for their actions.

Implement Comprehensive Police Training: Introduce mandatory training programs focused on ethics, human rights, and de-escalation techniques, especially during public health crises. Training should emphasize the importance of fair treatment for all demographics, with specific modules on avoiding corrupt practices and handling public health enforcement duties with integrity.

Reform Police-Citizen Interaction Protocols: Develop and enforce clear guidelines for police interactions with the public during emergencies. These protocols should prioritize non-violent approaches, minimize unnecessary checkpoints, and ensure that enforcement actions do not disproportionately impact vulnerable groups such as traders and drivers.

Promote Gender-Sensitive Policing: Introduce gender-sensitive policies and training within the police force to address the unique needs and experiences of both men and women. Although the study found no significant gender bias, ongoing attention to gender dynamics is crucial to preventing potential gender-specific misconduct in the future.

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