

Full Length Research

An assessment of the nature and patterns of Police brutality under Buhari's civilian administration

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The 1999 constitution as amended, positioned the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) with the core mandate of law enforcement in Nigeria. Hence, it has become the lead law enforcement institution in Nigeria, meant to maintain peace and order in society and uphold the Human Rights of Citizens. Nonetheless, incidents exist of Police Brutality on Nigerians. Such occurrence of Police Brutality has been reoccurring from Nigeria's Colonial Era to the Era of Buhari's Civilian Administration (2015-2022). Said incident places a dent in Nigeria's Human Rights track records in the International Community. To understand why the issues of Police Brutality occur in Nigeria, an examination of what informs it under a set time frame is needed. As such this study assessed what informed the occurrence of Police Brutality in Nigeria. It does this by interrogating the nature and patterns of Police Brutality by tying it to the occurrence under Buhari's Civilian Administration. In doing so, this study adopted the qualitative method to examine the subject matter of concern as well as embraced the Cognitive theory as its theoretical underpinning. Findings show that the nature of Police Brutality under Buhari's Civilian Administration is anchored by the inputs from the inorganic foundations, its regime focus and the structural encumbrances of the Nigerian Police force. Also, its patterns revolve around an environment of impunity and the EndSars protest as a catalyst for police reform.

Key Words: Police, the Nigerian Police, Police Brutality, the Buhari Administration

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INTRODUCTION

The Police is an institution of the State set up to promote law and order by enforcing the laws and maintaining order in society (Fraiser, 2012). In carrying out its mandate, the Police are expected to act professionally and ethically in the discharges of their duties (Bittner, 1970). Likewise, they are expected to conduct themselves in the discharge of their duties to the communities they police, with civility and treat citizens with the highest level of dignity and respect, thereby

upholding their fundamental rights (Valcke, 2012). Such professionalism and conduct by the Police propels citizens' trust and respect for the police thereby allowing for a symbiosis between the police and society. Such symbiosis produces as its byproduct of inclusiveness, community and ownership for the Police in Society (Bittner, 1970; Fraiser, 2012; Valcke, 2012). And so, such allows the deepening of Law and Order in society and enhances the Police in the delivery of its mandates. The aforementioned are the ideal conditions expected of the Police in any society.

Despite the above, incidents or occurrences of the reverse by the Police occur in society. Such incidents occur when the Police in the discharge of their duties conduct themselves in such a manner that abuses the Dignity and Rights of its citizens eroding society's trust and confidence in the Police (Okoye, 2021). Such incidents are termed Police Brutality (Cole, 2021). Police Brutality connotes the abuse by the Police of the powers and privileges entrusted to them in the discharge of their duties (Ulo, 2021). Such abuses can include, illegal arrest, illegal search and seizure, excessive and not proportionate use of force in the discharges of their duties, police intimidations, extrajudicial killings, etc (Bowling et al., 2004). Said abuses erode in society the confidence and trust they have in their police force. Hence, a question that emerges is what are the features and patterns that exist in a society that informs Police Brutality.

In Nigeria, incidents of Police Brutality have been repeated occurrences from Colonial rule under the British, to Independence, both Civilian and Military rule and the current Fourth Republic (i.e. beginning in 1999), (Ulo, 2021). Under Buhari's Civilian Administration (2015-2022), incidents of Police Brutality continue to occur, despite the Administration's pledge for police reforms and respect for the rule of law ("Buhari Administration at 7", 2022; Mbamala, 2022). One of the most glaring such incidents of Police Brutality was Police harassment of citizens, especially youths, by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) (Ulo, 2021). Said occurrence was responded to by the EndSars Event. An Event that culminated from repeated calls by Nigerian citizens to end Police Brutality, especially as conducted by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) (Mbamala, 2022). It led to a movement that intensified in 2017 and built up to 2020 with endsars protests and the alleged Lekki Massacre (Mbamala, 2022). Said occurrence of Police Brutality under the Buhari civilian administration led to the adoption was a continuum of the recurring issues of Police Abuse in Nigeria from the preceding Administration. Police Brutality is of greater focus under Buhari's civilian administration granted the euphoria of popular support that swept Buhari into government at the Federal level in Nigeria in 2015, (Busari, 2017). Likewise, was the commitment made by the Buharis during the campaign to reform the Nigerian Police.

Granted the forgoing, this study hence emerged out of the pondering on what features, characteristics and patterns exist with respect to the Nigerian Police Force that informs to the continual occurrence of Police Brutality using Buhari's civilian administration as a scope. To do so, relevant concepts are examined to inform this study's findings.

CONCEPT OF POLICE

Since the dawn of time, social life has been regulated by social consensus enshrined into law (Bittner, 1970). Hence, through such consensus, society has realised that for progress, development, and dignity to exist, there needs to be existing law and order (Valcke, 2012). In pursuit of such, as human civilisation progressed, they set down laws and institutional frameworks that aimed for an organised society (Chapter 1, 2018). One of the frameworks for delivering on such an aim was the Police (Section 1, n.d). As an institution, it originates from centuries of historical evolution, such as from municipal watchmen to civic guards, into a force that represents the civil authority of society that maintains laws and order (Bittner, 1970; Fraiser, 2012).

Hence, the Police or Policing is an integral part of the justice system in any given polity, aiming to forestall chaos, maintain law and order, prevent crimes, and promote fairness and equity in their society (Fraiser, 2012). To do their jobs and deliver on the mandate, the Police must have the intangible assets of legitimacy, trust, impartiality, neutrality, respect, friendship, and services within their embedded community (Kennedy, 1993). Likewise, it must be armed with the tangible assets of the instrumentality of force and the agency of violence geared with the legitimate authority to deploy it to ensure compliance (Kennedy, 1993). Such asset class at the disposal of the Police facilitates the response of policing that meets the needs of its citizens. And this is done within the context of law and order and promoting justice in a society. That said, the Police can therefore be seen as an institution of the state that harnesses the levers of non-negotiable coercive force in upholding law and order in society (Fabian, 2014). And so, such powers given to it by society allowed its functions to be primarily anchored on the control and prevention of crime and the maintenance of law and order (Kennedy, 1993)

POLICE BRUTALITY

In the conduct of their duties and functions, Policing institutions are often confronted with the issue of how to wield and deploy the powers and privileges entrusted to them by society to maintain law and others (Mbamala, 2022). A proportional use of these powers and privileges in the discharge of Policing responsibility is the elected answer to the aforementioned issues, yet occurrences of disproportionate use of police powers on policed communities arise in society. When such happens, they are termed Police brutality (Fabian, 2014). Hence, an understanding of what this term connotes is relevant to the subject matter of this study. As such, Police Brutality can be said to be, activities perpetuated by policing authorities involving excessive or disproportionate use of policing power on society (Okoye, 2021). Such

excessive use of force on society by the police creates in the members of such a community an imagery of fear, terror, distrust, loss of confidence and avoidance of the police.

Police Brutality is appropriately termed because it involves acts that are considered harsh, brutal, terrorizing, disconcerting and at variance with the mandate of the Police. Such activities include genocide, torture, enforced or involuntary disappearance, extralegal, arbitrary or summary execution, arbitrary arrest and detention, and racial discrimination (Bowling et al., 2004, p. 16). Many of such acts are themselves illegal for the Police to carry out, yet they occur at the hands of none other than a law-enforcing institution. The message Police Brutality sends into the minds of a society is that the dignity and rights of citizens are not guaranteed and any member of society can be victimised by the Police in the discharge of their duties. All of these are anthesis to the core mandate and functions of the Police.

Hence, as mentioned above, such action by the police towards their policing public, especially regarding the violation of their rights, constitutes "police brutality." (Ulo, 2021). The aspect of brutality is further emphasised by the fact that those that are meant to protect and uphold, the law and maintain order, are themselves breaking the law and perverting order (USIDHR, 2021). Citizens are trapped in the psychological and emotional perception that they are not safe with their Policing authority, as these authorities cannot uphold their rights and dignity.

Moreover, the incidents of Police Brutality in any society worldwide are a vast violation of the rights of citizens (Mbamala, 2022). Such rights, called human rights are guaranteed, by national laws and international conventions as fundamental and inalienable (USIDHR, 2021). Yet, Police Brutality connotes the sidestepping of such international and universal conventions of policing based on the dignity and respect for the rights of people are jettison. Police Brutality therefore is a Human rights violation both within the territorial context and in the international sphere (USIDHR, 2021).

Of note is the detrimental consequences of Police Brutality on the fundamental objective of the Police. Given the mandate of the police is to enforce the law and maintain order, the occurrence of police brutality negates the mandate of the police (Cole, 2021). The act of Police Brutality spells the violations of laws the Police are entrusted to enforce and the incitement of disorder in a society. Furthermore, it abuses the partnership and symbiosis that ought to exist between the police and a society that promotes trust, and confidence and enhances the functional objectives of the Police (Bittner, 1970; Fraiser, 2012; Valcke, 2012). As such, it can be said to diminish the functional objective of the Police within a given society.

THE BUHARI CIVILIAN ADMINISTRATION

The Buhari Civilian Administration is the federal executive government of Nigeria (Elumoye, 2022). Such is the central government of Nigeria that exercises the sovereign authority of the Nigerian State as prescribed by the 1999 constitution as amended. Likewise, it is a civilian government as opposed to a military government that Nigeria had in the past. Also, Buhari's Civilian Administration is a departure from his Military Regime in the 1980s (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2016).

It is led by the President of Nigeria, President Muhammadu Buhari ("The Buhari Administration at 6", 2021). He was first elected in 2015, winning an election that defeated an incumbent President, President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (Busari, 2017). It was also one of the first times in Nigeria's Fourth Republic (i.e. 1999 to date) that federal executive power shifted from the then-ruling party, the People's Democratic Party (PDP), to an opposition party, the All Progressive Congress (APC), (Elumoye, 2022). Likewise, it was the first instance in Nigeria's history when an incumbent President lost an election (Busari, 2017).

Hence, President Buhari was sworn in for his first tenure (i.e. constitutionally set at Four years, to be re-elected once) on May 29, 2015., from where he began the composition of his government (Busari, 2017). Then, President Buhari contested for the second tenure in 2019 and won, returning to power and reconstituting his administration for the second time ("Buhari Administration at 7", 2022). In both electoral cycles, Buhari campaigned and based his administration policy on three agendas: fixing the Economy, Stabilising Security and fighting Corruption (Nwafor, 2021). Of this principle agenda of the Buhari administration, the area of prime concern to the subject matter of this study is that of Security, in which issues of policing, from the perspective of police brutality, were the mainstay issue for focus.

POLICING AGENDA OF BUHARI CIVILIAN ADMINISTRATION

In 2015, the Buhari Administration came to power during the 2015 General elections, defeating an incumbent ruling party (Okolo & Karimo, 2017). Such was achieved on the backbone of its "Change" mantra, which translated to a desire to reform the governance system to be more responsive and deliver the dividends of democracy to citizens (Peter, n.d). Providing suitable Security was one of the critical campaign programs of the Buhari Administration, which included police reforms (Centre for Democracy and Development, 2016). However, given the popularity and support the Buhari Administration earlier enjoyed, the issues of Police Brutality and Human Rights Violations in Nigeria

continued to rear their ugly head during the lifetime of this administration (Okolo & Karimo, 2017). Such necessitated several reforms in the Nigeria Police, which is still under observation for deliverables. Hence, the Buhari administration has committed to improving the Nigerian Policing Architecture as its primary agenda (Adesina, 2019). In doing this, the Buhari administration has focused on improving the legal frameworks of the Police, increasing funding, equipping the Police, retraining them, re-organisation, institutionalising internal checks and balance mechanisms, and others (Murtala, 2019).

Such arises because the issue of Police brutality continues to rear its head in Nigeria. Such brutality by the Police, especially by its SARS component, triggered one of the largest protests (i.e., mainly driven by Nigerian youths), the "EndSARS protest of 2020", which paralysed an important nexus of the Nation's financial capital, Lagos (Iwouha & Aniche, 2021). Such culminated in the Lekki Toll Gate massacre that brought a further spotlight to the activities of human rights violations in Nigeria by the Nigerian Police (Ulo, 2021). Such forced a measure of reforms, of which the outcomes need to be accessed to gauge its delivery in Nigeria's policing, human rights, and justice compliance.

NATURE OF POLICE BRUTALITY UNDER BUHARI'S CIVILIAN ADMINISTRATION

The police are expected to serve society by aiding in maintaining law and order (Adesina, 2019). Hence, they are supposed to take on a partnership role in their activities. However, in any situation where the reverse becomes the case, outcries of Police Brutality are the result (Ulo, 2021). In Nigeria, human rights violations occur in the form of police brutality by the Nigerian Police (Adesina, 2019). Hence, an understanding of the nature that informs police brutality in Nigeria under Buhari's Civilian administration must be addressed. Such provides knowledge of the characteristics and triggers for such brutality, adding the understanding of why they occur and possibly how they can be addressed (Nwanze, 2014). That said, examining the nature of police brutality, especially tying it to the Buhari's of the study is essential in examining the pull and push factors that characterise and shape the occurrence of police brutality in Nigeria, especially in the time frame of 2015 to 2022.

Hence, this study has identified from its review of works of literature that the nature of police brutality in Nigeria, especially from 2015 to 2022, as it portends to Buhari's civilian administration can be broadly grouped into three. Said can be examined in tracing the characteristics of police brutality in Nigeria as it relates to Buhari's civilian administration which explains the push and pull factors that lead to police brutality in Nigeria, which violates the Human rights of its citizens. Given that, the three examined include:

INORGANIC FOUNDATIONS

The first nature that shaped police brutality under Buhari's civilian administration with repercussions on the human rights of Nigerian citizens examined is that characterised inorganic growth shaped by the legacy and indoctrination of colonial rule in Nigeria. The British began to colonise Nigeria in 1861 with the annexation of Lagos (Obaro, 2014). By 1914, the British created the Colony of Nigeria, which remained under British Colonial rule until Nigeria gained its independence from Britain in 1960 (Obaro, 2014). Under colonial rule, the British created the predecessor to the Nigerian police force to enforce and maintain law and order in Colonial Nigeria (Ulo, 2021). The colonial police of Nigeria were conditioned to carry out their duties as they related to the colonial interest of the British and not those of the indigenous population (Cole, 2021).

Hence, it can be interpreted that Nigeria's colonial master did not give Nigeria an organic police force. The policing force created for Colonial Nigeria was imbued not to render service to the Nigerian society but as a policing institution in Nigeria that was created and imbued to protect the then-colonial regime in Nigeria (Cole, 2021). Such is because the Nigerian Police can trace its historical origins to the colonial period through the activities of the British colonial authorities operating in Nigeria at that time (Aborisade and Obileye, 2017). Hence, the Nigerian Colonial Police, in carrying out its duties, did not place the human rights of the indigenous population as a priority but prioritised the interest of the country's colonial rulers (Ekwunife et al., 2021).

Such occurred because the Nigerian Police was established as a product of the British, Nigeria's then coloniser, not the indigenous people of Nigeria. As such, it can be said that the establishment of the Nigerian police was not an action that was indigenous to Nigeria, which then limited the Nigerian police force to function as an institution that was supposed to serve and protect the rights of citizens. Hence, the colonial administration of Nigeria justified actions with excessive use of force and prolonged detention to enforce their policy against the indigenous Nigerian population which threatened the interest of the colonial regime (Obaro, 2014). The Nigerian colonial police operation in such an environment began to develop the characteristics of impunity and brutality that live with it in the 21st century, as a result of its inorganic characteristics (Obaro, 2014).

And so, under the influence of colonialism, the Nigerian Police under Buhari's civilian administration retains the colonial mindset crafted by the British to serve the interest of the ruling authority and not its citizens (Ulo, 2021). Hence, the Nigerian police were not originally envisaged to serve and protect the interests of Nigerian society, as it organically should do. Such is at variance with the development of police in any society which is expected to take the form of organic growth (Fabian,

2014). Given that, the expectation is for a police force to originate from the desire of a society to protect itself from anarchy in the state of nature and establish and maintain law and order (Fabian, 2014). Instead, the Nigerian police as it exists today under Buhari's civilian administration is an offshoot of colonial rule, they were created by the British as the then-foreign colonisers of Nigerians, an instrument to maintain the ruling authorities' survival. And so, under Buhari's civilian administration, it operates as a vehicle for the ruling authorities' protection and not to serve the people's interests. And so, the occurrence of Police Brutality is the culminated effect of such inorganic development. Such an inorganic nature is indoctrinated in the culture of the Nigerian police, as it was not an organic creation of the Nigerian society to serve the societal interest (Aborisade&Obileye, 2017). Instead, it is an inorganic entity created by foreign colonisers to promote their self-serving interests (Obaro, 2014). After Nigeria gained independence, the Nigerian political class kept the colonial structures of the Nigeria Police, and it made no efforts to correct it, thereby keeping the Nigerian police as an instrument for serving the regime's interest and not societal interest. (Aborisade&Obileye, 2017; Ulo, 2021). Such is an attributive nature of Police Brutality under Buhari's civilian administration in Nigeria.

REGIME FOCUS

Secondly is the regime focus imprint of Military rule on the Nigerian police especially as it portends to Buhari's civilian administration. The imprint of military rule on the Nigerian police is shaped by the fact that the Nigerian military has ruled Nigeria for over 25 years. Given the duration of military rule in Nigeria, the Nigerian military's command and authoritarian control style had an infusion into the conduct of the Nigerian Police (Aborisade and Obileye, 2017). President Buhari was a Military Head of State, as such the culture of the military command and control system infused into his handling of the Police under his civilian administration

After coming to power via the undemocratic process of a coup d'état, the first action of the military is to suspend the constitution, human rights, and civilian government and to assume the absolute sovereign authority of the state devoid of the people's consent (Ulo, 2021). In doing so, the Nigerian military subsumed government institutions in Nigeria as instruments for maintaining their draconian rule. Under such a condition, the Nigerian Police, on the instruction of the Nigerian Military authorities, committed human rights violations to protect such regimes (Cole, 2021). It was possible as the Nigerian police under military rule in Nigeria were only accountable to the military government and hardly had to worry about human rights concerns in that environment (Onouha et al., 2021).

Such command style practices mentality is still in play

for the Nigerian Police, especially Buhari's civilian administration (Ojigho, 2021). Hence, the Police were used to enforce the draconian policy of military dictators (Obaro, 2014; Ulo, 2021). Under the Buhari Civilian Administration from 2015 to 2022, this military imprint reinforces the earlier inputs of colonial indoctrination and the legacy of the Nigerian police. Hence it created a default culture in the mindset of the Nigerian police of regime protection and not the human rights protection of its citizens (Obaro, 2014, 425; Ulo, 2021, p. 183). It is so today, as the political class and ruling elites in Nigeria have replaced the British as colonial masters and the military as draconian authoritative despots in the hierarchy of power in Nigeria (Ojigho, 2021). So, the Nigerian Police is tailored to serve the interest of this new class of rulers. Such is evident that as of 2019, of Nigeria's 371 800 police personnel, 150,000 of them were tasked to guard highly-status individuals in Nigeria, called Very Important Persons (VIPs) (Akpede, 2019). That meant that over 40% of the available persons in the Nigerian police were tasked with guarding VIPs and not rendering service to society in general (Akpede, 2019). And so, it can be seen as it occurred under colonial rule and military rule that from 2015 to 2022, the Nigeria Police served the interest of the Nigeria ruling class even at the detriment of the broader Nigerian society. So the protect the regime of the ruling class, such indoctrination is reflected in the nature of the Nigerian Police continually perpetrating actions of Police Brutality on the general public in Nigeria. Such can be found in the EndSars Event and its resultant Lekki Massacre incident.

STRUCTURAL ENCUMBRANCE

Finally, structural encumbrance characterises and induces the police to violate citizens' human rights, especially under Buhari's civilian administration. In these areas, the issue revolves around the outdated legal framework for policing. For example, the most recent reform to the Nigerian policing law, the Nigerian police act, was in 2020, after decades (Ulo, 2021). Likewise, the Nigerian police are faced with inadequate funding; consistently, its budget can only attend to personnel costs and doesn't attend to operational needs (Akpede, 2019). Even at that, police pay is relatively small, encouraging the police to prey on citizens to earn a living, thereby fuelling acts of brutality and encouraging corruption in the Nigeria Police (Aborisade and Obileye, 2017). Also, it is reported that the Nigerian police, as of 2021, had above 370,000 personnel for a country of over 200 million, which is inadequate for policing (Ulo, 2021; Statista, 2022). Yet, the qualifications of those recruited are substandard to the norm (Obaro, 2014). Another milieu here is the politicisation of the Police and poor orientation (Aborisade and Obileye, 2017). The Nigerian Political class has utilised the police as a medium for

regime protection, positioning them against citizens' interests (Iwuoha&Anichie, 2021, p. 4). Such is a continuation of the poor orientation given to the Nigerian police since colonial rule (Obaro, 2014, 425). All these make the Nigerian Police view its citizenry not as partners in maintaining law and order but as prey to be utilised to achieve self-serving interests. And so, a mix of the influence of colonial indoctrination and legacy, imprints of military rules, and structural issues in the Nigerian police has brought into the Nigerian state reality the issue of Human Rights violations via police brutality. The EndSars protest became a milestone in Nigerian citizens' struggles to correct the defect in the Nigerian police as an instrument for regime protection to service to the public (Zinat, 2021). Such action has tilted the conversation in Nigeria's public space to the much-claimed change in policing in Nigeria.

PATTERNS OF POLICE BRUTALITY UNDER BUHARI'S CIVILIAN ADMINISTRATION

From pieces of literature reviewed for this study, it was observed that the nature of police brutality in Nigeria that led to human rights violations and the reports of the Nigerian Police perpetuating it, especially under the Buhari Administration from 2015 to 2022, which informs its pattern.

ENVIRONMENT OF POLICE IMPUNITY

In this, the inorganic foundations of colonial legacy and indoctrination, regime focus influence of military rule and structural encumbrance confronting the Nigerian police have created an environment of impunity that aids the occurrence of incidents of police brutality, especially under the Buhari's civilian administration. As a result, reports of such brutality continued from 2015 to 2022, despite the Buhari Administration's efforts to reform the police (Bass, 2020). Such was because the political will to resolve the issue of police brutality was lacking, as the problem persisted. The EndSars protest was, therefore, the catalyst that pushed the government to disband SARS and further commit to police reforms, even setting up, for the first time in Nigeria's history, judicial panels of inquiries across the country to investigate cases of police brutality (Amnesty International Nigeria, 2020). Such occurred despite an environment of police impunity that exists that expresses itself as police brutality. Addressing such requires the political will of the which showed Buhari's civilian administration as well as the engagement of society.

ENDSARS AS A CATALYST FOR POLICE REFORM

Also, another pattern of note was that the EndSars protest in 2020 was a catalyst that spurred the conversation around reforms, as evidenced by the

Nigerian setting up the Judicial Panel of Inquiries (Lagos State Independent Panel of Inquiry, 2021). Said panels awarded damages to victims of police brutality, recommended police officers for investigation and discipline and gave recommendations on reforming Nigeria's policing system to end police brutality. The protest has encouraged police reform efforts. Efforts include moves to amend the Police Act of 2020 and the Police Trust Fund (i.e. to finance the police) to increase the regulatory and legal frame, for policing in Nigeria, to be responsive to the Human rights of citizens (Amnesty International Nigeria, 2020). Likewise, actions like disbanding the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) and establishing the police service complaint committee (i.e., dealing with abuse of police powers). Such efforts aim to re-orient and restructure the Nigerian police to be responsive to the need to protect the Human Rights of citizens, especially in carrying out its operations (Chow, 2020).

Hence, it shows that ending police brutality is possible in Nigeria but will require concrete government efforts and political will as well as continuous demand-led engagement and activism of citizens via civil society to push through changes. These two, a government and a citizen-centred civil society, are what it will take. Although caution is needed, as the EndSars have shown, due to the document massacre that it led to, the police and the Nigerian government are ready to apply forceful action to stem activist demand for change (Chow, 2020). So, cautionary constructive engagement must be the focal point in the engagement process. Doing so enables the issues of political will and paying lip service to police reforms in Nigeria to be addressed. Police reforms and their implementation will be driven by the Nigerian government alone and by the collaboration of external bodies to the Nigerian government, like media, faith-based and civil society organisations. Such encourages transparency and accountability.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study adopts the qualitative method as it allows this research to immerse itself in works of literature to discern information relevant to the subject matter of the nature and patterns of Police Brutality under Buhari's Civilian Administration from 2015 to 2022. In doing so, this study utilised the descriptive design as its blueprint for engaging the subject matters of this research article.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theory is a tool for analysis, prediction and explanation (Miller, 2022). In performing this role, theories help interpret events and predict future outcomes (Murray and Beglar, 2009). Hence, they become fundamental frameworks for understanding

issues. This study's theoretical underpinning was based on the cognitive theory which is explained below;

THE COGNITIVE THEORY

The cognitive theory emerged as a window to explain the rationale behind behaviours and conditions that give outcomes. As such it is a theory that focuses on the interactions between an individual or entity, its environment and the process of understanding its environment (Frederiksen, 1984). As a theory, it bases its roots in psychology and seeks to understand and provide an explanation of how behaviours and conditions can be rationalised in assessing the outcomes they produce. Jean Piaget a Swiss psychologist is referenced as a major contributor to the development of this theory (Lefa, 2014). This theory holds three major assumptions as its tenets, which are that behaviours and conditions that give outcomes can be assessed, and that rationale influences the ways and manners our behaviours and conditions that exist respond to an environment (Gonzalez-Prendes and Resko, 2012). Lastly, the rationale behind behaviours and conditions that produce outcomes can be targeted, modified and changed (Gonzalez-Prendes and Resko, 2012).

Likewise, cognitive theory is anchored on the interrogation of the cognitive process that informs the rationale that produces outcomes within a given society (Miller, 2022). Such comes from reasoning derived from the socialisation process ("What are the three main psychological theories of crime", 2021). Hence, it can be interpreted that the reason for the nature and patterns of police brutality in Nigeria under the Buhari Civilian Administration from 2015 to 2022 stems from the bankrupt moral thinking of the Nigerian Police, that they are meant to serve the regime in power and not the people. Such indoctrination of the Nigerian police that their service is in the interest of the ruling authority and not the people creates a culture of impunity that permits the occurrence of police brutality in Nigeria. Hence, the cognitive process for policing in Nigeria is informed by Nigeria's experience with an inorganic foundation influenced by colonial indoctrination and legacy, the regime focus influences of military rule on the Nigerian police and the structural deficiencies in the Nigerian police. These inputs that exist in the cognitive process of the Nigerian police shape the nature and patterns of police brutality in Nigeria and influence the Nigerian police in its view of what policing is about in Nigeria. Such a view makes them turn on the people as a source of revenue and not as partners in policing. Holding on to this theory means that any attempt to resolve the issue will be anchored on changing the orientation and structure of the policing in Nigeria and incorporating independent platforms for monitoring, evaluation and reporting on police brutality. Doing so creates an environment that produces in the mindset of the Nigerian police the

cognitive thing of upholding the human rights of citizens, thereby creating a rationale that promotes an end to the occurrence of police brutality.

CONCLUSION

Despite the episode of Police Brutality as a path of the Nigerian police experience, an understanding of its nature and pattern has been scarce. Hence, from this study undertaking a pathway for such an understanding is opened. Such is further given importance as the focus of this research has been on Buhari's civilian administration from 2015 to 2022, given Buhari's due hat of being once a Military Head of state of Nigeria and now as a Civilian ruler. From the study, it can be ascertained that the nature of police brutality in Nigeria under Buhari's civilian administration can be anchored on an inorganic foundation shaped by the colonial legacy and indoctrination of colonial rule in Nigeria, where the Nigerian Police were used as a vehicle for the colonial regime's protection and not to serve the interest of the indigenous people. Such has shifted under Buhari's civilian administrations from the then-colonial master to the now-ruling authorities in Nigeria. Secondly, the regime focused influence of the military rule era, whereby the Police were used as a tool to enforce the draconian policy of military dictators, which still translates to the incident of police brutality under Buhari's civilian administration. Finally, structural encumbrance revolves around the outdated legal framework for policing, inadequate funding of the Police, poor qualification for recruitment, inadequacy in equipment for the Police, the politicisation of the Police and poor orientation under Buhari's civilian administration. Likewise, the patterns of police brutality noticed under Buhari's civilian administration is an environment of impunity which encourages continuous incidents of police brutality and the EndSars which catalyzes police reforms. All these make the Nigerian Police view its citizenry not as partners in maintaining law and order but as prey to be utilised to achieve self-serving interests. A mix of these animates into the Nigerian state reality of the issue of Human Rights violations via police brutality. The EndSars protest has tilted the clamour for change in policing in Nigeria.

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