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Research Article

**Trends and Patterns of Police Professional Misconduct in Nigeria: Analyses of
Newspaper Reportage (2008-2018)**

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Abstract

Professional misconduct involving police officers has consistently put the Nigeria Police Force in a bad light and negatively impacts the public image of the law enforcement agency. In view of this, this study investigated incidents of police professional misconduct recorded in Nigeria between 2008 and 2018. Differential association theory and situational choice theory were employed as conceptual framework. Data were strategically elicited through content analysis of the online versions of three purposively selected first generation national newspapers in Nigeria. The results revealed that 137 cases of police professional misconduct were captured within the timeline. The highest percentage (32%) of the cases was reported in 2017 with Lagos State alone accounting for 29.9%. Furthermore, the involvement of police personnel in unethical behaviour was generally high in the last four months of every year. Extra-judicial killing (36.5%) was the most commonly reported type of police professional misconduct.

Keywords: police misconduct, police officers, Nigeria Police Force, Nigeria

JEL Codes: H83, Y10, Z18

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Araştırma Makalesi

**Nijerya'da Polislik Meslekleğini Suistimal Eğilimleri ve Örnekleri: Gazete
Röportajlarının Analizleri (2008-2018)**

Usman A. Ojedokun^a , Chinedu E. Dinne^b & Ikem G. Ujene^c

Öz

Polis memurlarının karıştığı mesleki suiistimaller, Nijerya Polis Gücünü sürekli olarak kötü bir ışığa soktu ve kolluk kuvvetlerinin kamuoyundaki imajını olumsuz etkiledi. Bunun ışığında, bu çalışma Nijerya'da 2008 ve 2018 yılları arasında kaydedilen polisin görevi kötüye kullanma olaylarını araştırdı. Kavramsal çerçeve olarak farklı çağrışım teorisi ve durumsal seçim teorisi kullanıldı. Veriler stratejik olarak, Nijerya'da amaçlı olarak seçilen üç birinci nesil ulusal gazetenin çevrimiçi versiyonlarının içerik analizi yoluyla elde edildi. Sonuçlar, zaman çizelgesi içinde 137 polis mesleğini suistimal vakasının yakalandığını ortaya koydu. Vakaların en yüksek yüzdesi (%32) 2017'de bildirilmiştir ve yalnızca Lagos Eyaleti %29,9'dur. Ayrıca, polis personelinin etik dışı davranışlara karışma oranı genel olarak her yılın son dört ayında yüksektir. Yargısız infaz (%36,5) polisin profesyonel görevi kötüye kullanmasının en sık rapor edilen türüydü.

Anahtar Kelimeler: polis suistimali, polis memurları, Nijerya Polis Gücü, Nijerya

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Introduction

Professional misconduct of police personnel is among the universal problems confronting police organizations worldwide (Prenzler & Lewis, 2005; Klockars, Kutnjak & Haberfield, 2006; Porter & Warrender, 2009; International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2011; Dean & Petter, 2011). Professional misconduct simply connotes all forms of behaviours exhibited by employees that negates the work ethics and prescribed standard codes of conducts of their organization. Although while it is true that the dimension, frequency, and intensity of police professional misconduct, as well as the attention given to it vary widely, its occurrence often has serious deleterious effects on victim(s), the police department which the deviant officer(s) represents, and other police officers respecting the ethics of their profession (Igbinovia, 1985; Skolnick & Fyfe, 1993; Bayley, 2002; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Son & Rome, 2004; Pino & Johnson, 2011). The involvement of a police officer(s) in a professional misconduct does not only constitute a deviance, the fact that the possibility of detecting and/or prosecuting officers perpetrating such acts is slim makes it particularly problematic. Generally, police misconduct has been broadly categorized to include sex-driven crimes, economic crimes, and crimes bordering on the excessive use of force (Stinson, Liederbach, Lab & Brewer, 2016).

In Nigeria, the involvement of police personnel in acts constituting professional misconduct is rife and wide ranging (Onyeozili, 2005; Hills, 2008; Ojedokun, 2010; Agbiboa, 2015, Ojedokun & Badmus, 2022). Indeed, the unethical conduct involving officials of the Nigeria Police Force is closely tied to the institutional legacy of the law enforcement agency (Akinlabi, 2017a). For instance, Tamuno (1970) reported that a total of 117 police officials were prosecuted and convicted for offences such as corruption, stealing, false pretenses and "other offenses bordering on dishonesty" between January, 1952 and March, 1955. Over five decades after Tamuno's analysis, police professional misconduct still constitutes a serious issue in Nigeria in spite of the fact that unethical behavior is expressly forbidden among police personnel (Ojedokun, 2010). Despite the fact there is dearth official national statistics on the recorded incidents of police misconduct in Nigeria, its frequency of occurrence as exemplified in the large array of media reports on the issue demonstrates its problematic nature (Adejoro, 2023; Sahara Reporters, 2022; The Cable, 2019).

Police professional misconduct is a major problem confronting the Nigeria Police Force (Hills, 2008; Alemika, 2010; Ojedokun & Badmus, 2022; Agbiboa, 2015; Akinlabi, 2017a). Consequently, the legitimacy of the law enforcement agency is increasingly being questioned, while its public image and integrity is consistently being tarnished and undermined by the actions of some of its personnel engaging in unethical and unprofessional conduct. Therefore, a study of this nature is imperative and apt considering the fact it does not only provide significant insight into the problem of police professional misconduct in Nigeria, but it equally suggests some useful recommendations which can assist police chiefs and police managers in Nigeria to make informed policy decision towards addressing it.

Moreover, although issues bordering on police corruption and police brutality have been widely researched in Nigeria (Udosen, Etiuma, Ugare & Basse, 2006; Aremu, Pakes & Johnston, 2011; Oluwaniyi, 2011). However, there is paucity of recent and holistic research on other forms of professional misconduct involving police officials. Therefore, this research was conceived to fill this gap and thereby further expand the frontiers of knowledge in this area. Against this background, the central objective of this study was to investigate the trends and patterns of cases of police professional misconduct which occurred in Nigeria between 2008 and 2018. It was guided by these research questions: (i) what is the yearly trend of the recorded cases of police professional misconduct in Nigeria between 2008 and 2018? (ii) what is the

spatial distribution in the recorded cases of police professional misconduct that were recorded in Nigeria between 2008 and 2018? (iii) what types of police professional misconduct were recorded in Nigeria between 2008 and 2018? (iv) what forms of punishment did the Nigeria Police Force mete-out to police personnel involved in professional misconduct between 2008 and 2018?

Literature Review

Police integrity is among the major contentious issues in most parts of the world. For instance, the police in Australia and United Kingdom at different points in time have been accused of engaging in unethical behavior (Yeadon, 2006; MacPherson, 1999; Newburn & Webb, 1999). Also, several cases bordering on professional misconduct have been linked to police departments in the United States of America (Chappell & Piquero, 2004). Similarly, the New Zealand Police Service has also been enmeshed in a series of scandal bordering on the allegations of officers committing rape and sexual assault since 2004 (Rowe, 2009). Moreover, policing operations in Nigeria have been characterized by personnel misuse of power (Akinlabi, 2017b).

The nature of police profession provides officers with unique opportunities for engaging in crime and other forms of misconduct because they routinely operate alone and often with little or no direct supervision (Stinson *et al.*, 2016). Apart from the fact that police profession creates room for personnel to engage in misconduct, it equally gives them excuses to legitimize their actions (Chappell & Piquero, 2004). Indeed, it is a common practice amongst police officials to shield their colleagues from being held accountable for their misdeeds (Donner & Jennings, 2014). Although the majority of police personnel are people of sterling qualities, unscrupulous officials are present in every police agency (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2006).

Police officials' involvement in acts of misconduct has the potential for breeding multiple devastating consequences for police organizations and the society at large. For instance, Lynch and Diamond (1984) articulate that acts constituting police misconduct are wide-ranging and could be criminal or civil in nature. In the opinion of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) (1999), the occurrence of police misconduct is capable of having devastating impacts on the police and members of the public. Stinson *et al.* (2016) assert that crimes involving police personnel generally calls into question police legitimacy and the integrity of police departments. On his own part, Igbinovia (1985) states that effective crime control would be impossible, while policing would be replaced with a totally different concept whenever there is a general prevalent belief that the police are not much different from common criminals, thugs and crooks. Furthermore, Bayley (2002) maintains that the fact that community willingness to assist the police in conducting their operations is typically hampered by peoples' negative perceptions of the police. In essence, cases of police misconduct can have multiple ramifications for a police agency and the community it serves (Skolnick & Fyfe, 1993).

Punch (2003) asserts that police organizations typically recognize the involvement of some officers in unethical conducts and frequently link the problem to the 'rotten apple metaphor'. Donner and Jennings (2014) describe the involvement of police officials in unethical behaviours as ironic since they are expected to uphold the law. Mastrofski (2004) laments that police crimes frequently go unreported and are often less noticed by police leadership. Apart from the fact that victims of police misconduct usually encounter barriers in the course of seeking justice, people affected are often unwilling to seek redress against law enforcement officials (Collins, 1998). Conversely, police agencies with cordial police-public relations are likely to receive more complaints bordering on officers' unethical behaviors from members of

the public (Lersch & Mieczkowski, 2000). In his own submission, Punch (2009) identifies organizational factor as the main foundation for police misconduct. Also, Reiss (1971) observes that police officers typically do not arrest their colleagues that are involved in unethical conducts. Moreover, police officers engaging in professional misconduct are unlikely feel remorseful if they are aware that they would continue to enjoy their departments' support regardless of their victims' complaints (Chappell & Piquero, 2004).

Theoretical Background

Differential association theory (DAT) and situational choice theory (SCT) were adopted as the conceptual framework for this study. DAT was employed to explicate the values, definitions and motivations underlying the decision of police officials to engage in unethical conduct while SCT was adopted to explain the situations and contexts encouraging police misconduct. DAT was first developed in 1939 and was further expanded in 1947. Edwin Sutherland was the major proponent of DAT which posits that the social environment where individuals found themselves plays a crucial role in their involvement in criminal behaviors as the techniques for perpetrating crimes and the definitions (i.e., motives, drives, values, rationalizations etc.) supporting such illegal acts are frequently learned through the processes of associating and communicating with other people (Vold & Bernard, 1985; Williams & McShane, 1999). Another key proposition of DAT is that individuals' propensity towards law violation is not a product of their social or psychological conditions they are experiencing. Rather it is an outcome of the way they defined those conditions. Thus, the theory argues that people have the tendency to break the law when the definitions favorable to law violation outweigh the definitions that are unfavorable to law violation. Police personnel involved in professional misconduct are likely to have learned and imbibed the values and definitions supporting such unethical conducts through excessive associations, communications, and contacts with their colleagues who are already engaging in behaviors that violate the normative expectations of their law enforcement agency.

Situational choice theory sees the situation as being central to the decision of the individual when engaging in rational calculation about whether or not to carry out a specific criminal act (Murray & Topalli, 2014). The theory views criminal behavior as the specific outcome of the choices and decisions that are made within the context of situational constraints and opportunities (Murray & Topalli, 2014). Therefore, the decision of an individual to engage in a criminal act is frequently influenced by the available opportunities, risks, and benefits that are associated with certain types of crime which together constitute the situation (Clarke & Cornish, 1983). Furthermore, SCT opines that the interaction between the motivation and the associated opportunity (financial reward, knowledge of the necessary skills and techniques needed for crime commission, and understanding of the risks and strategies for avoiding detection) typically culminate into criminal acts (Murray & Topalli, 2014). Another key tenet of SCT is that the modification of the features of a given social situation can prove to be highly effective in reducing the probability of occurrence of a given criminal act. Policing profession presents ample opportunity within a legitimate social context for some personnel of the Nigeria Police Force willing to engage in conducts that negate the ethics of the policing profession with minimal risk and/or with little chances of being detected and exposed.

Methodology

The descriptive research design was employed in this research. Data were strategically collected through the content analysis of incidents of police professional misconduct which occurred in Nigeria between 2008 and 2018 which were reported in the online versions of three purposively selected first generation national newspapers. The adoption of this approach was considered apt for this study because police organizations and police officials are typically unforthcoming in providing information considered to have the tendency to expose their wrongdoings (Reiss, 1971; Fishman, 1978). This situation is particularly true for the Nigeria Police Force, the organization from which it is usually very difficult to access *sensitive* and *vital* information. Specifically, three newspapers, namely The Guardian, The Punch, and Vanguard were purposively selected for this research. The selection of these news outlets was informed by the fact that they are among the first-generation (oldest) national newspapers in Nigeria which make their news coverage to be more comprehensive and broader in scope than regional and local newspapers. More importantly, unlike some other national newspapers, all the three selected newspaper outlets have their own individual dedicated online search dialogue box where current and archived news reports on different topics could be virtually sourced and retrieved. Similarly, the justification for the selection of the 2008-2018 timeframe was that online newspaper archiving of cases of police misconduct started gaining momentum in 2008. Data harvesting spanned a period of 10 months, starting in February 2018 and ending in January, 2019. The procedure for the collection of data essentially involved searching for news reports of cases relating to police misconduct in the search dialogue box provided on the websites of each of the newspapers covered. Some of the searched keywords included: ‘police officers dismissed for misconduct’; ‘Nigeria Police Force sacked its officers for misconduct’; ‘police officers convicted for misconduct’, ‘police corruption in Nigeria’, ‘police killings in Nigeria’, ‘police brutality in Nigeria’, ‘police harassment in Nigeria’ amongst others. Relevant news reports on the subject matter collated from each of the selected news outlets were individually sorted and arranged along yearly basis. Then, the contents of incidents in each of the covered cases of police professional misconduct were carefully read, compared, sieved (so as to avoid the tendency for repetition), analysed, interpreted and discussed. Moreover, to avoid duplication, only one source was taken in all the cases in which a particular incident was seen to have been reported by all the selected news outlets. Thereafter, the relevant data that were harvested were carefully sorted and assembled based on the identified sub-themes of the research. At the analysis stage, the descriptive statistics including charts, frequency distribution, and line graph were essentially deployed.

Results and Discussion

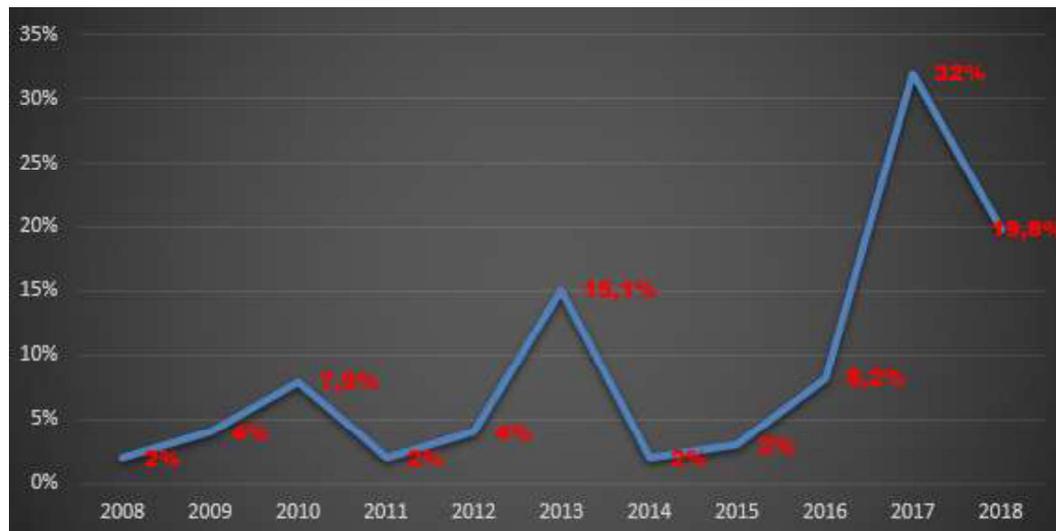
A total of 137 cases of police professional misconduct in Nigeria that were reported in the three news outlets between 2008 and 2018 were carefully reviewed. Consequently, this section presents and discusses the data analysed along the major sub-themes of the study.

Yearly Trend of Police Professional Misconduct in Nigeria between 2008 and 2018

Analysis of the yearly trend of police professional misconduct in Nigeria reported between 2008 and 2018 was conducted as a way of gauging the magnitude and direction of the problem.

Figure 1

Yearly Trend of Police Professional Misconduct in Nigeria (2008-2018)



Note. Created by the author.

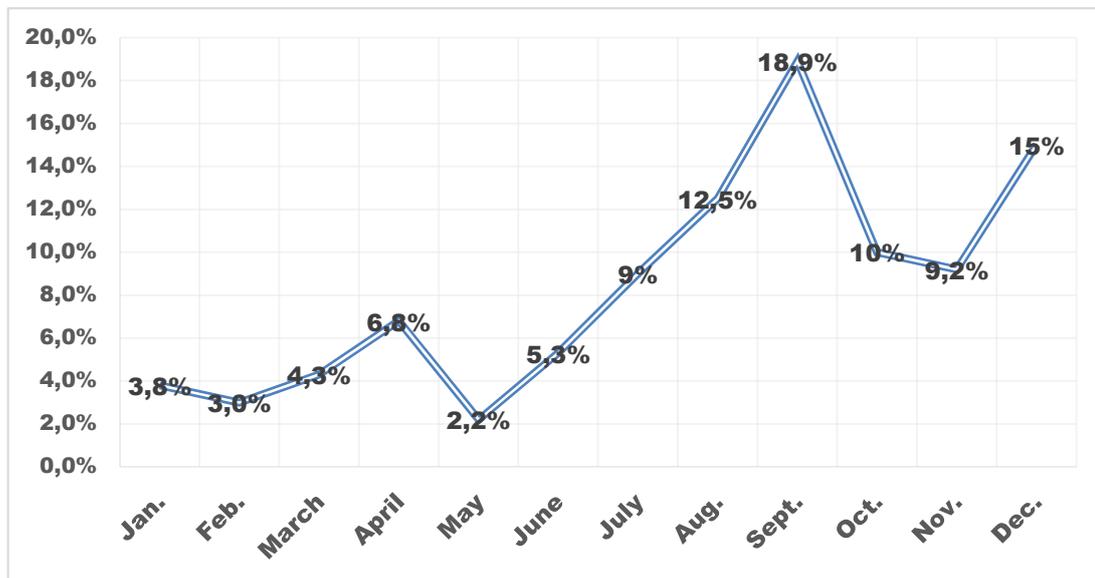
It is evident from figure 1 that different cases of police professional misconduct were annually recorded in Nigeria between 2008 and 2018 with varying frequency and intensity. The graph indicated that the highest percentage of incidents (32%) was recorded in 2017, followed by 2018 which accounted for 19.8%. Also, a considerable proportion of the cases (15.1%) happened in 2013. The breakdown for the remaining years considered were: 2016 (8.2%); 2010 (7.9%); 2009 (4%); 2012 (4%); 2015 (3%); 2008 (2%) and 2011 (2%). Furthermore, the high percentages of cases recorded in 2017 (32%) and 2018 (19.8%) could be explained as resulting from the operations and activities of officers serving in the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) that were widely accused of engaging in different forms of human rights violations bordering on extra-judicial killing, extortion, engaging in unlawful stop and search, conducting indiscriminate raiding and arresting of citizens amongst others in these periods (Olawoyin, 2018; Ogundipe, 2018; Onyekwena, 2018, Ojedokun, Ogunleye & Aderinto, 2021). Similarly, a substantial proportion (15.1%) of the incidents of police professional misconduct reported in 2013 could be attributed to the clashes that occurred in this period between the police and some members of some opposition political parties during the time of electioneering campaigns preceding the 2015 general elections (Adebowale, 2013; Onoyume, 2013). This finding is in line with the observation of Akinlabi (2017b) that policing operations in Nigeria have been frequently characterized with personnel misuse of power. Equally, SCT views situational constraints and opportunities as central in the decision and choices of criminals (Murray & Topalli 2014).

Analysis of the Reported Cases of Police Professional Misconduct in Nigeria by Month (2008-2018)

To further generate information on the patterns of police professional misconduct in Nigeria that were reported within the timeframe considered, the monthly distribution of the recorded cases was also analysed. Figure 2 contains the output of the analysis.

Figure 2

Monthly Distribution of the Reported Cases of Police Professional Misconduct in Nigeria (2008-2018)



Note. Created by the author.

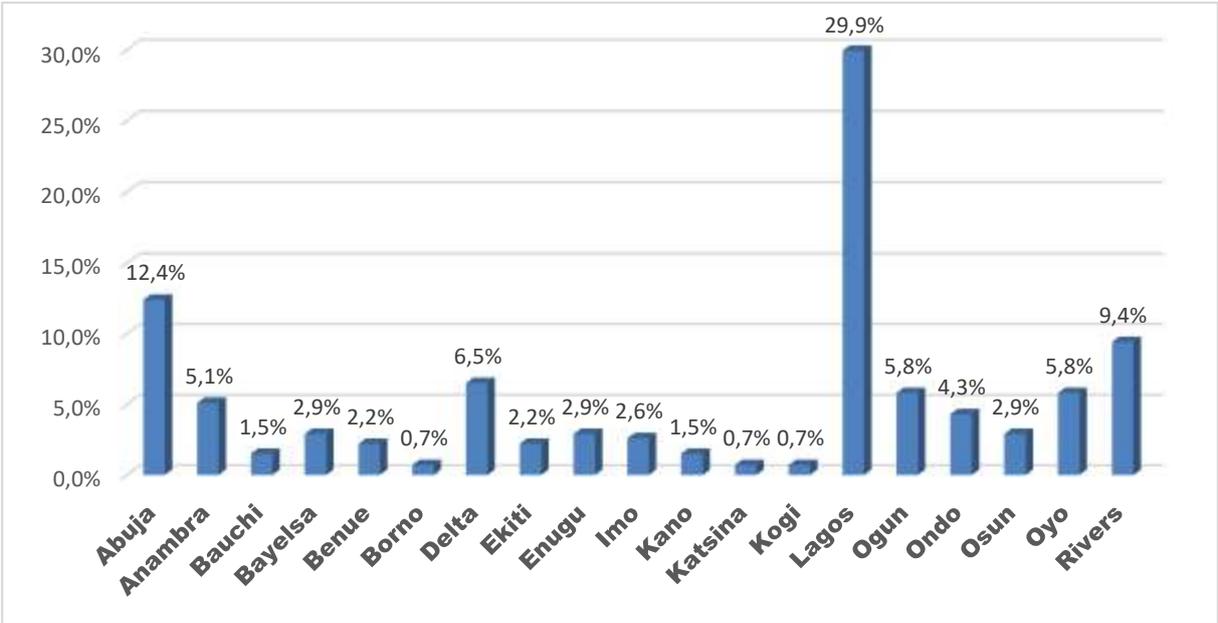
Findings revealed that most of the incidents of police professional misconduct (18.9%) which occurred within the period reviewed were recorded in September, followed by August which accounted for 12.5%. Also, 15% of the incidents took place in December. The months of November and July equally accounted for substantial proportions of the cases with 9.2% and 9% respectively. The distribution for the outstanding months were April (6.8%); June (5.3%); March (4.3%); January (3.8%); and February (3.0%). The month of May had the least share (2.2%) of the recorded incidents. It is clear from this result that the occurrence of police professional misconduct in Nigeria is not time-bound as it occurs all year round. Nonetheless, its frequency of occurrence gained more momentum towards the end of the year, from August to December. This observed pattern of occurrence can be attributed to the frenzy that normally characterised the Nigerian socio-economic space in the last few months of the year as people prepare for the Christmas season and the arrival of the New Year. Typically, in the last few months ending the year (August to December), many people in Nigeria usually engage in different licit and illicit activities in a bid to generate more income before the New Year. Also, many Nigerians usually embark on long-distance trips to reunite and celebrate the yuletide season with their loved ones. Therefore, the rise in the socio-economic activities often recorded in this period as compared to the previous months is likely to increase police-citizens' encounters. Consequently, suitable social contexts are presented in this situation for police officials to engage in more acts of professional misconduct. This finding supports the position of Moran (2005) that certain situations and contexts often orchestrate incidence of police corruption. Equally, it validates a key tenet of DAT which states that the learning of the drives, motives and techniques play crucial role in the occurrence of criminal behaviors.

Analysis of Reported Cases of Police Professional Misconduct in Nigeria by State (2008-2018)

The generated data were also analysed on the basis of all the States in Nigeria including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) to determine the patterns of concentration and distribution of the incidents.

Figure 3

Occurrence of Police Professional Misconduct in Nigeria by State (2008-2018)



Note. Created by the author.

Analysis in figure 3 showed that 19 out of the 36 States and the Federal Capital Territory (Abuja) witnessed different cases of police professional misconduct between 2008 and 2018. A further breakdown of the patterns of occurrence indicated that the lion shares of the incidents (29.9%) was recorded in Lagos State, while the FCT Abuja also accounted for 12.4%. Equally, 9.4% of the incidents of police professional misconduct happened in Rivers State, while 6.5% of the cases were recorded in Delta State. Moreover, Ogun State and Oyo State individually accounted for 5.8%, while Anambra State witnessed 5.1% of the incidents. All the remaining States recorded less than 5% of cases bordering on police professional misconduct within the period under review. It can be gleaned from this result that though police professional misconduct is an issue that is generally widespread in Nigeria, its intensity and frequency often vary considerably across the geopolitical zones. This finding is also in line with one of the core arguments of DAT which states that the frequency, duration, priority, and intensity of crime vary significantly during individuals’ interactions. Specifically, the South-Western States of Ekiti, Ogun, Lagos, Ondo, and Osun were the most affected, followed by the States in the South-South zones (Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers). The South-Eastern States of Anambra, Enugu, and Imo were also considerably affected. Apart from the FCT Abuja, incidence of police professional misconduct was generally low in Northern Nigeria between 2008 and 2018. This identified discrepancy in the pattern of occurrence may either be due to the fact that there is a variation in the willingness of the residents of these regions to tolerate police professional misconduct which ultimately had an implication for their dispositions towards seeking redress and the demand for police accountability. This position is in tandem with the observation of

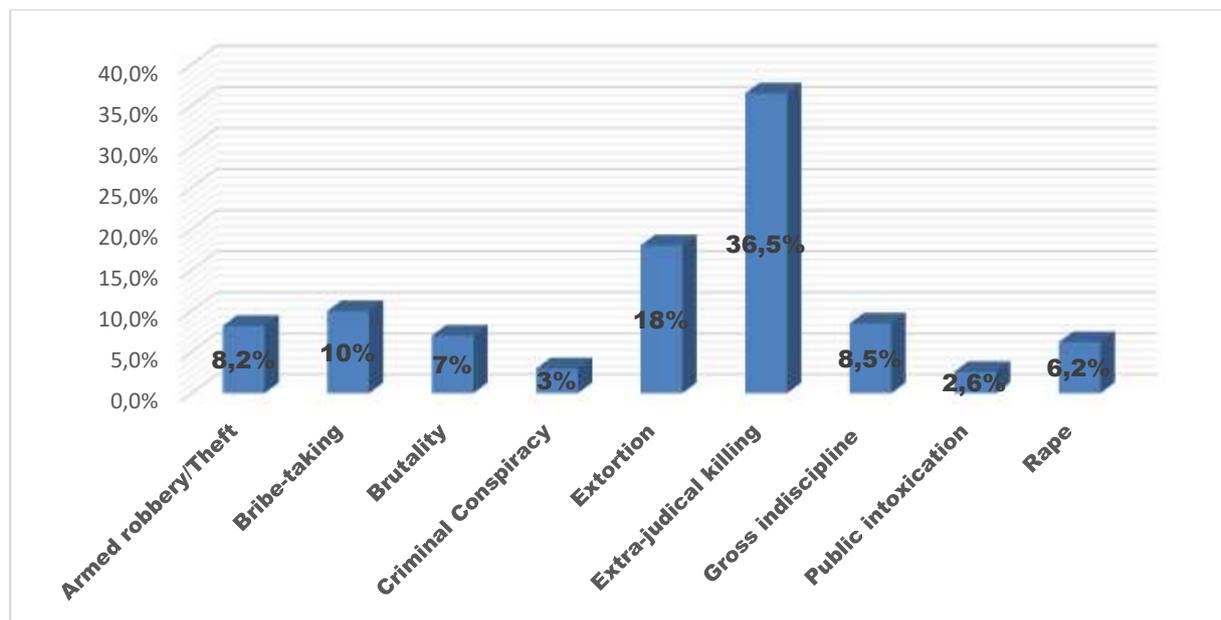
Lersch and Mieczkowski (2000) that police agencies that prioritize cordial police-public relations are likely to receive more complaints bordering on officers' unethical behaviors from members of the public.

Types of Police Professional Misconduct Recorded in Nigeria between 2008 and 2018

To ascertain the nature and gravity of unethical conducts involving police personnel, the analysis of the types of police professional misconduct in Nigeria that were reported between 2008 and 2018 was conducted. The analysis is presented in figure 4.

Figure 4

Types of Reported Cases of Police Professional Misconduct in Nigeria (2008 and 2018)



Note. Created by the author.

It is clear from figure 4 that extra-judicial killing was the police professional misconduct that was mostly recorded (36.5%) in Nigeria between 2008 and 2018. Equally, bribery/extortion also had a significant percentage (18%) followed by gross indiscipline (8.5%). The other forms of police professional misconduct recorded within the period reviewed were armed robbery/theft (8.2%); brutality (7%); rape (6.2%); criminal conspiracy (3%); and public intoxication (2.6%). It is clear from this finding that the professional misconduct which police officials in Nigeria committed within the period considered involved simple and serious offences that were financial and non-financial in nature. Also, most of these cases of professional misconduct involved the use of violence on victims. This finding supports the proposition of SCT that peoples' criminal propensity is often influenced by their perceived opportunities, risks and the expected benefits that are associated with their intended actions. Also, this result is in tandem with the observation of Stinson *et al.* (2016) that police misconduct are typically sex-driven crimes, economic crimes, and crimes bordering on excessive use of force. Equally, the fact that extra-judicial killing (36.5%) and bribery/extortion (18%) were more recorded within the timeline does not necessarily mean that they are more common than other forms of police professional misconduct. Rather, their high percentages could be due to the fact that they are the types that are more easily detected. For instance, extra-judicial killing by police officials is a gruesome act that is less likely to be tolerated and more likely to be reported than the others when detected. In June 2005, the Nigeria Police Force was enmeshed

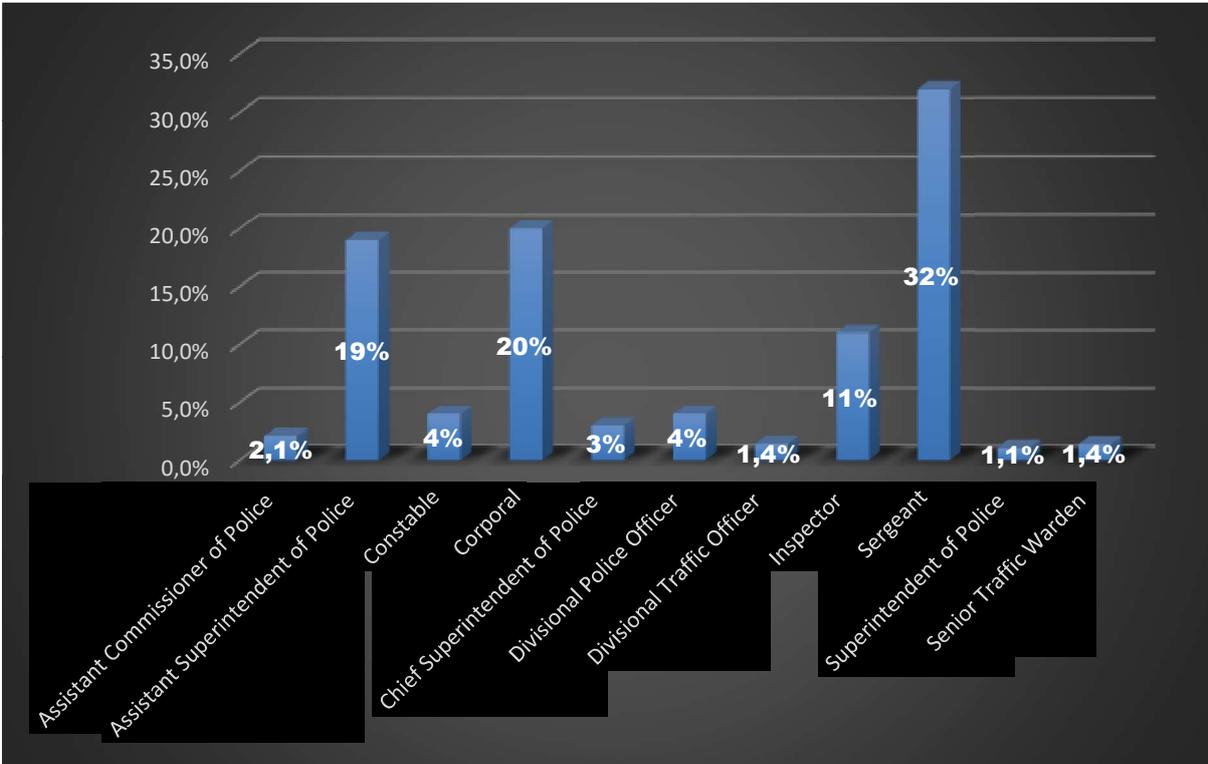
in a public scandal when six of its personnel were accused of extra-judicially executing six Igbo traders at the Apo Village in Abuja (Adesomoju, 2017, Network on Police Reform Network, 2010). Similarly, three policemen serving at the Ijanikin Division in Lagos State were dismissed from the Nigeria Police Force for robbing a businessman in December 2018 (The Punch, 2018). Furthermore, cases of bribery/extortion involving police personnel are more easily detected since they are openly and indiscreetly perpetrated on the major intercity and intracity highways in Nigeria (Ojedokun & Adeyaju, 2019; Marenin & Reisig, 1995).

Ranks of Police Officers Accused of Engaging in Professional Misconduct in Nigeria (2008 and 2018)

Analysis was conducted on the ranks of police officials accused of engaging in professional misconduct to determine the intensity and extent of the problem.

Figure 5

Rank of Police Officers Accused of Engaging in Professional Misconduct in Nigeria (2008 and 2018)



Note. Created by the author.

The output yielded by the analysis showed that professional misconduct is fairly common within the Nigeria Police Force as both low-ranking and high-ranking officials engaged in different unprofessional conducts. Police officers belonging to the rank of Sergeant perpetrated the highest share (32%) of the recorded professional misconduct between 2008 and 2018; and this was followed by officers who were in the category of Corporal that accounted for 20%. Furthermore, police personnel occupying the position of Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) committed 19% of the acts qualifying as professional misconduct followed by those in the grade of Inspector with 11%. The cadre of other officers accused of engaging in professional misconduct were Divisional Police Officer (4%); Commissioner of Police (3%); Assistant Commissioner of Police (2.1%); Divisional Traffic Officer (1.4%); Senior Traffic

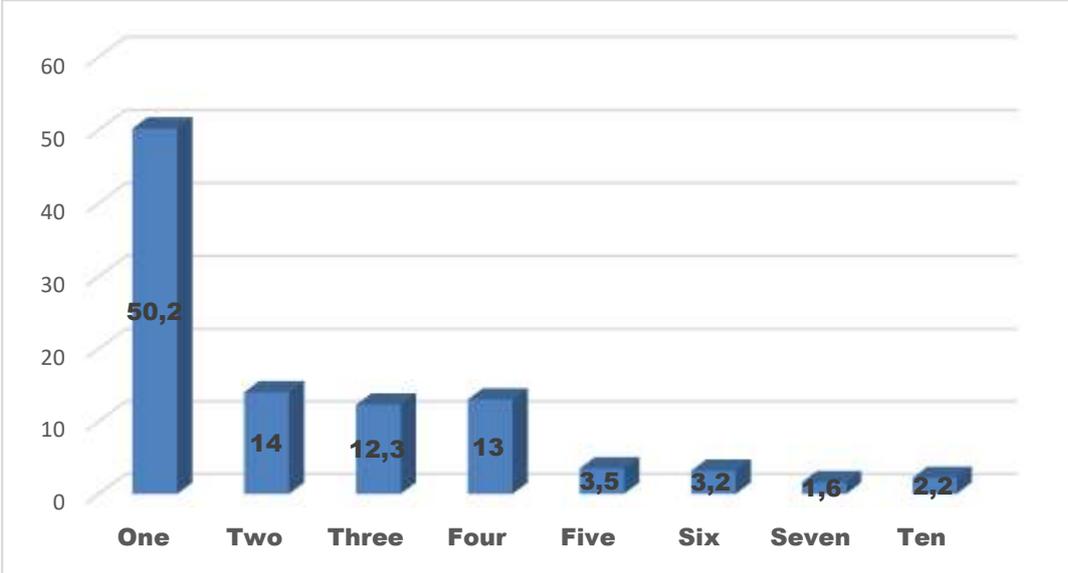
Warden (1.4%); and Superintendent of Police (1.1%). This finding clearly points out that acts constituting professional misconduct are common among personnel of the law enforcement agency and usually involves both high-ranking and low-ranking police officials. In 2005, a sitting Inspector General of Police was jailed for six months after being forced to resign and then prosecuted for engaging in embezzlement, bribe taking, and money laundering (Human Rights Watch, 2010). Also, in December 1986, a Police Chief Superintendent, George Iyamu was among a gang of notorious armed robbers that was arrested and publicly executed for terrorising Benin City and its environs (Marenin, 1987; Nigerian Monitor, 2015). The implication of this finding is that it may be difficult for the Nigeria Police Force to adequately instil professionalism and principle of ethical conduct among some of its personnel because low-ranking officers are likely to be imbibing the deviant values learnt from some of their superior officers. This result also validates the submission of DAT which opines that criminals learn their illegal behaviour in the course of communicating and interacting with people in their social environment. Moreover, it does not only buttress the submission of Punch (2009) that acts constituting police deviance is rampant throughout police departments, it equally corroborates the assertion of Mastrofski (2004) that police leaderships usually find it very difficult to correct and adequately address acts of misconduct among their officers.

Distribution of Police Officers Involved in Professional Misconduct in Nigeria by Number (2008-2018)

Information was sought on the number of police officers involved in each of the recorded cases between 2008 and 2018 as a way of gaining further insights into the patterns of occurrence of the problem.

Figure 6

Police Officers Involved in Professional Misconduct by Number (2008-2018)



Note.Created by the author.

The results of the analysis in figure 6 depicts that in cases where only one police officer engaged in professional misconduct constituted more than half (50.2%); and this was followed by the incidents where two officials (14%) committed the acts amounting to professional misconduct. Furthermore, 13% of the cases involved four personnel, while 12.3% consisted of three officials. The distribution of the remaining defaulting officers based on their numbers were five (3.5%); six (3.2); seven (1.6%) and ten (2.2%). The implication of this finding is that the smaller

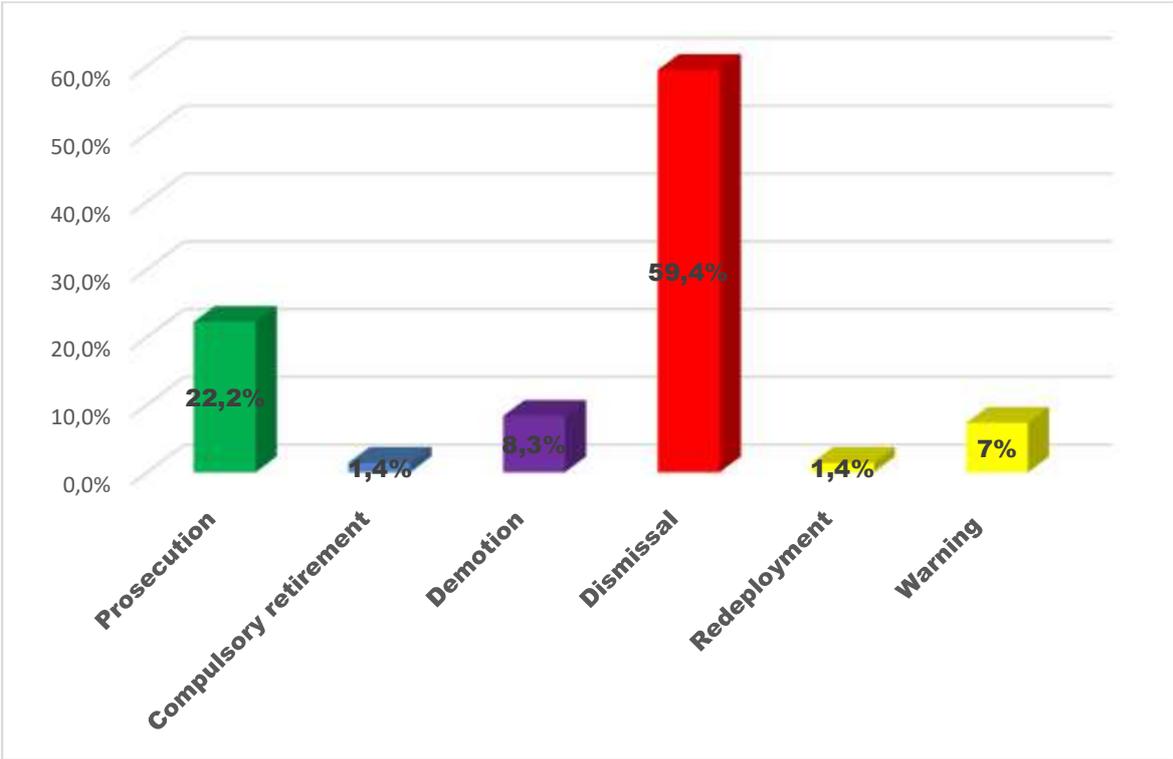
the number of personnel involved in an operation, the higher the tendency for engaging in acts constituting professional misconduct. Also, incidents of police professional misconduct involving more than five officers are more likely to involve a whole police station. Thus, professional misconduct involving police officials can either be perpetrated individually or as a group. Similarly, Mastrofski (2004) has observed that police crimes frequently do go unreported and are often less noticed by police leaderships. The implication of this finding is that police misconduct is a reflection of the rotten apple and the rotten system characterizing policing profession (Punch, 2003).

Punishments Meted-Out to Police Officers Involved in Professional Misconduct in Nigeria (2008-2018)

Punishment represents a technology of power that is usually deployed to ensure conformity and compliance from members of a group (Melossi & Pavarini, 1981; Obioha, 2002). Therefore, the types of punishment meted-out to erring officials was investigated as a way of generating information on how the Nigeria Police Force handles cases of police professional misconduct, and the willingness of the organization to sanction their unethical conducts.

Figure 7

Punishments Meted-Out to Police Officers Involved in Professional Misconduct (2008-2018)



Note.Created by the author.

It is clear from the distribution in figure 7 that the Nigeria Police Force employed six major forms of sanctions to discipline its personnel involved in professional misconduct. The breakdown of the analysis indicated that close to 60% of the officers involved were dismissed from the police service, while 22.2% were prosecuted. Apart from these, 8.3% of police officials found culpable of professional misconduct were demoted to lower ranks, while 7% were warned. Furthermore, the remainder of this group of officers were either compulsorily

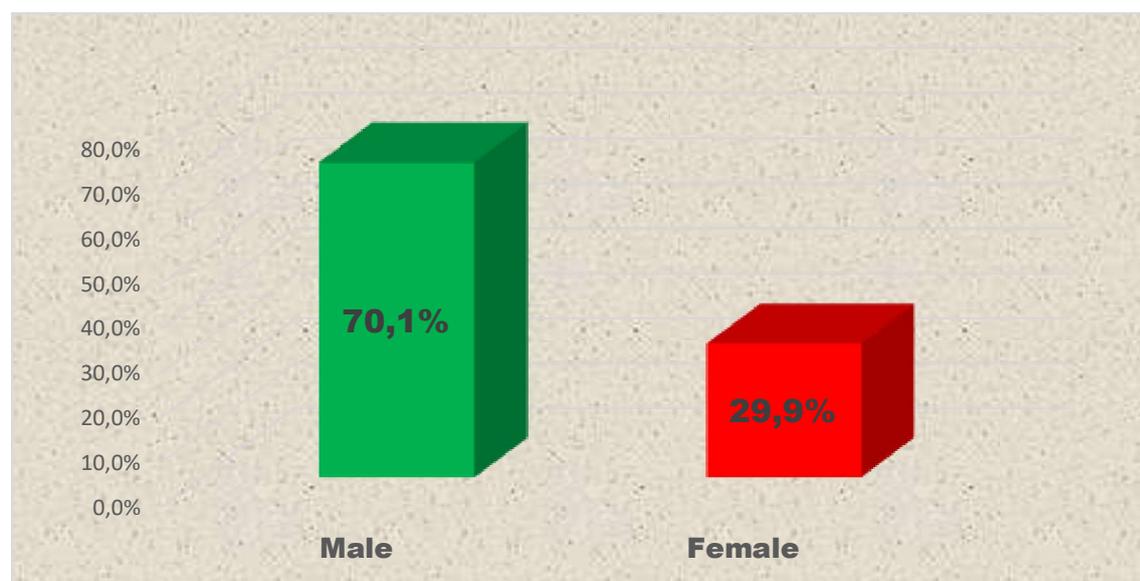
retired (1.4%) or redeployed (1.4%). It can be inferred from this result that the Nigeria Police Force is making effort to uphold the virtues of integrity and professionalism among its officers by putting in place different internal and external sanctions that are geared towards curbing professional misconduct. Although most of the punishments that were meted-out to erring police officials within the timeline considered were essentially internal in the form of dismissal, demotion, official reprimand, compulsory retirement, and redeployment, yet, a substantial proportion of the cases were externally handled through legal prosecution in the court of law. Generally, the nature and characteristics of a case determined the type of sanction that is attached to it. This observation agrees with the position of Ojedokun (2010) that police officials found guilty of engaging in professional misconduct are usually subjected to disciplinary actions that commensurate to the offences committed and on the basis of the rank to which they belonged. Furthermore, SCT opines that the modification of the spatial feature of a given environment is key to the reduction of a criminal activity.

Sex of Victims of Police Professional Misconduct in Nigeria (2008-2018)

Sex is among the most important determinants in the risk of exposure to criminal victimization (Siegel, 2012; Brown, Esbensen & Geis, 2010). Thus, it was considered germane to investigate the sex of victims of police professional misconduct in Nigeria in cases that were reported between 2008 and 2018.

Figure 8

Sex of Victims of Police Professional Misconduct in Nigeria (2008-2018)



Note. Created by the author.

It can be gleaned from the output of the analysis in figure 8 that more males (70.1%) were reported as victims of police professional misconduct than females (29.9%) in Nigeria between 2008 and 2018. The huge discrepancy that was recorded as regards the sex distribution of victims could either be due to the fact that males were more determined and willing to seek redress against police professional misconduct by bringing their victimization experience(s) to the attention of the police authority or the difference could have been influenced by the fact that police officers were more cautious and civil in their interactions with female citizens than males. DAT states that the processes of association and communication are key platforms through which people learn criminal behaviors. Lersch (1998) has equally argued that the fact

that the complaint processes and procedures for seeking redress against police misconduct are often complex can discourage victims from seeking redress.

Conclusion

This study focused on trends and patterns cases of police professional misconduct which occurred in Nigeria between 2008 and 2018. In all, 137 incidents including simple and serious offences that were financial and non-financial in nature were recorded within the period considered. Also, the act of professional misconduct involving police personnel were annually recorded with varying degree of intensity and frequency. The highest percentage (32%) was recorded in 2017. Both high-ranking and low-ranking police officials engaged in professional misconduct between 2008 and 2018.

Professional misconduct involving police officers has consistently put the Nigeria Police Force in a bad light and has negatively impacted its public image. Thus, to reverse this trend, the law enforcement agency needs to incorporate body-worn cameras into the professional kits of its officers. The adoption and utilisation of this technological apparatus is capable of engendering positive work ethics among police officials by ensuring that their operations and dealings with members of the public are in compliance with their organization's prescribed standard of code of conduct for personnel. This recommendation can go a long way in reducing incidents of bribery/public extortion, excessive use of force, acts of brutality, public intoxication, extrajudicial killings involving police officers. Similarly, the Nigeria Police Force and the Police Service Commission should encourage citizens and victims of police professional misconduct to seek redress by constantly engaging in public sensitization on the available official channels and procedural steps that can be taken to formally lodge complaints against perceived injustice and high-handedness suffered in the hands of law enforcement officers. This step can prove to be very useful in addressing professional misconduct involving police officials because citizens' intentional demand for police accountability is capable of discouraging police officers from engaging in them.

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