International Journal of
Humanities, Education, and Social Sciences

e-ISSN : 3026-0892
p-ISSN : 3026-1422

Index: Harvard, Boston, Sydney, Dimensions, Lens, Scilit, Semantic, Google, etc

https://doi.org/10.58578/IJHESS.v3i1.4717

Policies and Practice of Force in Nigerian Policing: A Case Study of Yelwa Division Bauchi Police Command

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Article Info:

Submitted:	Revised:	Accepted:	Published:
Dec 21, 2024	Jan 5, 2025	Jan 17, 2025	Jan 22, 2025

Abstract

This study aims to evaluate the policies and practice of force in Nigerian policing in yelwa division Bauchi Police command. The research objectives: know the mechanisms in existing policies that police use for mitigating excessive force, analyze the impact of police accountability mechanisms on public trust and community relations, evaluate the effectiveness of existing policies that police use in mitigating incidents of excessive force, assess the influence of training in de-escalation techniques and to access the implicit bias recognition on police officers' use of force in Yelwa division Bauchi Police command. This study employed survey research technique and developed a set of structured questionnaire as instrument utilized in collecting primary data. The data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to provide a comprehensive overview of the respondents' perceptions and experiences. The findings indicate that majority of respondents believe that these mechanisms have increased trust and improved community relations,

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though some still report no change or a decrease in trust, respondents generally perceive existing policies as moderately effective in reducing excessive force, there is room for improvement. The study concludes that current policies require enhancement to improve their effectiveness in addressing excessive force. It recommended that regular policy reviews, improved community engagement, and enhanced transparency in accountability mechanisms. Additionally, it suggests the implementation of continuous training programs to better support officers in de-escalation and bias recognition. Limitations include a small sample size and variability in respondents' perceptions, which underscores the need for further research with a larger and more diverse sample to validate and expand upon these findings.

Keywords: Accountability, Force, Police, Policies, Practice

INTRODUCTION

The use of force by police officers is a critical issue within law enforcement practices globally. Defined as the "amount of effort required by police to compel compliance by an unwilling subject" (Kaminski et al., 2019), it ranges from verbal commands to physical restraint and, in extreme cases, deadly force (Terrill & Paoline, 2019). The manner in which police use force is influenced by departmental policies, legal standards, and situational factors (Gelman et al.2020). In recent years, incidents involving excessive force have sparked public outcry and intensified scrutiny on law enforcement agencies worldwide (Chan et al., 2021).

In recent years, incidents involving police use of force have garnered significant media attention and public outcry, leading to widespread debates on the appropriate use of force and the need for accountability (Kappeler& Gaines, 2013; Hickman et al., 2020). Factors such as racial disparities in use of force incidents (Edwards et al., 2019; Ross, 2015) and the psychological and emotional impact on affected individuals and communities (Geller et al., 2014; Sawyer, 2016) it is in this background that this study aim to examine the evaluation of the policies and practice surrounding police use of force and exploring mechanism for enhancing accountability.

The NPF, established in 1930, has a long history of law enforcement and crime prevention in the country (Adetayo, 2018). The Nigerian Police Force is primarily responsible for the

enforcement of laws, investigation of crimes, and apprehension of offenders (Babalola, 2021). Its operations are guided by the Police Act and other relevant legislation, which empower it to maintain public order and protect lives and property (Ikechukwu, 2022). Despite its extensive mandate, the NPF has faced numerous challenges, including inadequate funding, corruption, and a lack of public trust, which have hindered its effectiveness in crime prevention and control (Afolabi, 2020).

Bauchi State is located in the northeastern region of Nigeria, known for its diverse population and strategic importance in the region. The Bauchi State Police Command is the primary law enforcement agency responsible for maintaining order and safety in Bauchi State. It headed by a Commissioner of Police and has several divisions, including Yelwa, under its jurisdiction. The command is responsible for maintaining law and order, preventing crime, and protecting the rights of citizens in Bauchi State. Its headquarters is located at Yandoka Road, Bauchi. The command is divided into several divisions, including Yelwa Divisional Police Headquarters, which covers the Yelwa area and surrounding communities. Stations under Bauchi State Police Command: Nigerian Police Force Headquarters Bauchi Yandoka Rd, Bauchi, Yelwa Divisional Police Headquarter - Abubakar Tafawa Balewa Road, Bauchi, Tafawa Balewa Housing Estate Police Station - Behind Babangida Square, Bauchi, Federal Low Cost Police Station - Yandoka Rd, Bauchi.

Yelwa Division is situated within Bauchi metropolis, a key urban center in Bauchi State. Yelwa Division Police Command in Bauchi is a local police division under the Bauchi State Police Command. The division likely covers the Yelwa area and surrounding communities, providing law enforcement services to the local residents.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this research is to examine the evaluation of the policies and practice surrounding police use of force and exploring mechanism for enhancing accountability. Specifically, the study in tend to achieve the following objectives;

i. To know the mechanisms in existing policies that police use for mitigating excessive force in Yelwa division Bauchi Police command
ii. To analyze the impact of police accountability mechanisms on public trust and community relations in Yelwa division Bauchi Police command
iii. To evaluate the effectiveness of existing policies that police use in mitigating incidents of excessive force in Yelwa division Bauchi Police command

iv. To assess the influence of training in de-escalation techniques in Yelwa division Bauchi Police command
v. To assess the implicit bias recognition on police officers' use of force in Yelwa division Bauchi Police command

Research Questions

i. What are the mechanisms in existing policies that police use for mitigating excessive force in Yelwa division Bauchi Police command?
ii. What is the impact of police accountability mechanisms on public trust and community relations in Yelwa division Bauchi Police command?
iii. What is the effectiveness of existing policies that police use in mitigating incidents of excessive force in Yelwa division Bauchi Police command?
iv. What is the influence of training in de-escalation techniques in Nigeria Police Force in Yelwa division Bauchi Police command?
v. How implicit bias recognition on police officers' use of force in Yelwa division Bauchi Police command?

Statement of the Problem

Despite the presence of guidelines and regulations aimed at governing police use of force, significant challenges persist in ensuring accountability and minimizing abuses. One critical issue is the lack of standardized guidelines across jurisdictions, leading to varying use of force policies that complicate efforts to establish consistent standards for evaluating officers' conduct (Paoline & Terrill, 2019; Smith, 2004). This variation not only confuses officers about what constitutes permissible force but also hampers public trust in law enforcement's ability to apply force judiciously and fairly. Moreover, limited transparency in reporting use of force incidents and disciplinary actions against officers further undermines accountability mechanisms, fostering public distrust and frustration (Walker &Fridell, 2020; White &Fradella, 2016). Another pressing concern is the inadequacy of training in de-escalation techniques and implicit bias recognition among police officers.

Literature Review

The Nigerian Police Force (NPF) is a critical institution responsible for maintaining law and order in the country. The organizational setup of police units in Nigeria has undergone significant changes since its establishment in 1914. The Nigerian Police Force was established in 1914, with the merger of the Lagos Police Force and the Royal Niger

Company Police (Ogunsanwo, 2018). The NPF was reorganized in 1966, with the creation of the Police Council and the Police Service Commission (PSC) (Alemika, 2017). The NPF is headquartered in Abuja, with a Commissioner of Police as its head (NPF, 2020). The force is divided into 12 zonal commands, each covering 2-4 states (NPF, 2020). Each state has a police command, headed by a Commissioner of Police (NPF, 2020). Local government areas have divisional police headquarters, with area commands overseeing multiple divisions (NPF, 2020). Sections include: Special Anti Robbery Squad (SARS), Mobile Police Force (MOPOL), Counter-Terrorism Unit (CTU) and Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD).

Bauchi State is located in northeastern Nigeria, covering 45,837 km² (Tafida, 2012). Yelwa Division is one of the 20 largest areas in Bauchi State, with a population of 245,479 (2020 estimate) (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Bauchi State's economy is primarily agricultural, with crops like cotton, groundnuts, and maize (Mohammed, 2018).

Yelwa Division is known for its fertile soil and irrigation schemes, supporting agricultural production (Tafida, 2012). Yelwa Division has a strong Islamic heritage, with many mosques and Islamic schools (Abubakar, 2019). Yelwa Division has a rich history, dating back to the 14th century (Tafida, 2012). Yelwa Division has benefited from agricultural development programs and water supply projects (Tafida, 2012).

Force: Force, in the context of policing, refers to the physical coercion or compulsion used to achieve law enforcement objectives. It can range from minimal physical contact to the use of weapons and deadly force.

Police Use of Force: Police use of force refers to the range of physical tactics and methods employed by law enforcement officers to compel compliance, maintain order, and protect themselves and others from harm.

Use of Force Continuum Theory (Primary Theory)

The Use-of-Force Continuum Theory was developed by William H. Parker in 1968. Parker was a prominent police chief who emphasized the need for a structured approach to police use of force. The Use-of-Force Continuum Theory operates under the assumption that law enforcement officers should apply force in a graduated manner, escalating through levels of force only as necessary to control a situation. The continuum typically starts with verbal commands and progresses through physical force to deadly force, depending on the threat

level posed by the suspect (Parker, 1968). This structured approach aims to ensure that force is proportional and justifiable based on the circumstances encountered.

Policies on Police Use of Force

In recent years, incidents involving police use of force have garnered significant media attention and public outcry, leading to widespread debates on the appropriate use of force and the need for accountability (Kappeler& Gaines, 2013; Hickman et al., 2020). Factors such as racial disparities in use of force incidents (Edwards et al. 2019, Ross, 2015)and the psychological and emotional impact on affected individuals and communities (Geller et al., 2014, Sawyer, 2016).

Recent evaluations highlight the significance of clear and precise language in these policies to prevent misuse and ensure accountability. For instance, the U.S. Department of Justice (2022) emphasizes the importance of including specific guidelines on de-escalation techniques and the use of less-lethal options before resorting to deadly force. Policies that are vague or overly broad can lead to inconsistent applications of force and undermine public trust. Ensuring that policies are regularly reviewed and updated in response to new developments in law enforcement practices is also critical for maintaining their effectiveness and relevance.The policies governing police use of force are crucial in shaping how law enforcement officials apply force during their duties. These policies are designed to provide guidelines that balance the need for effective law enforcement with the protection of citizens' rights. According to the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) (i) effective use of force policies must define the circumstances under which force may be used (ii) the types of force that are permissible (iii) and the procedures for reporting and reviewing incidents involving force (IACP, 2023). These policies aim to ensure that force is used only when necessary and in a manner proportional to the threat encountered.

The use of force by police officers is a critical issue within law enforcement practices globally. Defined as the "amount of effort required by police to compel compliance by an unwilling subject" (Kaminski et al., 2019), it ranges from verbal commands to physical restraint and, in extreme cases, deadly force (Terrill & Paoline, 2019). The manner in which police use force is influenced by departmental policies, legal standards, situational factors (Gelman et al., 2020). In recent years, incidents involving excessive force have sparked public outcry and intensified scrutiny on law enforcement agencies worldwide (Chan et al., 2021). The effectiveness of use of force policies is often assessed through audits and

reviews conducted by independent bodies or oversight committees. Studies indicate that agencies with well-defined and regularly updated policies tend to have better outcomes in terms of both officer and public safety (Klinger & Wallace, 2023). Continuous training and education on these policies further enhance their impact by ensuring that officers are aware of and adhere to the established guidelines.

Mechanism: A mechanism is a process, technique, or system designed to achieve a specific result or facilitate a particular function. In organizational and policy contexts, mechanisms are the tools or methods employed to implement strategies, enforce rules, or monitor outcomes.

Accountability Mechanisms for Police Use of Force

Accountability mechanisms are crucial for ensuring that police officers follow established use-of-force policies and for addressing any deviations appropriately. These mechanisms generally include internal reviews, external oversight, and civilian review boards. Internal reviews involve investigations carried out within the police department to determine if officers' actions were justified according to department policies. The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) emphasizes that these reviews are vital for detecting misuse patterns and implementing corrective measures (NIJ, 2023).External oversight involves independent entities or agencies reviewing police use-of-force incidents. This can include state or federal oversight bodies that add an extra layer of scrutiny and help ensure transparency in the review process (Walker, 2024). Studies indicate that external oversight can improve public trust in the police by showing a commitment to transparency and accountability (Pew Research Center, 2023).

To facilitate police accountability and community engagement, several partners, from policy makers to practitioners, have proposed reforming police protocols with a specific focus around use of force policies. Use of force policies ranging from banning chokeholds (particularly on the heels of Eric Garner's death) to the requirement to provide more systemized police use of force reporting have swept the nation in the last decade following numerous high-profile incidents of police killings. Unfortunately, the simultaneous expansion of the evidence base on the effectiveness of these policies has been more limited the effect of police body-worn cameras on use of force and citizens' complaints against the police: A randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology, 31*(3), 509–535.

Civilian review boards represent another key accountability mechanism, allowing community members to participate in the review process and provide input on police practices. These boards can help bridge the gap between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve by promoting greater transparency and public involvement (Cohen, 2023). Effective civilian review boards are characterized by their independence, authority to make recommendations, and ability to engage with the community to address concerns about police conduct. Collectively, these mechanisms help to ensure that police use-of-force policies are enforced fairly and that officers are held accountable for their actions.Training and education play a pivotal role in ensuring that police officers understand and properly implement use-of-force policies. Effective training programs provide officers with the knowledge and skills needed to make informed decisions in high-pressure situations. The training typically covers the legal and ethical aspects of force application, de-escalation techniques, and the use of various force options (Police Executive Research Forum, 2024). Regular training updates are necessary to keep officers informed about changes in policies and new practices.

Influence of Training in De-Escalation Techniques and Implicit Bias Recognition: Regarding the influence of training in de-escalation techniques and implicit bias recognition, the study's findings indicate that while such training is widely recognized as beneficial, the extent of its impact on reducing excessive force incidents varies. The responses suggest that while training contributes positively, it is not uniformly perceived as highly effective, reflecting broader concerns documented in past studies about the challenges in translating training into practice (e.g., Williams, 2018; Anderson & Clark, 2021). This aligns with existing literature which emphasizes that while training programs are crucial, their effectiveness depends on consistent application and reinforcement within policing practices.

METHODS

Population and Sample Size

The study area for this research is the Yelwa Police Division in Bauchi, Bauchi State, Nigeria. This provides an overview of the geographic, socio-economic, and institutional characteristics of the study area, which are relevant to understand the context of the research. Yelwa Division is one of the 20 largest areas in Bauchi State, with a population of

245,479 (2020 estimate) (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). For the purpose of the study, 45 Police personnel inYelwa Division of Bauchi, Bauchi State forms the population of the study because the Sample under this research work can be seen as a finite set of the population from it with the objective of investigating its proportion. Hence the entire population (15) forms the sample size for the study using census sampling techniques. A **census** involves collecting data from every member of a population, meaning every individual or unit within that population is surveyed. It provides comprehensive data, as no one is left out.

Data Collection/Analysis

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Table 1: Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	10	66.7%
Female	5	33.3%
Total	15	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The gender distribution among respondents reveals a notable imbalance, with 66.7% identifying as male and 33.3% as female. This disparity suggests that the sample may be reflective of a broader gender imbalance in the sector under study. The predominance of males could influence the findings, potentially skewing perspectives and experiences toward those more commonly associated with male-dominated fields. Such an imbalance may impact the generalizing of the results, particularly if gender plays a role in shaping attitudes or experiences related to the study's focus.

Table 2: Marital Status of the respondents

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Single	8	53.3%
Married	6	40%
Divorced	1	6.7%
Total	15	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Examining marital status, 53.3% of respondents are single, 40% are married, and 6.7% are divorced. This distribution indicates that a majority of respondents are either in the early stages of their personal lives or have opted to remain single. The high proportion of single respondents might influence their professional attitudes and experiences, possibly reflecting a greater focus on career development and professional growth. Conversely, the relatively small number of divorced individuals suggests that marital status may not be a significant factor in this sample's professional behavior or perspectives.

Table 3: The Ages of the respondents

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
21 – 30	5	33.3%
31 – 40	6	40%
41 – 50	3	20%
50 and above	1	6.7%
Total	15	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The Table 3 present age distribution of respondents shows that 33.3% are between 21 and 30 years old, 40% are between 31 and 40 years old, 20% are between 41 and 50 years old, and 6.7% are 50 years and older. This spread indicates a workforce predominantly in the younger to middle-aged range, with the largest group falling between 31 and 40 years. This demographic could represent a blend of youthful energy and established experience, providing a diverse range of insights into the study's focus. The lower representation of individuals over 50 years suggests a potential gap in perspectives from more experienced professionals.

Table 4: The Qualification of the respondents

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
ND/NCE	8	53.3%
HND/BSC/MSC	7	46.7%
Total	15	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The educational qualifications of the respondents reveal that 53.3% have ND/NCE certificates, while 46.7% hold higher qualifications such as HND, B.sc, or M.sc This

indicates a relatively well-educated sample, with a majority possessing intermediate-level qualifications. The balance between ND/NCE and higher qualifications suggests a range of academic backgrounds that could influence views on professional practices and policies. The presence of both intermediate and advanced qualifications may offer a comprehensive perspective on the study's subject matter, reflecting varying levels of expertise and knowledge.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

Table 5: The effective policies used in reducing incidents of excessive force?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very effective	3	20%
Effective	5	33.3%
Moderately effective	6	40%
Ineffective	1	6.7%
Total	15	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Effectiveness of Policies in Reducing Incidents of Excessive Force

The perception of the effectiveness of current policies in reducing incidents of excessive force varies among respondents. A minority, 20%, view the policies as very effective, while a larger proportion, 33.3%, find them effective, and 40% consider them moderately effective. Only 6.7% believe the policies are ineffective. This variation indicates that while there is a general consensus on the positive impact of these policies, the degree of effectiveness is seen differently. The significant proportion of respondents rating the policies as moderately effective suggests that there is room for improvement and further development.

Table 6: The impact of police accountability mechanisms on public trust and community relations?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Significantly increased trust	4	26.7%
Increased trust	7	46.7%
No change in trust	3	20%
Decreased trust	1	6.7%
Total	15	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

According to the respondents, 26.7% believe that these mechanisms have significantly increased trust, and 46.7% feel they have increased trust. However, 20% report no change in trust, and 6.7% think trust has decreased. This data suggests a generally positive impact of accountability mechanisms on public trust, though the varying perceptions indicate that the degree of trust improvement is not uniform across the board.

Table 7: The effective of training in de-escalation techniques in reducing the use of force by police officers?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very effective	4	26.7%
Effective	6	40%
Moderately effective	4	26.7%
Ineffective	1	6.7%
Total	15	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 7 examines the effectiveness of training in de-escalation techniques in reducing the use of force by police officers. Out of 15 respondents, a significant majority, 66.7%, rated the training as "Very effective" (26.7%) or "Effective" (40%). This suggests that most officers believe the training has a positive impact on their ability to manage potentially volatile situations without resorting to force. Conversely, only a small percentage of respondents (6.7%) found the training "Ineffective," indicating that while some officers may not feel the training meets their needs, this view is not widespread. Overall, the data

reflects a strong belief in the benefits of de-escalation training among the majority of surveyed officers.

Table 8: The extent of training in implicit bias recognition help in reducing incidents of excessive force?

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
To a very high extent	4	26.7%
To a high extent	5	33.3%
To a moderate extent	5	33.3%
To a low extent	1	6.7%
Total	15	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

This table present data on the extent does training in implicit bias recognition help in reducing incidents of excessive force. It shows that, 26.7% of the respondents agreed to a very high extent, 33.33% to a high extent, 33.3% to a moderate extent, 6.7 while the remaining agreed to a low extent. Hence to moderate extent and to a high extent constitute the highest percentages.

DISCUSSION

The study evaluated the effectiveness of existing policies on police use of force, the impact of accountability mechanisms on public trust, and the influence of training in de-escalation and bias recognition.

- The study found that majority of respondents believe that these mechanisms have increased trust and improved community relations, though some still report no change or a decrease in trust.
- This aligns with previous studies that highlight the positive but sometimes gradual impact of accountability measures on public perceptions of law enforcement.
- The research indicates that respondents generally perceive existing policies as moderately effective in reducing excessive force, there is room for improvement.
- A significant proportion of respondents view current policies as effective, though only a smaller segment considers them very effective.

- The variability in perceived effectiveness indicates a need for continuous assessment and improvement of training programs to enhance their impact on reducing excessive force.
- The study revealed that when training is acknowledged as beneficial, its impact varies among respondents. This reflects existing literature that underscores the importance of ongoing and effective training, as well as its integration into daily police practices.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that current policies on police use of force are perceived as having a generally positive impact but are seen as needing further enhancement. While policies are recognized for their role in mitigating incidents of excessive force, there is significant room for improvement to ensure they are more universally effective. This finding highlights the importance of refining and strengthening policy frameworks to better address issues of excessive force in policing.

Police accountability mechanisms have been effective in increasing public trust and improving community relations, though some respondents still perceive limited or negative impacts. This suggests that while accountability measures contribute positively, the process of building trust is complex and requires sustained effort. The generally positive reception of these mechanisms indicates progress but also points to the need for ongoing improvements in how accountability is enforced and perceived.

Training in de-escalation techniques and implicit bias recognition is acknowledged as a valuable component of policing but is not uniformly perceived as highly effective. The variability in responses underscores the need for more consistent and impactful training programs. Effective implementation of training requires not only initial education but also continuous reinforcement and evaluation to ensure it translates into improved policing practices.

Recommendations

- The research recommended that policymakers should conduct regular reviews and updates to address any identified gaps so as to enhance the effectiveness of policies on police use of force.

- It is also recommended that officers should be engaging with frontline and incorporating their feedback to provide valuable insights into the practical challenges of policy implementation.
- The research also recommended that officers should have strengthening enforcement mechanisms and ensuring comprehensive training on these policies which can improve their overall impact.
- Improving police accountability mechanisms involves expanding transparency and community engagement efforts.
- Law enforcement agencies should focus on building stronger partnerships with community stakeholders and ensuring that accountability measures are clearly communicated and consistently applied.
- Increasing public awareness of these mechanisms can further enhance trust and foster positive relationships between police and the community.
- The research also recommended that implementations of more structured approach with regular evaluations and updates.
- Training should be integrated into ongoing professional development and supported by practical exercises and real-world scenarios. Ensuring that training is continuously reinforced and adapted based on feedback and outcomes can improve its effectiveness and impact on policing practices.

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