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Gender, Police, and Policing: Reforming Law Enforcement for Equity and Accountability in Zaria Metropolis, Kaduna State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Gender inequality remains a persistent challenge within policing institutions worldwide, with implications for organizational effectiveness, public trust, and access to justice. Although the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) has introduced several reforms aimed at improving gender inclusion, concerns remain regarding women's representation, workplace experiences, leadership opportunities, and the responsiveness of policing to gender-specific security needs. This study examines gender dynamics within policing institutions in Zaria Metropolis, Kaduna State, with particular attention to institutional equity, organizational culture, accountability mechanisms, and gender-responsive policing practices. A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was employed, involving 100 police personnel selected through stratified sampling from the Sabon Gari and Tudun Wada Police Divisions. Ninety-four valid questionnaires were retrieved and analysed using descriptive statistical techniques. Guided by Intersectionality Theory, the study conceptualizes gender as interacting with institutional hierarchies, organizational culture, and broader socio-political structures to produce differentiated experiences among police personnel and citizens. The findings indicate that while respondents acknowledged the existence of formal policies promoting gender equity, substantial structural barriers continue to constrain women's participation in operational policing and leadership positions. The study further reveals inconsistencies between institutional policy commitments and everyday policing practices, particularly regarding organizational accountability, promotion opportunities, and gender-sensitive service delivery. These findings suggest that policy reforms alone are insufficient without broader institutional transformation capable of challenging entrenched patriarchal norms and organizational cultures. The paper argues for gender-transformative policing through reforms in recruitment, promotion, professional training, institutional accountability, and community engagement. Such

reforms are essential for strengthening police legitimacy, enhancing public confidence, and promoting equitable access to justice in Nigeria.

Keywords: Gender-responsive policing, police accountability, gender equality, Nigeria Police Force

Introduction

Contemporary policing extends beyond the conventional functions of crime prevention and law enforcement to encompass the protection of human rights, promotion of social justice, and maintenance of public confidence in state institutions. Increasingly, policing is recognised as a socially constructed institution whose organisational culture reflects broader relations of power, inequality, and exclusion operating within society (Brown & Silvestri, 2020; Silvestri, 2017). Consequently, questions concerning gender representation, institutional inclusiveness, accountability, and equitable service delivery have become central to contemporary debates on police reform across both developed and developing societies.

Historically, policing evolved as an institution organised around masculine ideals that privileged physical strength, aggression, authority, and hierarchical command. Although many countries have implemented affirmative recruitment policies and institutional reforms over the past four decades, policing continues to exhibit significant gender disparities in recruitment, career progression, leadership representation, and organisational culture (Rabe-Hemp, 2008). Women remain underrepresented in operational policing and senior management positions, while institutional practices frequently reproduce gendered inequalities through discriminatory workplace cultures, occupational segregation, unequal promotion opportunities, and sexual harassment. These challenges have attracted increasing scholarly attention because organisational diversity has been shown to enhance institutional legitimacy, improve decision-making, strengthen community engagement, and foster more responsive policing practices (Prenzler & Sinclair, 2013).

The relationship between gender and policing extends beyond the internal composition of police organisations to encompass interactions between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. Research consistently demonstrates that gender influences how crimes are reported, investigated, and prosecuted, particularly in cases involving sexual violence, domestic abuse, trafficking, child protection, and other forms of gender-based violence (GBV). Survivors frequently encounter secondary victimisation arising from insensitive investigative procedures, victim-blaming attitudes, inadequate institutional support, and weak accountability mechanisms (Kelly, 2002). Similar concerns have been raised regarding the treatment of sexual and gender minorities, who often experience disproportionate surveillance, harassment, extortion, and discriminatory policing in contexts characterised by restrictive legal and socio-cultural environments (Human Rights Watch, 2016).

Consequently, gender-responsive policing has emerged as an important component of broader criminal justice reform aimed at improving police legitimacy, procedural justice, and democratic accountability.

These global concerns are particularly significant within sub-Saharan Africa, where policing institutions continue to operate within complex historical legacies of colonial administration, militarised governance, weak institutional accountability, and deeply entrenched patriarchal social structures. In many African countries, formal commitments to gender equality coexist with organisational cultures that continue to privilege masculine norms of leadership and operational competence (Boni, 2020). Consequently, women remain concentrated in administrative and support functions, with relatively limited participation in frontline policing, tactical operations, criminal investigations, and strategic decision-making. Institutional barriers are further reinforced by inadequate mentoring, limited leadership opportunities, discriminatory workplace practices, and insufficient gender-sensitive organisational policies.

Nigeria presents an important context for examining these dynamics. Despite numerous institutional reforms introduced following democratic transition, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) continues to face considerable challenges relating to professionalism, accountability, corruption, public legitimacy, and organisational effectiveness (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2019). These challenges are compounded by persistent gender inequalities that affect both police personnel and citizens interacting with law enforcement institutions. Female officers remain significantly underrepresented within the organisation, particularly in senior command positions, specialised operational units, and strategic leadership roles (CLEEN Foundation, 2021). Existing studies further demonstrate that organisational cultures within the NPF continue to reproduce patriarchal norms that constrain women's professional advancement while simultaneously influencing institutional responses to gender-based crimes.

Although specialised Gender Desks have been established across many police commands, concerns remain regarding their effectiveness in addressing the needs of survivors of gender-based violence. Reports continue to document inadequate investigations, procedural delays, demands for unofficial payments, insufficient victim support services, and limited institutional capacity for trauma-informed policing (Amnesty International, 2020). These institutional weaknesses undermine public confidence and discourage vulnerable populations from reporting crimes, thereby weakening both police legitimacy and access to justice.

Scholarly research on gender and policing in Nigeria has expanded considerably over the past decade. However, much of the existing literature has concentrated either on women's representation within the police or on police responses to gender-based violence. Comparatively limited attention has been devoted to examining how organisational culture, institutional accountability, recruitment, promotion practices, workplace experiences, and community

policing intersect to shape gender-responsive policing. Furthermore, relatively few empirical studies have simultaneously investigated these dimensions using evidence drawn directly from serving police personnel. This represents an important gap in the literature, particularly within northern Nigeria where socio-cultural norms and institutional practices may present distinct challenges for gender inclusion.

This study addresses this gap by examining gender dynamics within policing institutions in Zaria Metropolis, Kaduna State. Rather than treating gender solely as a demographic characteristic, the study conceptualises gender as an institutional process embedded within organisational structures, professional cultures, and systems of power that shape both workplace experiences and policing outcomes. Specifically, the study investigates gender representation within the police workforce, organisational experiences of male and female officers, perceptions of institutional accountability, and the extent to which existing policing practices promote gender-responsive service delivery.

The significance of this study extends beyond the Nigerian context. As international organisations increasingly advocate gender-transformative security sector reform, empirical evidence from developing societies contributes to broader comparative debates concerning institutional change, police legitimacy, democratic governance, and social justice. By integrating empirical findings with Intersectionality Theory, this paper contributes to contemporary scholarship on policing by demonstrating how gender inequalities are produced through the interaction of organisational culture, institutional hierarchies, and wider socio-political structures. The findings provide evidence capable of informing police reform policies aimed at strengthening institutional accountability, improving gender equity, enhancing community trust, and promoting more inclusive systems of public security.

Literature Review

Gender, Policing, and Institutional Change: A Global Perspective

The question of gender equality within policing has evolved from concerns about women's numerical representation to broader debates concerning institutional legitimacy, democratic governance, organizational effectiveness, and human rights. Contemporary policing scholarship increasingly recognizes police organizations as gendered institutions whose structures, cultures, and operational practices both reflect and reproduce wider social inequalities (Silvestri, 2017; Brown & Silvestri, 2020). Rather than viewing gender as merely an individual attribute, recent scholarship conceptualizes it as an organizing principle that shapes recruitment, career advancement, workplace interactions, leadership opportunities, and police-community relations.

Across many democratic societies, police reforms over the past four decades have sought to diversify police organizations by increasing women's participation in recruitment, operational policing, and senior leadership. These reforms have been motivated not only by commitments to equality but also by

growing empirical evidence suggesting that organizational diversity contributes positively to police legitimacy, procedural justice, problem-solving capacity, and community trust (Prenzler & Sinclair, 2013; Rabe-Hemp, 2008). Nevertheless, progress has been uneven across jurisdictions, with women continuing to experience structural barriers that limit their full participation in policing.

International evidence indicates that women remain significantly underrepresented within police organizations despite sustained policy reforms. According to UN Women (2020), female officers constitute approximately 20% of police personnel globally, although substantial regional disparities persist. Representation tends to be higher in Northern Europe and North America than in many countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, where cultural norms and institutional traditions continue to reinforce masculine organizational cultures. Importantly, numerical increases in female recruitment have not necessarily translated into substantive organizational equality. Women frequently remain concentrated within administrative, community policing, and family protection units while remaining underrepresented in specialist investigations, tactical operations, intelligence, and senior command positions (Cordner & Cordner, 2011; Brown & Silvestri, 2020).

These patterns suggest that institutional transformation requires more than expanding recruitment opportunities. Sustainable reform depends upon organizational cultures capable of challenging entrenched assumptions regarding leadership, competence, authority, and professional identity. Consequently, recent scholarship has shifted attention from descriptive representation toward substantive inclusion, emphasizing women's ability to influence institutional decision-making and organizational change (Chan, 2013).

Women in Law Enforcement: Persistent Organizational Inequalities

Research across different policing systems consistently demonstrates that women continue to encounter structural and cultural barriers throughout their professional careers. Although formal recruitment policies increasingly promote equal opportunity, workplace experiences often remain characterized by occupational segregation, gender stereotyping, unequal promotion opportunities, limited mentoring, and workplace harassment (Rabe-Hemp, 2008; Silvestri, 2017).

In the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom, studies have documented the persistence of what scholars describe as the "glass ceiling" within policing institutions. Female officers remain disproportionately concentrated at lower and middle management levels despite possessing educational qualifications and professional competencies comparable to their male counterparts (Brown & Silvestri, 2020). Organizational expectations frequently require women simultaneously to demonstrate traditionally masculine attributes associated with authority while conforming to feminine expectations regarding empathy and communication. This "double bind"

creates contradictory performance standards that complicate women's career advancement.

Similar challenges have been documented across Europe, where institutional reforms have increased women's representation without fundamentally transforming police organizational culture. Research in Sweden, Norway, Germany, and France indicates that women continue to experience exclusion from informal professional networks that influence promotion, specialized assignments, and leadership development (Loftus, 2010). Consequently, scholars increasingly argue that numerical diversity alone is insufficient unless accompanied by broader cultural transformation capable of dismantling informal systems of exclusion.

Evidence from Asia and Latin America reflects comparable patterns. In India, despite sustained governmental efforts to recruit more women, female officers remain concentrated within women-only police stations and departments responsible for domestic violence, thereby reinforcing occupational segregation rather than organizational integration (UNDP, 2018). Latin American scholarship similarly demonstrates that women frequently encounter discrimination in operational assignments, leadership selection, and professional recognition despite constitutional commitments to gender equality (Amaral, 2019).

Within Africa, South Africa provides one of the continent's most extensively studied examples of police gender reform. Although post-apartheid restructuring significantly expanded women's participation, research continues to document persistent institutional barriers relating to promotion, workplace discrimination, and organizational culture (Boni, 2020). Rwanda represents a relatively successful example of gender mainstreaming within security institutions, where sustained political commitment has resulted in comparatively higher levels of female participation across policing and other public institutions (Uwineza & Pearson, 2012). Nevertheless, even these relatively successful cases demonstrate that increasing women's representation does not automatically eliminate deeply embedded institutional inequalities.

Gendered Policing Practices and Access to Justice

Gender influences not only who performs policing but also how policing is experienced by citizens. Contemporary criminological scholarship increasingly emphasizes that policing practices are socially constructed and shaped by institutional assumptions regarding gender, power, sexuality, class, and social status (Carrington *et al.*, 2019). Consequently, different groups experience police authority in markedly different ways.

One of the most extensively researched dimensions of gendered policing concerns police responses to gender-based violence. International studies consistently demonstrate that survivors frequently encounter procedural obstacles, insensitive treatment, victim-blaming attitudes, and inadequate institutional support when reporting crimes involving domestic violence or sexual assault (Kelly, 2002). Although many jurisdictions have established

specialized investigative units and victim support mechanisms, implementation often remains inconsistent because organizational cultures continue to privilege conventional crime control over victim-centred approaches.

Recent scholarship emphasizes trauma-informed policing as an important framework for improving institutional responses to survivors of violence. Trauma-informed approaches encourage officers to recognize the psychological consequences of victimization while minimizing secondary victimization during investigative processes (Campbell, 2020). Such approaches have been associated with improved reporting rates, greater victim satisfaction, and increased confidence in criminal justice institutions.

Gendered policing also affects sexual and gender minorities. Studies conducted across Africa, Eastern Europe, and parts of Asia document disproportionate surveillance, arbitrary detention, extortion, and discriminatory treatment of LGBTQ+ communities where restrictive legal frameworks and conservative social norms prevail (Human Rights Watch, 2016). These findings illustrate how policing frequently reproduces broader systems of social exclusion rather than functioning as a neutral institution of law enforcement.

Gender, Police Legitimacy, and Community Trust

Police legitimacy depends fundamentally upon public confidence that law enforcement institutions exercise authority fairly, impartially, and accountably. Contemporary policing research increasingly argues that organizational diversity constitutes an important component of institutional legitimacy because representative institutions are perceived as more responsive to diverse community needs (Tyler, 2006).

Empirical studies consistently demonstrate positive associations between female representation and several dimensions of policing effectiveness. Female officers generally receive fewer complaints regarding excessive force, demonstrate greater reliance on communication and negotiation during conflict resolution, and exhibit stronger engagement with community policing initiatives (Cordner & Cordner, 2011). Although these findings should not be interpreted as reflecting inherent gender differences, they suggest that organizational diversity broadens institutional capacity by incorporating varied professional perspectives and approaches to policing.

Community trust becomes particularly important in societies characterized by historical experiences of state violence, corruption, and institutional mistrust. In such contexts, gender-responsive policing contributes not only to improved service delivery but also to rebuilding institutional legitimacy through greater procedural fairness, transparency, and accountability.

Gender and Policing in Nigeria

The Nigerian experience reflects many of the global patterns discussed above while also exhibiting distinctive characteristics shaped by colonial legacies, centralized policing structures, weak institutional accountability, and deeply

entrenched patriarchal social relations. Despite constitutional guarantees of equality and several institutional reform initiatives, women remain significantly underrepresented within the Nigeria Police Force, particularly in operational commands and senior leadership positions (CLEEN Foundation, 2021).

Existing Nigerian scholarship identifies multiple barriers to women's advancement within the police. These include discriminatory workplace cultures, limited access to specialized training, inadequate mentoring, gender stereotypes concerning operational competence, and organizational expectations regarding family responsibilities (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2019). Consequently, female officers are frequently assigned administrative responsibilities or Gender Desk functions while remaining comparatively underrepresented in tactical operations, criminal investigations, intelligence units, and strategic leadership.

Research further demonstrates that institutional weaknesses within the Nigeria Police Force influence responses to gender-based violence. Studies report inadequate investigative procedures, insufficient victim support, unofficial financial demands, delayed investigations, and limited accountability mechanisms that discourage survivors from reporting offences (Amnesty International, 2020). Although Gender Desks have improved institutional visibility regarding GBV, implementation remains inconsistent because broader organizational cultures have not undergone comparable transformation. Recent reform initiatives—including police modernization, community policing programmes, human rights training, and increased attention to accountability—have sought to improve institutional responsiveness. However, available evidence suggests that these reforms have produced mixed outcomes because organizational culture has changed more slowly than formal policy (CLEEN Foundation, 2021). This discrepancy underscores the importance of distinguishing between formal institutional commitments and substantive organizational transformation.

Literature Gap

Although scholarship on gender and policing has expanded considerably during the past decade, several important gaps remain. First, much of the international literature continues to focus primarily on descriptive measures of women's representation while giving comparatively less attention to how organizational culture mediates the relationship between formal gender policies and everyday policing practices.

Second, Nigerian research has concentrated predominantly on either women's participation within the Nigeria Police Force or police responses to gender-based violence. Comparatively few studies have examined these issues simultaneously within an integrated analytical framework that incorporates recruitment, promotion, organizational accountability, institutional culture, workplace experiences, and police-community relations.

Third, empirical evidence from northern Nigeria remains limited despite the region's distinctive socio-cultural context and its importance for understanding how gender intersects with religion, culture, institutional authority, and policing practices. Consequently, relatively little is known about how police personnel themselves perceive organizational gender reforms and institutional accountability within this context.

This study addresses these gaps by integrating organizational, institutional, and community dimensions of gender-responsive policing using empirical evidence obtained directly from serving police officers in Zaria Metropolis. Guided by Intersectionality Theory, the study contributes to emerging scholarship by demonstrating how organizational structures, institutional culture, and broader socio-cultural relations interact to shape gendered experiences within contemporary policing. This analytical perspective extends existing Nigerian scholarship beyond descriptive accounts of women's representation toward a more comprehensive understanding of institutional transformation, police legitimacy, and gender-responsive governance.

Theoretical Framework

Intersectionality Theory

This study is anchored in **Intersectionality Theory**, originally developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) to explain how multiple systems of social inequality simultaneously shape individuals' experiences of privilege and disadvantage. Emerging from Black feminist scholarship, intersectionality challenged traditional approaches that treated categories such as gender, race, and class as independent variables. Instead, Crenshaw argued that these social categories are mutually constitutive, interacting to produce unique forms of discrimination and social exclusion that cannot be understood in isolation (Crenshaw, 1989).

Since its formulation, intersectionality has evolved into one of the most influential analytical frameworks in sociology, criminology, gender studies, and public policy. Contemporary scholarship extends the concept beyond race and gender to include other dimensions of social identity and structural inequality, including class, ethnicity, age, disability, sexuality, religion, occupation, and institutional status (Collins & Bilge, 2020). The framework therefore provides a multidimensional understanding of how institutions reproduce unequal power relations through organizational structures, formal rules, and everyday practices.

Within policing scholarship, intersectionality offers a particularly valuable perspective because police organizations operate simultaneously as workplaces, bureaucratic institutions, and agents of state authority. These multiple functions create complex interactions between organizational culture, institutional hierarchy, and broader social norms that influence both the experiences of police personnel and the treatment of citizens. Consequently, inequalities within policing cannot be adequately explained by gender alone; rather, they emerge through the interaction of gender with rank, professional

authority, organizational culture, educational attainment, years of service, and wider socio-cultural expectations.

From an intersectional perspective, the underrepresentation of women in policing is not merely a consequence of recruitment practices but reflects the cumulative effects of institutional arrangements that privilege masculine norms of leadership, authority, and operational competence. Although formal policies may prohibit discrimination, informal organizational cultures often continue to shape promotion decisions, task allocation, mentoring opportunities, and leadership development in ways that reproduce gender inequality. Thus, institutional discrimination frequently operates through subtle organizational processes rather than explicit exclusion.

This perspective is particularly relevant in the Nigerian context, where policing is embedded within broader systems of patriarchy, hierarchical authority, and centralized state administration. The Nigeria Police Force functions within a socio-cultural environment characterized by gendered expectations regarding leadership, family responsibilities, occupational roles, and public authority. These societal norms frequently intersect with institutional practices to influence recruitment, deployment, promotion, and workplace interactions. Consequently, women officers may experience organizational barriers that extend beyond formal institutional regulations and reflect wider cultural assumptions regarding gender and professional competence.

Intersectionality is equally useful for understanding police-citizen interactions. Individuals encounter policing differently depending upon the intersection of gender with other social characteristics such as socioeconomic status, age, ethnicity, disability, religion, or sexual orientation. Women reporting gender-based violence, for example, may experience institutional barriers that differ substantially from those encountered by male complainants because police responses are mediated by broader societal attitudes toward gender, sexuality, and victimhood. Similarly, vulnerable populations often experience policing through multiple forms of social disadvantage that reinforce unequal access to justice and public security.

Applying Intersectionality Theory to this study therefore shifts analytical attention from individual attitudes toward broader institutional processes that reproduce inequality. Rather than asking whether discrimination exists in isolation, the framework encourages examination of how organizational culture, accountability mechanisms, leadership structures, recruitment policies, workplace practices, and community relations collectively shape gendered experiences within policing institutions. This multidimensional perspective provides a more comprehensive understanding of why formal gender equality policies often coexist with persistent organizational inequalities.

The empirical findings of this study are interpreted through this theoretical lens. For instance, the relatively low representation of women within the surveyed police divisions is understood not simply as a numerical imbalance but as evidence of broader institutional dynamics that constrain women's

participation in operational policing and leadership positions. Similarly, respondents' perceptions regarding recruitment, promotion, accountability, and gender-sensitive policing are analysed as manifestations of deeper organizational structures rather than isolated administrative practices. The theory also facilitates interpretation of the apparent contradiction observed in the findings, whereby respondents acknowledged the existence of formal gender policies while simultaneously identifying persistent barriers to women's advancement. From an intersectional perspective, this contradiction reflects the distinction between formal institutional equality and substantive organizational inclusion.

Furthermore, the theory provides an important framework for understanding police reform. Contemporary reforms increasingly emphasize gender mainstreaming, diversity management, accountability, and inclusive governance. However, intersectionality suggests that sustainable institutional transformation requires more than policy reforms or increased female recruitment. Effective reform must address the structural conditions through which organizational cultures reproduce unequal power relations. This includes transforming leadership practices, strengthening accountability mechanisms, institutionalizing gender-sensitive professional training, promoting transparent promotion procedures, and fostering organizational environments that value diversity as an institutional resource rather than a symbolic objective.

Despite its considerable analytical strengths, Intersectionality Theory has attracted several criticisms. Some scholars argue that its multidimensional nature complicates empirical measurement because the interaction among multiple social identities may be difficult to operationalize within quantitative research (McCall, 2005). Others suggest that the framework occasionally lacks methodological precision regarding the relative importance of different forms of inequality. Nevertheless, these limitations do not diminish its value for the present study. Rather, they underscore the importance of combining quantitative evidence with broader sociological interpretation to understand how institutional inequalities are produced and sustained within policing organizations.

Overall, Intersectionality Theory provides the most appropriate analytical framework for this study because it moves beyond simplistic explanations of gender inequality and offers a comprehensive understanding of how organizational culture, institutional structures, and wider socio-political contexts interact to shape policing practices. By applying this perspective, the study contributes not only to debates on gender and policing in Nigeria but also to broader discussions concerning institutional reform, democratic governance, organizational change, and social justice.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

Drawing on Intersectionality Theory, this study conceptualizes gender-responsive policing as an outcome of the interaction among institutional structures, organizational culture, and accountability mechanisms. Female

representation, equitable recruitment and promotion, gender-sensitive training, organizational accountability, and community engagement are treated as interconnected institutional processes that collectively influence policing effectiveness and public trust. These institutional dimensions ultimately shape broader outcomes, including police legitimacy, equitable service delivery, organizational professionalism, and citizen confidence in law enforcement.

Materials and Methods

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive cross-sectional survey design to investigate gender dynamics within the Nigeria Police Force in Zaria Metropolis, Kaduna State. The design was considered appropriate because it permits the systematic collection of quantitative data on respondents' perceptions, experiences, and attitudes at a single point in time. Cross-sectional surveys are particularly suitable for examining organizational practices and institutional processes where the objective is to describe prevailing conditions and explore relationships among variables without manipulating the research environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

The study adopted a quantitative approach because it facilitates objective measurement of officers' perceptions regarding gender representation, institutional accountability, organizational culture, and gender-responsive policing practices. The design also enabled the generation of empirical evidence that could inform institutional reforms within the Nigeria Police Force.

Study Area

The study was conducted in Zaria Metropolis, Kaduna State, north-western Nigeria. Zaria comprises two principal Local Government Areas (LGAs)—Zaria and Sabon Gari—and represents one of the largest urban centres in northern Nigeria. The metropolis accommodates a heterogeneous population distinguished by ethnic, religious, occupational, and socioeconomic diversity. Its strategic importance as an educational, commercial, and administrative centre generates substantial policing demands relating to crime prevention, traffic management, conflict resolution, and community security.

Administratively, several police divisions operate within the metropolis, including Sabon Gari, Tudun Wada, Samaru, Dan Magaji, Kwarbai, Dakaci, Kasuwar Mata, and Sa'inya Divisions. However, this study focused on the Sabon Gari and Tudun Wada Police Divisions because they constitute the principal operational divisions within the metropolis and serve populations characterized by considerable demographic and socioeconomic diversity. These divisions therefore provide an appropriate setting for examining organizational practices relating to gender representation, institutional accountability, and police-community relations.

Study Population

The target population comprised serving police personnel stationed in the Sabon Gari and Tudun Wada Divisions of the Nigeria Police Force. Both male and female officers were included because the study sought to compare perceptions regarding institutional gender equality, organizational culture, recruitment practices, leadership opportunities, accountability mechanisms, and gender-responsive policing.

Including officers across different ranks and years of service enabled the study to capture diverse organizational experiences and perspectives regarding institutional reforms.

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

A total sample of **100 police officers** was selected for the study. The sample size was considered adequate for achieving the descriptive objectives of the research while remaining feasible within the operational constraints associated with conducting research in security institutions.

A stratified sampling technique was employed to ensure representation across the two police divisions and to include officers occupying different organizational positions. Stratification minimized sampling bias by allowing participants to be selected from identifiable subgroups within the study population.

Instrument for Data Collection

Primary data were collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire designed specifically for the study. The questionnaire was developed following an extensive review of the literature on gender and policing, police accountability, organizational culture, and institutional reform.

The instrument comprised six major sections corresponding to the study objectives. Most questionnaire items were measured using five-point Likert scales ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree, while selected variables employed dichotomous response categories (Yes/No). The structured format ensured consistency in data collection and facilitated quantitative analysis.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

To ensure content validity, the questionnaire was developed following a comprehensive review of relevant theoretical and empirical literature on gender, policing, and organizational accountability. The instrument was subsequently reviewed by senior scholars in sociology and criminology with expertise in gender studies and police research. Their observations informed revisions to improve clarity, relevance, and alignment with the study objectives.

The internal consistency of the instrument was assessed through pilot testing prior to the main survey. Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, with the instrument achieving coefficients within the acceptable

threshold recommended for social science research ($\alpha \geq 0.70$), indicating satisfactory reliability (Field, 2022).

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was conducted following formal administrative approval from the relevant authorities within the Nigeria Police Force. The researchers visited the selected police divisions and explained the objectives of the study to prospective participants.

Participation was entirely voluntary. Officers who consented to participate completed the questionnaire independently, thereby minimizing interviewer influence and reducing response bias. Completed questionnaires were retrieved immediately after completion or at mutually agreed collection periods to maximize the response rate.

Data Analysis

Completed questionnaires were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 26 for analysis. Descriptive statistical procedures, including frequencies, percentages, means, and cross-tabulations, were used to summarize respondents' characteristics and examine patterns in their perceptions regarding gender equity, institutional accountability, organizational culture, and policing practices.

The findings are presented using tables accompanied by analytical interpretation rather than purely descriptive narration. Interpretation is guided by Intersectionality Theory and situated within the broader literature on gender-responsive policing and organizational reform.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the police officers involved in the study.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variables	Variable options	Male	Female	Total
Age:	<26years	24(28.6)	0(0.0)	24(25.3)
	26-35years	13(15.5)	0(0.0)	13(13.7)
	36-45years	32(38.1)	11(100.0)	43(45.3)
	46-55years	15(17.9)	0(0.0)	15(15.8)
Rank:	Constable	24(28.6)	0(0.0)	24(25.3)
	Inspector	13(15.5)	0(0.0)	13(13.7)
	ASP/DSP	34(40.5)	11(100.0)	45(47.4)
	CSP	13(15.5)	0(0.0)	13(13.7)
Years of Service	<6years	24(28.6)	0(0.0)	24(25.3)
	6-10years	15(17.9)	0(0.0)	15(15.8)
	11-15years	26(31.0)	0(0.0)	26(27.4)
	>15years	19(22.6)	11(100.0)	30(31.6)
Marital Status	Single	39(46.4)	0(0.0)	39(41.1)
	Married	39(46.4)	0(0.0)	39(41.1)
	Widowed	6(7.1)	11(100.0)	17(17.9)

Educational Qualification	O. Level	13(15.5)	0(0.0)	13(13.7)
	OND/NCE	39(46.4)	0(0.0)	39(41.1)
	HND/Degree	13(15.5)	0(0.0)	13(13.7)
	Post graduate	19(22.6)	11(100.0)	30(31.6)

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The socio-demographic profile of respondents reveals the persistent gender imbalance within the Nigeria Police Force. Of the 94 officers who participated in the study, 88.4% were male, while only 11.6% were female, indicating substantial underrepresentation of women within the sampled police divisions (Table 1). This distribution reflects broader national trends that continue to characterize policing as a predominantly male profession despite recent policy commitments to gender inclusion.

The age distribution further demonstrates important differences between male and female officers. Whereas male officers were represented across all age categories, female officers were concentrated exclusively within the 36–45-year age group. Similarly, women were represented only at the Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) and Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) levels and were absent from both junior ranks and the highest managerial positions represented in the study. Female respondents also possessed comparatively longer years of service and higher educational qualifications than their male counterparts, with all female officers reporting postgraduate qualifications.

These findings suggest that women who remain within the organization often possess higher educational credentials and more extensive professional experience before attaining positions comparable to those occupied by male officers. Such patterns indicate that organizational advancement within the Nigeria Police Force may demand disproportionately greater qualifications and professional experience from women than from men. From an intersectionality perspective, this finding reflects the interaction of gender with organizational hierarchy, educational attainment, and institutional culture in shaping career progression within policing.

Gender Equity and Exclusion Issues

To examine the forms, prevalence of gender-based discrimination, harassment, exclusion experienced by women and marginalized genders within the police Force, the opinions of the male and female officers were assessed independently on the selected item used for the assessment in Table 2.

Table 2: Gender Equity in the Police Force

Issues of gender equity	Gender	Strongly	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly
		Agree				disagree
Women have equal opportunities for recruitment in my unit.	Male	0(0.0)	25(29.8)	44(52.4)	15(17.9)	0(0.0)
	Female	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	11(100.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
Female officers receive fair consideration for promotions compared to the males.	Male	15(17.9)	25(29.8)	32(38.1)	12(14.3)	0(0.0)
	Female	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	11(100.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
There are enough female officers in my division to handle gender-sensitive cases	Male	28(33.3)	19(22.6)	13(15.5)	12(14.3)	12(14.3)
	Female	0(0.0)	11(100.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
Sexual harassment within the police force is promptly addressed by authorities.	Male	47(56.0)	0(0.0)	25(29.8)	0(0.0)	12(14.3)
	Female	11(100.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
Female officers face challenges in accessing leadership positions compared to males.	Male	32(38.1)	13(15.5)	12(14.3)	27(32.1)	0(0.0)
	Female	11(100.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Women had equal opportunities for recruitment in their respective units of the Police Force. Though 29.8% of the male officers agreed with the suggestion but 52.4% along with all (100.0%) female officers were neutral in their opinions. But 17.9% of the male officers disagreed with the suggestion. All the female officers were not sure whether fair consideration for promotions compared was given to females when compared to the males. But 17.9% and 29.8% of the male officers strongly agreed and agreed with the suggestion while 38.1% were undecided and 14.3% disagreed with the opinion. All the respondents agreed that there were enough female officers in their respective divisions to handle gender-sensitive cases. However, all (100.0%) the female officers agreed with most (56.0%) of the males that sexual harassment within the police force is promptly addressed by the authorities. Only 29.8% of the male officers disagreed with this opinion. But all (100.0% of the female officers strongly agreed that they faced challenges in accessing leadership positions compared to male counters. Only 14.3% and 32.1% of the male officers disagreed with those challenges faced by female officers. On the possible factors for such challenges, Table 3 showed the opinions of the male and female officers on some of the related issues.

Table 3: Factors for Gender related Equity in the Police Force

Issues of gender related equity	Gender	Yes	No
Gender sensitivity training is provided regularly in this police division.	Male	43(51.2)	41(48.8)
	Female	11(100.0)	0(0.0)
Recruitment and promotion policies are free from gender discrimination.	Male	84(100.0)	0(0.0)
	Female	11(100.0)	0(0.0)
The police force has policies supporting pregnant officers and nursing mothers.	Male	84(100.0)	0(0.0)
	Female	11(100.0)	0(0.0)

Source: Field Survey (2025)

All (100.0%) the female officers agreed that gender sensitivity training is provided for regularly in the respective police divisions. Most (51.2%) of the male officers agreed with this opinion. But 48.8% disagreed with the suggestion. All the officers (male and female) agreed with the view that recruitment and promotion policies in the Police Force were free from gender discrimination and that the police force has policies supporting pregnant officers and nursing mothers. These indications implied that adequate gender provisions were provided for in the management of the Nigerian Police institutions.

Policy Practices, Institutional Cultures and Challenges of Gender Biases in the Police Force

To assess how policing practices and institutional cultures reinforce or challenge gender biases, particularly toward women and gender-nonconforming individuals in the Police Force, the opinions of the male and female officers on the selected issues are tabulated in Table 4.

Table 4: Accountability and Equity in Policing Practices

Practices of accountability and institutional challenges	Gender	Yes	No
Accountability mechanisms exist in my division for cases of misconduct.	Male	78(92.9)	6(7.1)
	Female	0(0.0)	11(100.0)
I have confidence in the internal disciplinary system of the Nigeria Police Force.	Male	66(78.6)	18(21.4)
	Female	0(0.0)	11(100.0)
Officers are regularly evaluated on gender-sensitive practices in policing.	Male	71(84.5)	13(15.5)
	Female	11(100.0)	0(0.0)
There is gender bias in the allocation of assignments or tasks.	Male	37(44.0)	47(56.0)
	Female	0(0.0)	11(100.0)
My division has an accessible complaint mechanism for gender-related issues.	Male	72(85.7)	12(14.3)
	Female	11(100.0)	0(0.0)

Source: Field Survey (2025)

Female officers did not agree that there were accountability mechanisms their respective divisions for cases of misconduct. But 92.9% of the male officers agreed that there were such mechanisms in their respective divisions. Only 7.1% of the male officers agreed with the female officers on the non-existence of such mechanisms. Most (78.6%) of the male officers had confidence in the internal disciplinary system of the Nigeria Police Force. None of the female officers had such confidence in the internal disciplinary system of the Police Force. But all the female officers along with most (84.5%) of the male officers agreed that police officers were regularly evaluated on gender-sensitive practices in their policing. Only 15.5% of the male officers disagreed with such practices. All the female officers along with 56.0% of the males did not agree that there was gender bias in the allocation of assignments or tasks to personnel of the force and all the female along with 85.7% of the male officers agreed that there were accessible complaint mechanisms for gender-related issues in

the Force management. On the way and manner of such practices, Table 5 showed the rated opinions of the male and female officers.

Table 5: Way and Manner of Policing Practices

Practices of policing	Gender	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
External oversight bodies (e.g., Police Service Commission) effectively monitor police operations.	Male	53(63.1)	18(21.4)	13(15.5)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
	Female	0(0.0)	11(100.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
Officers are held accountable when they discriminate against citizens based on gender.	Male	53(63.1)	19(22.6)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	12(14.3)
	Female	0(0.0)	11(100.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
Corruption and favouritism affect gender equity in police operations.	Male	56(66.7)	28(33.3)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
	Female	11(100.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
						0(0.0)

Source: Field Survey (2025)

All the female officers agreed that there were external oversight bodies like Police Service Commission who effectively monitor police operations. This opinion was in agreement with 63.1% and 21.4% of the female officers who strongly agreed and agreed respectively with the opinion. Only 15.5% of the male officers were not sure of such bodies. In the same vein, all the female officers agreed along with 63.1% and 22.6% of the male officers who strongly agreed and agreed that Force personnel were usually held accountable when they discriminate against citizens based on gender. But 14.3% of the male officers strongly disagreed with this opinion. All the female and male officers agreed that corruption and favouritism affected gender equity in police operations in their respective divisions. The observation here is that major factors affecting gender equality are mostly corruption and favouritism associated with cleavages in the society.

Effectiveness of Gender Reforms, Frameworks for Promoting Inclusivity and Accountability

To evaluate the effectiveness of existing gender reforms policies, frameworks aimed at promoting inclusiveness and accountability in the police institutions, the opinions of the male and female officers’ attitudes on the selected items are presented in Table 6.

Table 5: Officers’ Attitude towards Police Reforms

Gender inclusiveness/accountability	Gender	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Gender inclusivity improves policing effectiveness.	Male	44(52.4)	27(32.1)	13(15.5)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
	Female	11(100.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
Recruitment policies should actively encourage more women to join the police	Male	27(32.1)	26(31.0)	19(22.6)	12(14.3)	0(0.0)
	Femal	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	11(100)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)

force.	e			.0)		
Transparency in handling	Male	66(78.6)	0(0.0)	6(7.1)	12(14.3)	0(0.0)
complaints against police	Femal	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	11(100	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
officers is essential for public	e			.0)		
trust.						
Police reforms must include	Male	65(77.4)	13(15.5)	6(7.1)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
mandatory gender sensitivity	Femal	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	11(100	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
and accountability measures.	e			.0)		
	Male	0(0.0)	53(63.1)	31(36.	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
Resistance to gender reforms				9)		
among officers hinders police	Femal	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	11(100	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
development.	e			.0)		

Source: Field Survey (2025)

All the female officers strongly agreed that gender inclusiveness improves police’s effectiveness. This is agreed with 52.4% and 32.1% of the male officers who strongly agreed and agreed respectively with the opinion. But all the female officers were not sure whether recruitment policies should actively encourage more women to join the Police Force or not. This is in contrast with 32.1% and 31.0% of male officers who strongly agreed and agreed respectively with the suggestion. In the same vein, all the female officers were not sure whether the application of transparency in handling complaints against police officers would be essential for public trust. This was also in sharp contrast with 78.9% of the male officers who strongly agreed with the suggestion. The female officers were not sure whether police reforms should include mandatory gender sensitivity and accountability measures or not. But 77.4% and 15.5% of the male officers strongly agreed and agreed with the suggestion. The male officers (63.1%) agreed that resistance to gender reforms among officers hinders police development. All the females and 36.9% of the male officers were undecided on such development. On general attitudinal disposition towards reforms in the Force. Table 7 showed the opinions of the officers.

Table 7: Opinions of Respondents on Attitudinal Disposition towards Reforms in the Force

General attitudinal disposition towards reforms	Gender	Yes	No
I am willing to undergo mandatory training on gender equity and accountability.	Male	84(100.0)	0(0.0)
	Female	11(100.0)	0(0.0)
I support stricter sanctions against officers found guilty of gender-based misconduct.	Male	84(100.0)	0(0.0)
	Female	11(100.0)	0(0.0)

Source: Field Survey, (2025)

All the officers were willing to undergo mandatory training on gender equity and accountability and were of the view that they would support stricter sanctions against officers found guilty of gender-based misconducts. The

observation here implied that any notable lapses could be attributed to lack of effective policy and other factors like corruption earlier observed.

Propose Transformative Strategies for Improving Gender-based Inclusiveness

The opinions of the officers on gender-based transformative strategies for improving recruitment, retention and leadership opportunities in the Police Force are summarized in Table 8.

Table 6: Opinions of Respondents on Transformative Strategies for Improving Gender Inclusiveness

Transformative strategies for improving gender-based	Gender	Yes	No
have attended at least one human rights/gender sensitivity training in the last 12 months.	Male	46(54.8)	38(45.2)
	Female	11(100.0)	0(0.0)
My station has clear policies on gender-based violence and discrimination.	Male	84(100.0)	0(0.0)
	Female	11(100.0)	0(0.0)
Supervisors actively encourage gender inclusivity in my unit.	Male	72(85.7)	12(14.3)
	Female	11(100.0)	0(0.0)
Male and female officers receive equal access to professional development opportunities.	Male	84(100.0)	0(0.0)
	Female	11(100.0)	0(0.0)
Lack of gender balance in the police negatively affects service delivery.	Male	57(67.9)	27(32.1)
	Female	11(100.0)	0(0.0)

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The opinions of the officers in Table 8 revealed that there were transformative strategies for improving gender inclusiveness in the Nigerian policing system. All the female officers agreed that they have attended at least one human rights/gender sensitivity training in the last 12 months of this study while 54.8% of the male were held the same opinion. All the divisions had clear policies on gender-based violence and discrimination as indicated in the table and the officer were of the view that senior personnel actively encourage gender inclusiveness in the different divisions. The respondents agreed that male and female officers receive equal access to professional development opportunities in the Force. All the female officers along with 67.9% of the male officers agreed that lack of gender balance in the police negatively affect service delivery. These observations implied acknowledgement for gender inclusiveness in policing. Table 9 showed the opinions of the officers on the strategies towards inclusiveness.

Table 9: Opinions of Respondents on Strategies towards Inclusiveness in Policing

Strategies towards inclusiveness	Gender	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Gender bias among officers negatively affects public confidence in policing.	Male	38(45.2)	21(25.0)	25(29.8)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
	Female	0(0.0)	11(100.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
1. I believe community engagement on gender issues can improve police-community relations.	Male	78(92.9)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	6(7.1)	0(0.0)
	Female	0(0.0)	0(0.0)		11(100.0)	0(0.0)
				0(0.0)		
2. Lack of resources and facilities affects gender equity efforts in my division.	Male	24(28.6)	41(48.8)	0(0.0)	19(22.6)	0(0.0)
	Female	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	11(100.0)	0(0.0)
					)	
3. The Nigeria Police Force is currently gender-inclusive.	Male	38(45.2)	46(54.8)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
	Female	0(0.0)	11(100.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
4. Reforms targeting equity and accountability will enhance professionalism in the police.	Male	38(45.2)	40(47.6)	6(7.1)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
	Female	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	11(100.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
				)		
5. I am committed to supporting reforms that promote gender equity and accountability in policing.	Male	53(63.1)	6(7.1)	25(29.8)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
	Female	0(0.0)	11(100.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The respondents were of the view that gender bias among officers negatively affects public confidence in policing. But all the female officers disagreed with the suggestion that community engagement on gender issues can improve police-community relations which contradicted the opinions of the male officers (92.9%) who agreed with the suggestion. The female officers did not agree that lack of resources and facilities had any effects on efforts towards gender equity in the respective division. This is in sharp contrast with the opinion of 28.6% and 48.8% of the male officers who strongly agreed and agreed respectively with the suggestion. All the officers agreed that the Police Force is currently gender-inclusive. The female officers were not sure that reforms targeting equity and accountability will enhance professionalism in the Force which contradicted the opinions of 45.2% and 47.6% of the male officers who strongly agreed and agreed with the suggestion. All the female officers agreed that they were committed to supporting reforms that promote gender equity and accountability in the Police Force, an opinion they held with 63.1% and 7.1% of the male officers who strongly agreed and agreed with the suggestion.

Discussion

The findings of this study contribute to growing international scholarship demonstrating that policing remains a profoundly gendered institution despite decades of reform efforts. Consistent with previous research (Brown & Silvestri, 2020; Rabe-Hemp, 2008; Silvestri, 2017), the study found that

women remain significantly underrepresented within operational policing, reflecting enduring institutional and cultural barriers to gender equality. The finding that women accounted for only 11.6% of respondents is broadly consistent with evidence indicating that female representation within the Nigeria Police Force remains considerably below international aspirations for gender-balanced policing (CLEEN Foundation, 2021).

Beyond numerical representation, the study demonstrates that organizational inequality persists even where formal gender policies exist. Although respondents acknowledged institutional commitments to equitable recruitment and promotion, female officers consistently perceived greater obstacles to leadership advancement than their male colleagues. This divergence reinforces sociological arguments that organizational inequalities are reproduced through informal institutional practices and workplace cultures rather than solely through explicit discrimination. It also supports Intersectionality Theory by illustrating how gender interacts with organizational hierarchy, educational attainment, and institutional authority to shape professional experiences.

The findings further indicate that respondents generally recognized the value of gender-sensitive policing and supported institutional reforms designed to strengthen accountability, professionalism, and community engagement. These findings align with international evidence suggesting that gender-diverse police organizations are more likely to promote procedural justice, improve communication with citizens, and enhance institutional legitimacy (Cordner & Cordner, 2011). However, the persistence of perceived leadership barriers suggests that policy commitments have not yet been matched by substantive organizational transformation.

An important contribution of this study lies in identifying the distinction between policy adoption and policy implementation. While respondents acknowledged the existence of gender-sensitive policies, leadership support, and accountability mechanisms, these institutional arrangements have not fully translated into equal professional opportunities for women. This gap between formal policy and lived organizational experience represents one of the central challenges confronting police reform in Nigeria. Addressing this challenge requires sustained institutional commitment to transparent promotion systems, gender-responsive leadership development, mentoring programmes, and organizational cultures that value diversity as a source of institutional effectiveness rather than merely a compliance requirement.

Unlike many previous Nigerian studies that focus exclusively on either women's representation or police responses to gender-based violence, this study integrates organizational culture, institutional accountability, workplace experiences, and perceptions of reform within a single analytical framework. Consequently, it contributes to the growing comparative literature on gender-transformative policing by demonstrating that meaningful institutional reform requires simultaneous changes in organizational structures, leadership practices, and institutional culture.

Conclusion

This study examined gender dynamics within the Nigeria Police Force by investigating institutional equity, organizational culture, accountability mechanisms, and gender-responsive policing practices in the Sabon Gari and Tudun Wada Police Divisions of Zaria Metropolis, Kaduna State. Drawing upon Intersectionality Theory, the study conceptualized gender inequality as an institutional phenomenon produced through the interaction of organizational structures, workplace culture, professional hierarchies, and broader socio-cultural norms.

The findings demonstrate that although the Nigeria Police Force has made important progress in institutionalizing formal gender-sensitive policies, significant disparities remain between policy commitments and organizational realities. Female officers continue to experience limited representation within operational policing and leadership positions despite relatively high educational qualifications and extensive professional experience. These findings suggest that institutional reforms have yet to dismantle the organizational cultures and informal practices that reproduce gender inequality within policing institutions.

The study further demonstrates that respondents generally recognize the importance of gender-responsive policing and express strong support for institutional reforms aimed at strengthening accountability, transparency, professional ethics, and gender inclusiveness. This broad organizational support provides an important opportunity for advancing sustainable police reforms capable of enhancing both institutional effectiveness and democratic legitimacy.

A major contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that gender equality within policing should not be evaluated solely by the existence of formal institutional policies or numerical representation. Rather, meaningful gender transformation requires substantive organizational change encompassing recruitment, promotion, leadership development, institutional accountability, workplace culture, and police-community relations. The study therefore extends existing Nigerian scholarship by integrating organizational sociology, gender studies, and policing research within a single analytical framework.

Theoretically, the study reinforces the explanatory value of Intersectionality Theory in understanding institutional inequalities within security organizations. The findings illustrate that gender interacts with organizational hierarchy, professional status, educational attainment, and institutional culture to produce differentiated experiences among police personnel. Consequently, police reforms that focus exclusively on increasing female recruitment without addressing broader organizational structures are unlikely to achieve sustainable gender equality.

Overall, the study argues that gender-responsive policing represents both an institutional necessity and a democratic imperative. Police organizations that promote diversity, accountability, and organizational inclusion are better

positioned to improve service delivery, strengthen procedural justice, enhance public confidence, and contribute to democratic governance. For Nigeria, achieving these objectives requires sustained institutional commitment to comprehensive organizational transformation rather than isolated policy interventions.

Policy Implications

The findings of this study have important implications for policing policy, institutional governance, and security sector reform in Nigeria.

First, police reform should move beyond numerical targets for female recruitment toward comprehensive institutional transformation. Although increasing women's representation remains important, organizational effectiveness ultimately depends upon creating institutional environments in which women have equitable access to operational assignments, leadership positions, specialized training, and professional development. Recruitment policies should therefore be complemented by transparent promotion systems, structured mentoring programmes, and leadership succession strategies that actively support women's career advancement.

Second, organizational accountability requires substantial strengthening. Existing disciplinary mechanisms should be reinforced through independent oversight procedures, confidential reporting systems for workplace discrimination and sexual harassment, and transparent investigation processes capable of promoting confidence among police personnel and the wider public. Institutional accountability should be evaluated not merely by the existence of formal procedures but by their accessibility, impartiality, and effectiveness.

Third, continuous professional education should become an integral component of police organizational development. Mandatory training programmes should extend beyond basic gender awareness to include trauma-informed policing, human rights, procedural justice, conflict resolution, unconscious bias, ethical leadership, and victim-centred investigation techniques. Such programmes should be institutionalized within police academies and in-service professional development curricula.

Fourth, strengthening community engagement should become a central component of gender-responsive policing. Community policing initiatives should establish stronger partnerships with women's organizations, traditional institutions, civil society organizations, faith-based organizations, youth associations, and other community stakeholders to improve trust, encourage crime reporting, and enhance collaborative approaches to public safety.

Finally, digital technologies offer considerable opportunities for improving institutional accountability. Electronic complaint management systems, digital monitoring of disciplinary processes, performance evaluation dashboards, and data-driven monitoring of gender equity indicators can improve transparency while reducing opportunities for administrative bias and organizational discretion.

Collectively, these reforms would contribute to a more professional, accountable, inclusive, and democratically legitimate Nigeria Police Force capable of responding effectively to the security needs of an increasingly diverse society.

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