

Intersectional Dynamics in Nigerian Policing: Promoting Gender Equity, Accountability, and Inclusive Reforms in Zaria Metropolis, Kaduna State

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Abstract

Introduction

Policing in Nigeria, as in many global contexts, remains a profoundly gendered institution, mirroring broader societal power imbalances and perpetuating systemic inequalities. Women constitute 8–12% of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), with the majority confined to junior or clerical roles, far below the 35% affirmative action target outlined in national gender policies they face systemic barriers, including discrimination, harassment, and limited leadership opportunities. This paper examines the intersection of gender, police, and policing through three lenses the experiences of women in law enforcement, gendered biases in policing practices, and the impact of policing on marginalized genders (women, communities, and gender-nonconforming individuals).

Objectives

The study analyzes gender disparities in police workforce representation and leadership, examine how policing practices perpetuate gender-based discrimination and evaluate reforms for gender-inclusive and accountable policing.

Method

The study employed empirical review of gender and policing and review relevant literatures. This study used the descriptive survey design with a structured questionnaire. A total of 100 police officers from the two principal divisions in Zaria Metropolis Sabon Gari and Tudun Wada through a stratification process was used.

Results

Out of the 100 questionnaires distributed, 94 were correctly completed and retrieved, representing a 94% response rate. Collected data were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), IBM version 26. Statistical procedures used included frequencies and percentages. The study utilizes the intersectionality theory which sees how overlapping identities (gender, race, class, sexuality, disability) interact to create unique form of privileges and oppression. These shapes differential outcomes in policing. It is a key to policing reforms. The theory is critical for understanding how women experience policing differently. Its relevance lies in promoting equity driven reforms.

Conclusion

The study concludes that gender-transformative policing requires systemic change from recruitment to community engagement. It therefore proposes actionable reforms to foster gender-responsive policing, improve accountability, and enhance safety for vulnerable populations.

Introduction

Policing globally is a bastion of traditional masculinity, characterized by a culture of aggression, physical dominance, and patriarchal authority (Brown, 2007). This institutional masculinity not only shapes internal dynamics but also dictates how police forces interact with the public. In Nigeria, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) operates within a deeply patriarchal socio-cultural context, compounding these global challenges with local realities of gender inequality. The under-representation of women, particularly in leadership, and the documented mishandling of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) cases highlight a critical disconnect between the police and the diverse genders they are sworn to serve and protect (Alemika, 2020). This study situates itself at this confluence of global policing culture and Nigerian gender relations.

Policing, across the globe, is not only a mechanism of law enforcement but also a reflection of social power hierarchies. From its inception in colonial and industrial societies to contemporary professionalized institutions, policing has historically been a masculinized domain. The global police culture emphasizes aggression, hierarchy, and militarized discipline, which systematically disadvantages women and marginalized genders (Rabe-Hemp, 2008; Silvestri, 2017). Despite decades of reform, women constitute only 10–30% of police forces worldwide (UN Women, 2020). Even in developed democracies like the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada, women remain underrepresented in leadership roles, excluded from tactical units, and subject to harassment and discrimination (Prenzler & Sinclair, 2013). The problem is magnified in developing nations, where patriarchal norms, legal discrimination, and weak institutions restrict women's meaningful participation in policing (Amaral, 2019). Women represent only 8–12% of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), with the majority confined to junior or clerical roles, far below the 35% affirmative action target outlined in national gender policies.

Beyond internal representation, policing practices themselves are gendered. Women survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) are often re-traumatized by insensitive officers. LGBTQ+ individuals experience disproportionate profiling, harassment, and violence, especially in states with anti-LGBTQ+ laws. Institutional cultures often silence or marginalize female officers who challenge these norms. In Nigeria, these global challenges converge with specific local dynamics: entrenched patriarchy, systemic corruption, authoritarian legacies, and discriminatory laws such as the Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act (2014). Female officers in Nigeria constitute less than 15% of the force (CLEEN Foundation, 2021), are concentrated in “gender desk” or administrative roles, and rarely rise to senior command. Survivors of GBV encounter barriers at police stations, while communities are criminalized and subject to extortion (Amnesty International, 2020). This paper contributes to global scholarship by situating the Nigerian experience within wider international debates. It argues that while policing is universally gendered, the specific intersections of gender, sexuality, class, and institutional weakness in Nigeria present unique challenges that can expand global understandings of gender-responsive policing.

A systemic gender inequity persists within the NPF, manifesting in two key ways: first, through the marginalization of women officers in recruitment, career progression, and workplace culture; and second, through the perpetuation of gendered biases in policing practices that fail to adequately serve women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and other marginalized genders. This dual failure erodes public trust, particularly

among vulnerable populations, and undermines the effectiveness and legitimacy of law enforcement in Nigeria. The study objectives aimed at quantifying gender disparities in workforce representation and leadership positions within the Tudun Wada and Sabon Gari divisions, analyzing the gendered experiences of police officers, focusing on perceived discrimination, harassment, and career progression barrier and evaluating officers' perceptions of their preparedness and approach to handling cases involving women and LGBTQ+ individuals. This research provides empirical, localized data from Kaduna State, filling a critical gap in the Nigerian literature on gender and policing. The findings will be valuable for the NPF leadership in formulating gender-sensitive reform policies, for civil society organizations advocating for police accountability, and for academics studying institutional change.

This paper aimed at critically assessing intersectional dynamics in Nigerian Policing to promoting Gender Equity, Accountability, and Inclusive Reforms in Zaria Metropolis, Kaduna State, it looked at gender dynamics in policing institutions with a view to promoting gender-inclusiveness, equitable, and accountable policing practices in Nigeria. The paper determined the extent of female representation and participation in law enforcement agencies in Nigeria, examine the forms and prevalence of gender-based discrimination, harassment, and exclusion experienced by women and marginalized genders within the police force, analyze how policing practices and institutional cultures reinforce or challenge gender biases, particularly toward women and gender-nonconforming individuals, evaluate the effectiveness of existing gender reforms, policies, and frameworks aimed at promoting inclusivity and accountability in policing institutions and propose evidence-based and gender-transformative strategies for improving recruitment, retention, and leadership opportunities for women and marginalized genders in law enforcement.

Literature Review

Global Experiences of Women in Law Enforcement

Women's entry into policing accelerated after the civil rights and feminist movements of the North America in 1960s and 1970s. Yet, despite legal protections, women in the U.S. constitute about 12–13% of the force and face barriers to promotion, sexual harassment, and stereotyping (Rabe-Hemp, 2008). In Canada, gender quotas have increased representation, but female officers remain concentrated in community-oriented roles rather than tactical or investigative units (Brown & Silvestri, 2020). In Europe, countries like the UK, Sweden, and Norway have implemented policies to integrate women more effectively. However, research shows women still confront “the glass ceiling” and cultures of hyper-masculinity (Silvestri, 2017). In France and Germany, female officers often balance dual expectations of toughness and sensitivity, reflecting gendered double standards.

In Asia, India illustrates deep-rooted cultural challenges: women comprise less than 7% of police officers, with many confined to “all-women police stations” handling domestic cases (UNDP, 2018). While such initiatives increase access for female victims, they inadvertently reinforce gender segregation within the force. In Latin America, countries such as Brazil and Argentina have expanded women's recruitment, but

patriarchal police cultures persist. Research documents female officers being denied operational tasks, facing sexual harassment, and being pressured into “gender-specific” community roles (Amaral, 2019). In Africa, South Africa’s post-apartheid reforms improved female representation (now 25%), yet women still report harassment and limited leadership opportunities (Boni, 2020). Rwanda stands out for its significant female inclusion across governance and security, which has improved community-police trust (Uwineza & Pearson, 2012). Despite gradual recruitment of women since the 1960s, female officers remain marginalized. Studies highlight sexual harassment, restricted career advancement, and the perception that women are “unsuited” for core policing duties (Okeke, 2019; CLEEN, 2021). Global literature celebrates incremental progress, especially in the West, but remains insufficiently comparative. African and Asian contexts are under-researched, limiting cross-regional insights into how cultural and institutional contexts shape gendered policing.

Gendered Policing Practices

Globally, gender biases shape policing practices. In the U.S. and UK, survivors of GBV frequently face victim-blaming attitudes and secondary victimization when reporting crimes (Kelly, 2002). In Latin America, police are often complicit in domestic abuse cases, failing to register complaints or protecting abusive officers (Amaral, 2019). LGBTQ+ communities face particular challenges: in Russia, LGBTQ+ activists have been harassed and detained under “anti-propaganda” laws; in Uganda and Nigeria, police extort and detain LGBTQ+ individuals under criminal statutes (Human Rights Watch, 2016). Even in liberal democracies, LGBTQ+ individuals report disproportionate stop-and-search practices and harassment (Miller et al., 2019).

In Nigeria, survivors of GBV often encounter police officers who demand bribes to record cases, trivialize violence as “domestic matters,” or discourage reporting. LGBTQ+ individuals, already criminalized, are doubly vulnerable to abuse and extortion by police (Amnesty International, 2020). Much global scholarship focuses narrowly on GBV, underplaying the broader intersection of gender with class, race, and sexuality in shaping police behavior. Nigerian scholarship, while exposing GBV and LGBTQ+ issues, often relies heavily on NGO reports rather than systematic empirical data.

Community Relations and Public Trust

International evidence demonstrates that higher female representation in policing improves community trust. In the U.S. and Canada, women officers are associated with lower rates of excessive force and higher levels of community engagement (Brown & Silvestri, 2020). In Rwanda, women’s inclusion in post-genocide security forces has contributed to restorative community relations (Uwineza & Pearson, 2012). In Nigeria, however, community-police relations remain strained. Surveys show that police are among the least trusted institutions, particularly among women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and low-income groups (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2019). While global research demonstrates the benefits of inclusion, it often assumes institutional readiness and accountability conditions largely absent in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Intersectionality Theory

Originating from U.S. Black feminism (Crenshaw, 1989), coined by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989. Globally, it has illuminated policing injustices faced by Black women in the U.S., Dalit women in India, and queer individuals in South Africa. Intersectionality reveals how overlapping identities (gender, race, class, sexuality, disability) interact to create unique form of privileges and oppression. These shapes differential outcomes in policing. It is a key to policing reforms. Intersectionality is critical for understanding how women experience policing differently. Its relevance lies in promoting equity driven reforms. It remains a transformative lens for analyzing and restructuring law enforcement systems towards inclusivity, fairness and social justice. Reforms such as reforming police recruitment, developing anti-harassment policies, training programs and building community trust through participatory policing models are acknowledged by intersectional social realities. Its criticism lies in implementation of challenges as policing intersectional policies may face resistance from entrenched bureaucratic and patriarchal cultures but this did not hinder its relevance to this study.

Study Area

The study area is Zaria Metropolis, which comprises two Local Government Areas (LGAs): Zaria and Sabon Gari, both located in Kaduna State, Nigeria. Zaria Metropolis hosts several police divisions including Sabon Gari Division, Tudun Wada Division, Dan Magaji, Kwarbai, and Samaru Divisions. In this study there are 3 division in Sabon- Gari, Kasuwar mata, samara and Sabon gari division, while Zaria city has Tudun Wada, Dan Magaji, Dakaci and Sa'nye. The area is socio-culturally diverse, with a mix of urban and peri-urban communities, making it a strategic location for assessing police–public relations, patrol duties, and gender representation in policing activities.

Methodology

This study used the descriptive survey design with a structured questionnaire as the main instrument used for data collection. The questionnaire was administered to a total of 100 police officers from the two principal divisions in Zaria Metropolis Sabon Gari and Tudun Wada through a stratification process. Out of the 100 questionnaires distributed, 94 were correctly completed and retrieved, representing a 94% response rate. Collected data were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), IBM version 26. Statistical procedures used included frequencies and percentages. Ethical consideration was sort, informed consent attained from the respondent, confidentiality, cultural sensitivity.

Result

Table 1 showed the socio-demographic characteristics of the police officers involved in the study,

Table 1
Socio-Demographic characteristics of 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)
Field survey (2026)				

Table 1 stated a total of (95) respondents involved in the study, 88.4% were males and 11.6% were females. Among the male officers (84), 28.6% were less than 26years in age and none of the female officers was less than 26years. Of the officers within 26 and 35years age bracket, 15.5% were males and none of the officers within the age range was female. Those within the age range of 36 and 45years consisted of 38.1% of the male officers and all (100.0%) of the female officers involved in the study. For those within 46 and 55years, 17.9% were males. By their ranks, 28.6% of the male officers were constables while 15.5% were of the rank of Inspector of police. None of the female officers was within these ranks. For those within the ranks of Assistant Superintendent of police (ASP) or District Superintendent of police (DSP), the males were 40.5%. All the female officers were within these ranks

(ASP or DSP). The female officers involved in the study were all senior officers by this observation. Only the male officers (15.5%) were within the rank of Chief Superintendent of police (CSP).

In terms of years of service, 28.6% of the male officers had less than 6years of experience, 17.9% had between 6 and 10years and 31.0% had between 11 and 15years of experience. None of the female officers had less than 15years of experience on the job as indicated in Table 1. All the female officers (100.0%) along with 22.6% of the male officers had above 15years of experience on the job. For their marital statuses, 46.4% of the male officers were singles while 46.4% were married. Most officers, whether male or female could not state categorically that 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 counterparts. 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 2 showed the opinions of the male and female officers on some of the related issues.

Table 2
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)
Field survey (2026)			

Table 2 indicated (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 3.

Table 3: 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)

Field survey (2026)

Table 3 showed 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 4
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 favoritism 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)
Field survey (2026)						

Table 4 indicated 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 favoritism affected gender equity in police operations in their respective divisions. The observation here is that major factors affecting gender equality are mostly corruption and favoritism 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 5.

Table 5
The 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 force.	Male	27(32.1)	26(31.0)	19(22.6)	12(14.3)	0(0.0)
	Female	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	11(100.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
Transparency in handling complaints against police officers is essential for public trust.	Male	66(78.6)	0(0.0)	6(7.1)	12(14.3)	0(0.0)
	Female	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	11(100.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
Police reforms must include mandatory gender sensitivity and accountability measures.	Male	65(77.4)	13(15.5)	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)
Resistance to gender reforms among officers hinders police development.	Male	0(0.0)	53(63.1)	31(36.9)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
	Female	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	11(100.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
Field survey (2026)						

Table 5 stated 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 6 showed the opinions of the officers.

Table 6
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)
Field survey (2026)			

Table 6 stated 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 recruitment, retention, and leadership in law enforcement.

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 7.

Table 7
Opinions of respondents on Transformative strategies for improving gender inclusiveness

Transformative strategies for improving gender-based	Gender	Yes	No
I 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)
Field survey (2026)			

Table 7 stated the opinions of the officers in Table 7 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 8 showed the opinions of the officers on the strategies towards inclusiveness.

Table 8
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)
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)	0(0.0)	11(100.0)	0(0.0)
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)
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)
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)
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)
Field survey (2026)						

Table 8 revealed 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

In this study, 88.4% were males and 11.6% were females. Among the male officers (84), 28.6% were less than 26years in age and none of the female officers was less than 26years. By their ranks, 28.6% of the male officers were constables while 15.5% were of the rank of Inspector of police. None of the female officers was within these ranks. In terms of years of service, 28.6% of the male officers had less than 6years of experience, 17.9% had between 6 and 10years and 31.0% had between 11 and 15years of experience. None of the female officers had less than 15years of experience on the job. For highest educational qualifications, 15.5% of the male officers had Ordinary level or Senior Secondary School Certificate, 46.4% had diploma or its equivalents (OND/NCE) while 15.5% had Higher National Diploma or first degree (HND/Degree). All (100.0%) the female officers along with 22.6% of the male officers had post graduate degrees. The low representation of female in the different demographic categories assessed here was partly due to, the under representation and participation in law enforcement agencies in the country.

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 most officers, whether male or female could no state categorically that women had equal opportunities for recruitment in their respective units of the Police Force. Female officers face challenges in accessing leadership positions compared to male counters. All the officers see 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. There was no gender bias in the allocation of assignments or tasks to personnel of the force, there were accessible complaint mechanisms for gender-related issues in the Force management.

Female officers agreed that there were external oversight bodies like Police Service Commission who effectively monitor police operations and believed gender inclusiveness improves police's effectiveness. Police 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. Female officers were committed to supporting reforms that promote gender equity and accountability in the Police Force.

Women in policing face marginalization, but in Nigeria this is compounded by weak institutions and cultural patriarchy. Gender based violence (GBV) mishandling is a universal challenge but exacerbated in Nigeria by corruption and legal discrimination. In Zaria metropolis in both divisions studied Tudun-Wada and Sabon-Gari LGA there are challenges that women face as most of them are administrative staffs and desk officers while other ranks go for patrol, combat crime from other special squads, women do not engage in night shift. Community trust improves with women's inclusion globally, but Nigeria shows that inclusion without reform has limited impact. Nigeria illustrates how global gendered patterns in policing are intensified by postcolonial, authoritarian, and religious-cultural contexts.

Conclusions

In this study it is pertinent for recruitment and promotion to capture the female, gender quotas, transparent promotion pathways are relevant to the growth and development of the police service. There should be training & Sensitization by integrating gender sensitivity programs into police academies. Provision of digital tools such as AI to track gender bias in case reporting. Community policing: gender desks in all divisions with trained officers. Restorative justice should alternate for gender-based violence cases. The study recommends digital accountability mechanisms for global policing.

Recommendations

1. Institutional Reforms: Mandate and enforce a 30% quota for women in recruitment and promotion to senior ranks. Establish a robust, confidential system for reporting sexual and gender-based harassment.
2. Training and Capacity Building: Implement mandatory, continuous training on GBV, trauma-informed interviewing, and professional interaction with LGBTQ+ individuals for all officers, not just those on the Gender Desk.
3. Policy and Research: The NPF should develop a clear, non-discriminatory policy on interacting with LGBTQ+ individuals to prevent abuse and extortion.
4. Future research should employ qualitative methods to explore the lived experiences of women officers and LGBTQ+ citizens with the police in greater depth.

Declarations

Ethical Approval

This study involved human participants and was conducted in accordance with established ethical standards for social science. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Departmental Research Ethics committee, Department of Sociology, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna State,

Nigeria. The study adhered to ethical principles of voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and non-maleficence through the research process.

Consent to participate

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Participants were adequately informed about the purpose of the study, procedures involved, potential risks and benefits and their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without negative consequences.

Consent to publish

Consent to publish was obtained from participants. No personally identifiable information is included in this manuscript and all data have been anonymized to protect participant identities.

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Availability of Data and Materials

The data set generated and analyzed during the current study are not publicly available due to ethical considerations related to participant confidentiality but are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request, subject to institutional ethical guidelines.

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