

Police Culture, Procedural Justice, and Public Trust in Nigeria: A Community-Level Analysis

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Abstract

Police culture plays a critical role in shaping police–community relations, public trust, and the effectiveness of law enforcement institutions. In Nigeria, persistent allegations of corruption, brutality, and abuse of authority have continued to undermine the legitimacy of the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), despite successive reform initiatives. This study examines police culture and its contribution to mistrust, social incoherence, and citizen disempowerment within and between the NPF and the Saburi community in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja.

Guided by procedural justice and police legitimacy theory, the study adopted a qualitative survey research design. Data were collected through structured, open-ended interviews with 60 purposively selected participants, comprising 30 police officers across different ranks and 30 community members representing diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The data were analyzed using thematic and content analysis, supported by word-frequency and word-cloud techniques with the aid of NVivo 12 and Microsoft Excel. The findings reveal that police culture within the NPF is characterized by entrenched informal practices, including leadership intoxication, abuse of authority, police brutality, selective enforcement, rent-seeking behaviour, and persistent SARS-related operational attitudes. These cultural practices were found to significantly undermine public trust, weaken social coherence, and systematically disempower economically vulnerable citizens by commodifying access to justice. The study further establishes that prevailing police culture hinders effective service delivery by discouraging crime reporting, reducing intelligence sharing, and weakening voluntary compliance with the law. Importantly, both police officers and community members acknowledged these cultural deficiencies, indicating that legitimacy deficits are institutionally recognized rather than solely externally perceived.

The study contributes to policing scholarship by providing localized, community-level empirical evidence on the cultural drivers of police legitimacy deficits in Nigeria. It underscores the need for policing reforms that prioritize cultural transformation, ethical leadership, procedural justice, and meaningful community engagement to rebuild trust and improve service delivery.

Keywords: Police culture; Public trust; Procedural justice; Citizen disempowerment; Service delivery; Nigerian Police Force; Community-level.

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INTRODUCTION

The police, as the primary point of contact between the state and the community, occupy a strategically central position within any criminal justice system. Through routine interactions with citizens, policing institutions shape public perceptions of state authority, justice, and social order. Consequently, trust, cooperation, and mutual respect between the police and the public are widely regarded as essential indicators of police effectiveness, institutional legitimacy, and democratic accountability (Fleming & McLaughlin, 2010; Tyler & Jackson, 2014). Contemporary policing scholarship increasingly emphasizes that public trust is not merely an outcome of effective crime control but a foundational requirement for sustainable security governance (Bottoms & Tankebe, 2012; Jackson et al., 2021). Procedural justice theory provides a dominant framework for understanding the relationship between police behaviour and public legitimacy. According to this perspective, citizens are more likely to view the police as legitimate and to comply voluntarily with the law when policing practices are perceived as fair, impartial, respectful, and accountable (Tyler, 2006; Bradford et al., 2021). Conversely, coercive, corrupt, or discriminatory practices erode legitimacy, weaken institutional authority, and undermine public safety outcomes. Police culture, the informal norms, values, and practices that shape everyday policing behaviour, therefore plays a decisive role in determining whether police–community relations are characterized by trust and cooperation or by mistrust and conflict.

In Nigeria, the police–public relationship is particularly consequential given the country’s complex security challenges, including violent crime, terrorism, communal conflicts, and persistent institutional fragility. The Nigerian Police Force (NPF) can only effectively fulfil its constitutional mandate of crime prevention and the protection of lives and property when it enjoys public confidence, cooperation, and voluntary compliance with the law. Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that positive police–community relations enhance intelligence gathering, crime reporting, and community participation in security initiatives, whereas adversarial relations undermine policing effectiveness and exacerbate insecurity (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2020; Tankebe et al., 2022).

Despite these expectations, public perceptions of the NPF have historically been shaped by negative encounters involving corruption, extortion, intimidation, brutality, and abuse of power. Numerous studies document widespread public distrust of the police, with citizens frequently perceiving officers as predatory rather than protective, particularly in interactions with economically disadvantaged and socially marginalized groups (Madaki & Kurfi, 2013; Okeke, 2021). Recent empirical research indicates that these challenges have persisted—and in some instances intensified—between 2020 and 2025. Studies reveal that routine police–citizen interactions in Nigeria are often characterized by rent-seeking behaviour, selective law enforcement, and discretionary abuse of authority (Anyo & Yecho, 2020; Ayuk et al., 2020). Research conducted in 2025 further highlights how socio-political factors such as class, ethnicity, and religion shape policing practices and public trust, reinforcing structural barriers to police legitimacy (Adenuga & Ojizele, 2025).

The #EndSARS protests of 2020 marked a critical moment that exposed long-standing grievances against police brutality, corruption, and impunity, drawing national and international attention to systemic failures within the NPF (Akinlabi, 2022; Ojo, 2023). Subsequent studies demonstrate that repeated exposure to police abuse has contributed to declining public trust in the Nigerian

justice system, weakened accountability mechanisms, and reduced willingness to cooperate with law enforcement (Covenant, 2025). Central to these challenges is an entrenched police culture that normalizes informal practices such as extortion, selective service delivery, and coercive enforcement, often at the expense of procedural justice and citizen empowerment. Scholarship on Nigerian policing underscores how organizational culture shapes everyday police behaviour and service delivery outcomes. Umar (2018) illustrates that police responsiveness to complaints frequently depends on a complainant's ability or willingness to provide financial inducements, leading to neglected investigations and systematic disempowerment of vulnerable citizens. While police officers often attribute such practices to poor remuneration, inadequate logistics, and limited institutional support, recent studies argue that structural constraints alone cannot explain the persistence of these behaviours, emphasizing instead the role of entrenched institutional norms and weak accountability mechanisms (Alemika, 2020; Okoli & Agada, 2021). Broader historical and structural factors, including colonial policing legacies, political interference, weak oversight institutions, and chronic underfunding, further reinforce a policing environment in which informal rules frequently supersede formal regulations (Hills, 2021; Tankebe et al., 2022).

In response to growing legitimacy challenges, community policing has been promoted as a trust-enhancing strategy aimed at fostering collaboration between citizens and law enforcement agencies. Recent studies suggest that when effectively institutionalized, community policing can improve safety outcomes, enhance service delivery, and strengthen police–community cooperation (Awoyemi et al., 2025; Nwafor, 2025). However, empirical evidence also highlights significant implementation challenges within the NPF, including resource constraints, officer burnout, limited training, and weak adherence to community policing principles, which undermine its effectiveness as a mechanism for rebuilding trust (Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology, 2025).

Despite sustained reform efforts and growing scholarly attention, most empirical studies on policing in Nigeria remain focused on national or institutional levels. There is a notable scarcity of localized, community-level research examining how police culture operates in everyday interactions and how it shapes mistrust, social coherence, citizen disempowerment, and service delivery within specific communities. This gap limits the effectiveness of evidence-based policing reforms and constrains the development of context-sensitive interventions. Against this backdrop, this study focuses on the Saburi community in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, with the overarching aim of examining police culture and its contribution to mistrust, coherence, and disempowerment within and between the Nigerian Police Force and the community. Specifically, the study seeks to: (i) identify the various forms of police culture that generate mistrust, incoherence, and citizen disempowerment within and between the police and the Saburi community; (ii) assess the extent to which these identified cultural practices contribute to existing levels of mistrust, incoherence, and disempowerment within the NPF and in police–community relations; and (iii) determine whether prevailing police culture enhances or hinders effective service delivery by the Nigerian Police Force. By addressing these objectives, the study aims to generate localized, empirically grounded insights capable of informing police reform initiatives, strengthening accountability, and improving police–community relations in Nigeria.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative survey research design to investigate police culture and its contribution to mistrust, coherence, and disempowerment within and between the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) and the Saburi community in Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja. The survey design was considered appropriate as it facilitates the systematic collection of data from participants to describe, analyze, and interpret existing social conditions and interpersonal interactions between the police and the community (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Specifically, the qualitative survey enabled the capture of participants' perceptions, experiences, and attitudes, allowing nuanced insights into how organizational culture, informal practices, and police behaviors influence public trust, social coherence, and citizen empowerment. Structured interviews were employed to elicit detailed accounts from both police officers and community members, providing the depth required to examine complex patterns of behavior, institutional norms, and informal practices shaping police–community relations (Patton, 2015).

Study Area and Population

The research was conducted in Saburi community, situated within AMAC, FCT Abuja. AMAC is primarily residential, moderately compact, and culturally diverse, comprising residents of varying occupations, social statuses, and religious affiliations. Saburi, in particular, reflects a microcosm of the broader AMAC population, including government workers, private employees, artisans, traders, students, religious leaders, and traditional institution leaders. The target population consisted of:

Police officers in AMAC, spanning low, medium, and high ranks, to capture hierarchical perspectives on police culture and its impact on service delivery.

Residents of Saburi Community, representing diverse socio-economic and demographic backgrounds, to capture community perceptions of police behavior, trust, and empowerment.

This dual-population approach facilitated triangulation of perspectives between law enforcement personnel and community members, enhancing the depth, validity, and interpretive rigor of the findings.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The study employed a purposive sampling technique to select participants who were most knowledgeable or directly involved in police–community interactions (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). A total of 60 participants were included:

30 police officers, purposively selected across low, medium, and high ranks to ensure representation of diverse hierarchical perspectives.

30 community members, purposively selected to reflect the socio-economic and demographic diversity of Saburi, including individuals with direct experience interacting with the police.

Purposive sampling was appropriate given the study's qualitative focus on information-rich cases, which provide in-depth insights into police culture and its effects on mistrust, coherence, disempowerment, and service delivery.

Data Collection Methods

Data were collected using a structured interview guide consisting predominantly of open-ended questions. The questions were designed to elicit detailed narratives on:

- i. Forms of police culture and behaviors affecting trust, coherence, and empowerment;
- ii. Experiences and perceptions of police–community interactions; and
- iii. The perceived impact of police culture on service delivery and community relations.

Interviews were conducted in-person with both police officers and community members, each lasting approximately 30–45 minutes. The interview protocol was carefully aligned with the research objectives to ensure comprehensive coverage of the study's thematic focus.

To maintain ethical standards, all participants were informed about the purpose of the study, assured of confidentiality, and provided consent before participation.

Methods of Data Analysis

The study employed a qualitative analysis approach, combining content analysis, thematic coding, and word-frequency techniques. The analytical process comprised:

Transcription: All interviews were transcribed verbatim.

Coding: Transcripts were coded using Nvivo-12 software, allowing systematic identification of recurring themes, patterns, and categories related to police culture, mistrust, coherence, and disempowerment.

Thematic Analysis: Emerging themes were interpreted in relation to the research objectives, highlighting convergent and divergent perspectives across police officers and community members.

Descriptive Analysis: Basic descriptive statistics, including percentages and charts, were generated using Microsoft Excel to summarize the prevalence of recurring perceptions and experiences.

Triangulation: Data from police officers and community members were triangulated to identify similarities, differences, and contextual nuances, enhancing the reliability and credibility of the findings (Patton, 2015).

Additionally, word-clouds and word-frequency visualizations were generated to illustrate dominant themes in participant narratives, providing a visual representation of salient aspects of police culture and its influence on public trust, coherence, and service delivery.

Justification of Methodology

The selected qualitative survey design, purposive sampling, and structured interview approach are justified on several grounds:

- i. They enable the study to capture rich, context-specific insights into police culture and community perceptions that are difficult to quantify through structured surveys.
- ii. They facilitate comparative analysis of perspectives across hierarchical levels within the NPF and among diverse community segments.
- iii. The approach allows for the identification of micro-level practices, informal norms, and institutional behaviors that influence mistrust, incoherence, and citizen disempowerment, thereby providing actionable evidence for policing policy and reform initiatives.

Overall, this methodology provides a rigorous, contextually grounded, and ethically sound framework for examining the effects of police culture on trust, coherence, and empowerment within the Saburi community and the NPF in AMAC, FCT Abuja.

Data Presentation and Empirical Results

Respondents' Background Information

The demographic information of the respondents reveals that most (police officers and public) of the respondents were male while few were female. More than of the police-respondents NPF were between the 31-40years of age and just a half of the public respondents were between 18-30 years of age. Also, above half of the police-respondents had police college education followed by nearly half who had HND/BSc while most of the public respondents had SSCE followed by about quarter had OND/NCE. Hence, the results of the survey indicate that the respondents have the versatile requisite knowledge to provide the versatile knowledge to provide the required answers to the interview-questions. Furthermore, Fig 1 depicts the ranks and years of work experience of the police respondents. It shows that roughly a third respondents were Inspectors (30%), Sergeants (33%) and a few (17%) were Assistant Superintendent of Police. Also, the figure reveals that above half (60%) of police respondents had above 10 years working experience in NPF.

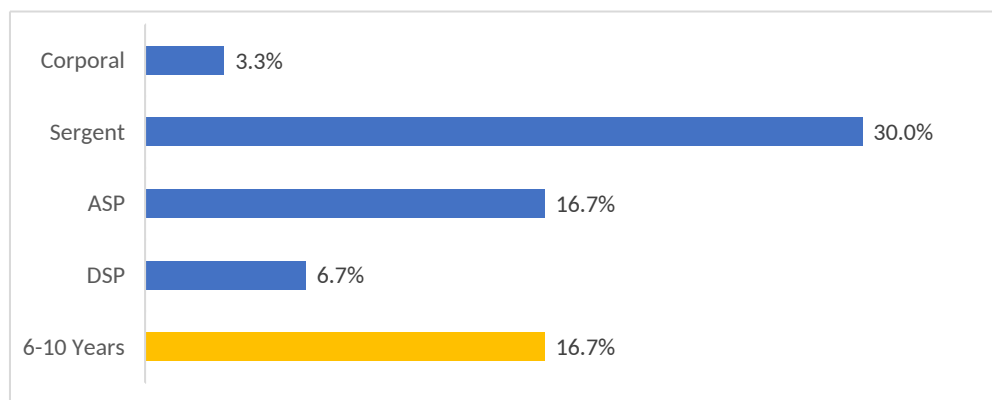


Fig 1. Police-Respondents Rank and their Working Experience

Presentation of Interviews: The Identification of Existing Police Culture and Its Causes, Engendering Mistrust, Incoherence and Disempowerment within and between the Police and Public

Table 1 presents the word-frequency of the existing police culture and its causes as identified by the police respondents. Table 1 reveals that *leadership intoxication* (22), *police brutality* (20), *SARS attitudes* (15), *human right section abuse* (15), *unfairness* (8) and *dishonesty* (8) among others are the identified police culture. Subsequently, *poor welfare* (15), *bad working condition* (18), *police pension fund* (13) and *funds misappropriation* (14) among others are the major causes of the bad police culture identified. Fig 2 presents the word-could analysis (word frequency distribution) of the identified misused structures. The word's magnification (bold) implies words that frequently appear in the sampled respondents; thus, it indicates the most salient points of the sample. Evidence from Fig 2 and Table 1 reveals the major common individual identified police culture and causes among others, can be interconnected from the most salient points as follows: *Leadership intoxication, police brutality, human right section abuse and SARS attitudes* among others are the pervasive police culture; and *poor working environment, bad welfare and police housing scheme* among others are the major identified causes of the existing police culture. Therefore, *Leadership intoxication, police brutality, human right section abuse and SARS attitudes* among others are the pervasive police culture contributing to mistrust, incoherence and disempowerment in the NPF.

Table 1. Identified Police Culture and Causes

<i>Culture and Causes</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
SARS attitudes	15
poor welfare	15
police pension fund	13
police brutality	20
leadership intoxication	22
bad working conditions	18
poor work environment	17
corruption officers	4
housing fund	4
Unfairness	8
Dishonesty	8
bad welfare	12

poor work environment	4
police housing scheme	10
funds misappropriation	14
human rights section abuse	15

Source: Researcher's compilations using NVivo-12



Fig 2. Word-cloud Analysis of the Identified Police Culture and Causes

Exploratory Analysis of Police Opinions on Existing Police Cultures within NPF

The analysis of the police opinions on the identified police culture reveals that nearly all of the respondents agreed that some officers have the culture of navigating some structures in NPF for their self-interest. Consequently, the figure depicts that most of the respondents perceived the earlier identified police cultures as factor that hinders better police service delivery.

Table 2. The Perceive Consequences of the Identified Police Culture

- *the cultures make public disregard the police so no boosting morale for officers pushing them to police the community (1.7%)*
- *these cultures make public see police as a threat (12.5%)*
- *injustice (5.6%)*
- *bad welfare has become a tool for officers to be misbehave (2.3%)*
- *terrible (2.4%)*

- *SARS, public see police as threat not friend (12.2%)*
- *leadership failure affects the whole system (10.3%)*
- *the cultures are not working (1.02%)*
- *junior officers are disregarded and lead to disrespect from public (10.8%)*
- *good welfare will boost morale of the officers to perform well (3.0%)*

Source: Field Survey

The respondents (police officers) further identified some consequences of the identified police culture, these include; *junior officers are disregarded and lead to disrespect from public, these cultures make public see police as a threat and the cultures make public disregard the police so no boosting morale for officers pushing them to police the community* (see Table 2 for details).

Presentation of Focus Group Discussions

The analysis of the group discussions such as Community-Leaders, Chiefs, Market Women, Okada Group and Youth Group reveals that above half of the respondents concurred to have been treated badly by police and majority of them experienced and perceived some bad actions of the police. The major bad actions of the police as experienced and perceived by the respondents are *extortion, brutality, bad law enforcement and slapping* among others.

Following the emphasized bad actions of the police officers earlier identified, the public respondents identified some expected character from the police officers that will enhance police-community relationship, these include *friendly, justice pursual, fair-hearing, depth investigations* and so on. Subsequently they recommended *proper training, socializing, close supervision, improve salary and improve salary among others* for us (Nigeria) to have the police we will be proud of. The respondents as well outlined possible indicators such as “*appearance*”, “*attitudinal change*” and “*prompt to distress call*” among others to know if improved changes have taken place in the NPF (see Table 3).

Table 3. Public Recommendations

Expected Police Behaviour by Public	Public Recommendations on Improving Trust and Confidence	How Public Know Improved Changes has taken place in NPF
• <i>do their investigation properly</i> • <i>Justice pursual</i> • <i>good behaviour</i>	• <i>Proper training</i> • <i>Socialize with the community</i> • <i>Close supervision</i>	• <i>by their appearance</i> • <i>Attitudinal Change</i> • <i>prompt response to calls</i>

• <i>fair-hearing, good judgement</i> • <i>cordial relationship with community</i> • <i>they should do their work properly</i> • <i>police should have human feelings</i> • <i>they should be diligent</i> • <i>Friendly</i> • <i>kind to people</i> • <i>balance hearing ears</i> • <i>in depth investigation</i>	• <i>Frequent lectures at all levels</i> • <i>improve salary</i> • <i>trustworthy, faithful</i> • <i>Stop bribery</i> • <i>proper supervision</i> • <i>robust training</i>	• <i>through their behaviour</i> • <i>through their attitudes</i> • <i>by their attitudes</i> • <i>by their behaviour</i>
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Source: Researcher's compilations using NVivo-12

Evaluation and Discussion of Findings

This section discusses and evaluates the findings in relation to the study's research objectives, situating the results within existing scholarly literature on police culture, legitimacy, and service delivery, while highlighting the study's unique empirical contributions.

In line with the first objective, the findings reveal that police culture within the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) is characterized by entrenched informal practices such as leadership intoxication, abuse of authority, police brutality, rent-seeking behaviour, and residual SARS operational attitudes. These practices reflect a coercive policing orientation in which authority is exercised arbitrarily rather than procedurally. This finding corroborates earlier Nigerian studies that identify informal norms and discretionary abuse of power as defining features of police culture (Alemika, 2020; Okoli & Agada, 2021). It also aligns with procedural justice theory, which posits that policing practices lacking fairness, respect, and neutrality undermine public trust and institutional legitimacy (Tyler, 2006; Bradford et al., 2021). However, this study extends existing literature by demonstrating that these cultural practices are not only perceived by the public but are also openly acknowledged by police officers themselves. Unlike prior studies that rely predominantly on citizen narratives (Anyo & Yecho, 2020; Ayuk et al., 2020), the present findings show that officers

recognize leadership failures and internal disrespect as central drivers of negative police–community relations. This internal acknowledgment underscores the depth of cultural dysfunction within the NPF and suggests that legitimacy deficits are institutionally recognized rather than externally imposed.

Building on the identification of problematic police cultures, the second objective examined whether these practices contribute to mistrust, social incoherence, and disempowerment between the police and the Saburi community. The findings provide strong empirical support for this relationship. Both police and community respondents consistently linked extortion, selective enforcement, intimidation, and brutality to declining public confidence and avoidance of police institutions. This supports existing empirical evidence that coercive and corrupt policing erodes institutional legitimacy and weakens citizen cooperation (Akinlabi, 2022; Tankebe et al., 2022). Beyond confirming this relationship, the study makes a critical contribution by foregrounding citizen disempowerment as a core outcome of police culture. While earlier studies acknowledge mistrust and hostility toward the police, few empirically demonstrate how policing practices systematically marginalize economically vulnerable populations at the community level. The findings show that access to justice in Saburi community is frequently perceived as conditional upon financial capacity or social connections, effectively commodifying justice and excluding disadvantaged groups. This supports Covenant (2025), which links police abuse to declining confidence in the justice system, but extends the literature by illustrating how such abuse produces sustained feelings of powerlessness and social exclusion.

Importantly, the findings also reveal that mistrust and incoherence are not merely attitudinal but behavioural. Fear of extortion or harassment discourages crime reporting and cooperation, thereby weakening informal social control mechanisms and collective security. This evaluation underscores the cyclical nature of mistrust, where negative police culture produces disempowerment, which in turn undermines policing effectiveness.

The third objective assessed whether police culture enhances or hinders service delivery within the NPF. The findings overwhelmingly indicate that prevailing police culture hinders effective service delivery. Police respondents acknowledged that public mistrust limits intelligence sharing, reduces voluntary compliance, and complicates crime prevention efforts. Community respondents confirmed that fear and suspicion often prevent them from seeking police assistance. These findings are consistent with organizational policing literature emphasizing that institutional culture directly shapes operational outcomes (Hills, 2021). However, this study advances existing knowledge by demonstrating how internal police culture and leadership failures translate into external service delivery deficits. Junior officers were identified as particularly affected by internal disrespect, poor supervision, and authoritarian leadership, which subsequently shape their interactions with the public. While previous studies often attribute poor service delivery primarily to inadequate resources or funding constraints, this study reveals that welfare challenges are frequently used to legitimize misconduct rather than fully explain it. This nuanced evaluation deepens understanding of how structural deficiencies interact with cultural norms to undermine professionalism.

Furthermore, community respondents articulated clear expectations of improved service delivery grounded in fairness, responsiveness, and respectful engagement. These expectations closely align with procedural justice principles, suggesting that rebuilding trust does not require extraordinary

interventions but a consistent shift toward ethical and community-oriented policing practices. This finding challenges assumptions that Nigerian communities are inherently hostile toward the police and instead indicates a readiness for cooperation if institutional behaviour changes.

Overall, the findings demonstrate a coherent progression across the research objectives: entrenched police culture generates mistrust and disempowerment, which in turn undermines service delivery and social coherence. While the study corroborates existing Nigerian and international literature on police legitimacy, it advances knowledge in four key ways. First, it provides empirical evidence of police officers' self-recognition of cultural and leadership failures. Second, it demonstrates the persistence of SARS-related operational culture despite formal institutional reforms, highlighting the limitations of structural change without cultural transformation. Third, it explicitly links police culture to citizen disempowerment rather than mistrust alone. Finally, by focusing on Saburi community, the study contributes localized, community-level evidence that addresses a significant gap in Nigerian policing scholarship dominated by national-level analyses.

Conclusion, Policy Implications and Recommendations

This study examined police culture and its contribution to mistrust, social incoherence, and citizen disempowerment within and between the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) and the Saburi community of Abuja Municipal Area Council (AMAC), FCT Abuja. Guided by procedural justice and police legitimacy theory, the study provides localized empirical evidence on how entrenched informal norms within the NPF shape police–community relations and service delivery outcomes. The findings reveal that police culture in the study area is characterized by leadership intoxication, abuse of authority, police brutality, selective enforcement, rent-seeking behaviour, and persistent SARS-related operational attitudes. These practices undermine public trust, weaken social cohesion, and systematically marginalize economically vulnerable citizens. Notably, the convergence of police and community perspectives indicates that legitimacy deficits are institutionally recognized rather than solely constructed through public perception.

The study further demonstrates that prevailing police culture significantly hinders effective service delivery. Mistrust and fear discourage crime reporting, reduce intelligence sharing, and weaken voluntary compliance with the law, thereby undermining public safety outcomes. The persistence of coercive practices despite post-#EndSARS reforms underscores the limitations of structural changes that fail to address underlying organizational culture. Overall, the study concludes that sustainable improvements in policing outcomes in Nigeria require deliberate cultural transformation anchored in ethical leadership, procedural justice, and meaningful community engagement.

The findings have important implications for policing policy and security governance in Nigeria. First, they suggest that police reform initiatives must move beyond structural and policy adjustments to directly address organizational culture. Embedding procedural justice principles into operational guidelines, performance evaluations, and disciplinary systems is critical for rebuilding legitimacy and public trust.

Second, leadership accountability emerges as a central policy priority. The prevalence of leadership intoxication indicates the need for merit-based promotion, ethical leadership training,

and stronger internal and external oversight mechanisms. Without accountable leadership, reform efforts are unlikely to translate into behavioural change at the street level.

Third, the study highlights the limitations of symbolic community policing initiatives. While community policing remains a viable trust-building strategy, its effectiveness depends on genuine institutional commitment, adequate resourcing, and officer orientation toward partnership rather than control. Policies must therefore focus on institutionalizing community policing practices rather than merely adopting them rhetorically.

Finally, the study underscores the broader governance implications of police misconduct. When access to justice is perceived as commodified, public confidence in state institutions deteriorates. Addressing police culture is therefore essential not only for improving policing outcomes but also for strengthening democratic accountability, human rights protection, and social cohesion.

Based on the findings, the study makes the following recommendations:

First, the NPF should implement sustained cultural reorientation programmes emphasizing procedural justice, ethical conduct, and respect for human rights. Such initiatives should be continuous and embedded within professional development frameworks rather than delivered as one-off trainings.

Second, leadership reform should be prioritized through transparent promotion systems, mandatory ethics and leadership training for senior officers, and strict sanctions for abuse of authority. Leadership performance should be assessed using both operational outcomes and community trust indicators.

Third, officer welfare and working conditions should be improved to reduce incentives for rent-seeking behaviour. However, welfare reforms must be accompanied by robust accountability mechanisms to prevent the normalization of misconduct.

Fourth, community policing initiatives should be strengthened through regular engagement with community leaders, civil society organizations, and traditional institutions in Saburi community. Structured dialogue platforms can enhance mutual understanding and rebuild trust.

Finally, independent oversight and complaint-handling mechanisms should be strengthened to empower citizens and protect complainants from intimidation or retaliation.

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