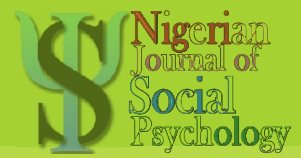


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## **Covid-19 Pandemic and Enforcement of Order by the Nigeria Police Force in Enugu Urban, South-East Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*Covid-19 pandemic is a highly infectious virus which requires precautionary measures to contain the disease. In order to ensure public compliance to the preventive measures, the Nigeria police Force was mandated to enforce these measures amid a seeming intractable face-off between the Nigeria Police Force and the public. The aim of the study was to appraise the role of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) in the enforcement of Covid-19 Pandemic order in Enugu Urban, South-East Nigeria. The study was guided by two study objectives. Mixed research method was adopted for the study. The general population of the study was 475151, from which a sample size of 400 was selected using Taro Yamen formula for sample determination. Frequency, percentage and graphic illustration were adopted for the analysis. Content analysis was adopted in analyzing the in-depth interview data gathered. The study found that the police were too hard on the people in the course of enforcing the Covid-19 pandemic order. It was equally found that police were not fair in treatment meted on the public and this made the public not to comply with the police. The study recommended among others that there should be a special squad in the Nigeria Police Force specially trained to deal with policing the public in periods of health pandemic. Such officers should have knowledge of human health. Again, the Nigeria Police Force should be given the desired training in applying procedural justice at all times during investigation instead of brutal force and intimidation as a way of policing the nation.*

**Keywords:** *Covid-19, human health, lockdown policing, pandemic*

### **Introduction**

Corona viruses are a large family of viruses that are known to cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The novel coronavirus (Covid-19) was identified in 2019 in Wuhan, China. This is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified in human. (WHO, 2020).

The first official case of Covid-19 in Nigeria was an Italian migrant from Europe to Lagos State, Nigeria and was tested positive and announced by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDDC) on the 17<sup>th</sup> of February 2020. Some states that share boundaries with Lagos State

like Ondo, Ogun, Oyo and major cities like Abuja and Kano within a very short time recorded their index cases respectively. Prior the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria, Health institution could be better described as a transient camp to mortuary particularly those owned and controlled by government. The reason for this ugly trend is not far fetched. Virtually all the political elites in Nigeria and their families; both immediate and extended seek for medical care in any country of their choice. The Nigeria government not only pays the medical expenses but equally pay travel allowance to these persons within the period of the medical care. This generated uncaring attitude by government who saw the equipping of government hospital as waste of resources

The Covid-19 which started in the city of Wuhan China spread like wild fire in Europe America, Asia and indeed Africa did not give room for such medical spree abroad. For this and other extraneous reasons, there were speculations that there was going to be harvest of dead bodies not only in Nigeria but in the whole of Africa as a continent. The reasons adduced for this ugly expectation include the low literacy level in Africa, environmental pollution, challenges in the critical infrastructures particularly in the health sector.

The World Health Organization (WHO) introduced immediate measures to curb the seeming intractable spread of the virus, These measures include washing of hands regularly with soap and in a running water for about twenty seconds, using hand sanitizers with basic alcohol composition not less than 65%, use of face-masks to cover the nose and mouth and obeying physical or social distancing rule of one meter (three feet) gap.

In view of the escalating nature of the Covid-19 pandemic, countries of the world introduced lockdown measures with different rules attached. This was done to avert possible contact with those not yet infected by the deadly virus. Kalu (2020) noted that the federal government of Nigeria forced an interim lockdown measures for two weeks with effect from 30<sup>th</sup> March, 2020 for three out of the thirty-six states in the country defined as the epic centre for the Covid-19 pandemic. These states include Lagos, Ogun, and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

The lockdown was however extended to another two weeks. The situation became very worrisome when the pandemic entered the communities. It was apparently difficult for government to do contact tracing through those already infected. In view of the low literacy level of the population particularly in Northern Nigeria, there was erroneous believe that the pandemic was never in existence. The fatality rate was believed to be a curse from the gods who were out to punish those who may have contributed to the hardship in the country. The erroneous believe seem to appear real in the country because at the beginning of the pandemic, the worst hit were the political and elites who of course have always had their ways to travel to any country of their choice. To curb the community infection, the federal government of Nigeria introduced ban on interstate movement. Only those on essential duties like medical personnel, vehicles carrying food and medical related materials were allowed to move across other states.

Nigeria is described in demographic literature as the most populous country in Africa with her population totaling over two hundred million. Prior the Covid-19 pandemic, Nigeria in 2008 was described as the headquarters of poverty with more than 40% of the population living below the poverty line of one dollar per day (Kalu,2020). Apart from this challenge, greater number of the population is in the informal sector of the economy and apparently depends on daily income for sustenance. Considering the poverty plight of the people amid the pandemic and the attendant lockdown measures, wealthy individuals through the Nigeria government donated money and other essential materials as palliatives to the people. The government equally doled out money and food items to alleviate the sufferings of the people. However, the

distribution pattern of the money and materials seem not to go down well with the people. There was serious allegation that the distribution pattern was lopsided. People from the Northern part of the country were alleged to have had the greatest chunk. In view of the pre Covid-19 level of poverty and hunger in the country coupled with the poor distribution pattern of the palliatives, people were forced to move to the streets particularly in those cities described as the Covid-19 pandemic epic centre which of course are the commercial nerve centers in Nigeria. This situation presented a complete violation of the international standards for the prevention of the spread of Covid-19 pandemic.

Considering the challenges that the preventive measures could pose to the public, the Nigeria government deemed it crucial to involve members of the police. It is the principal responsibility of the police of any society to maintain law and order and equally respond promptly to crisis situation that of the Nigeria Police Force is no less an exception. However, responding to health crisis situation was quite new as such posed a challenge to the force. The Author stressed that the training curriculum of members of the Nigeria Police Force did not take cognizance of such health challenge as Covid-19 pandemic {Ojedokun 2021 cited in Aborisade & Adedayo, 2021}. Boyd (2013) conceptualizes police as part of law enforcement or group of people tasked with the responsibility of prevention of crime and apprehension of offenders. Boyd noted that the functions of the police further include enforcing law, preventing crime, responding to emergencies and providing support service.

Ugwuoke (2010) affirmed that police is a formal social institution which emerged as a vital segment of legal administrative apparatus which are specifically designed and equipped to maintain law and order through the enforcement of societal laws and regulations especially in a free and democratic environment. The author further said that the term police is derived from the Greek word *polies* which refers to the secular segment of the society responsible for the maintenance of law and order and for the protection of the safety and health of the city- states. Alemika (2010) described the police as the most visible governmental agents through which the character of a government is portrayed. In Nigeria, literature suggests that there is a serious discordance between the police and the public. Such scenario is captured in Alemika and Chukwuma (2004) that the police in Nigeria with the backing of autocratic leaders and repressive laws frequently act outside the rule of law. Often, they constitute laws unto themselves, maiming, killing and detaining persons arbitrarily and with impunity.

Ibidapo -Obe and Nwosu (2015) buttressed this point by attesting to the fact that confidence in the Nigeria police has been eroded and the victims of crime do not trust the police enough to make a formal report at the station. The obvious implication of these challenges is that the whole idea of democratic policing has been decimated. Covid-19 pandemic is quite phenomenal because the world has not witnessed such health challenge in the recent times. Scholars have dealt with the issue relating to Covid-19 preventive measures and citizens' level of compliance, enforcement of Covid 19 pandemic lockdown order (Aliu, 2021), however very few or none of these studies has evaluated the role of the Nigeria Police Force in curbing the Covid-19 pandemic, particularly in the present situation where Covid-19 pandemic is quite new and measures to contain the challenge was not captured in the curriculum, content of the Nigeria Police Force. This gap informs the need for this study. It is therefore the aim of the study to appraise the role of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) in the enforcement Covid- 19 Pandemic order in Enugu Urban, South-East Nigeria.

## **Research objectives**

To guide the study, the following research objectives were outlined:

1. To investigate how the public perceives police involvement in curbing the spread of Covid-19 pandemic in Enugu Urban, South-East Nigeria
2. To investigate how the police attitude to the public influence public cooperation during Covid-19 pandemic in Enugu Urban, South-East Nigeria.

## **Literature Review**

### **Public Perception of Police Involvement in Curbing the Spread of Covid-19 Pandemic**

It is mandatory for the police to act in accordance with the rules, but obvious in the discharge of their duties, the police violate public rights and put them into an un expected hardship through their unprofessional behaviours. To this end, people desire the police to be cautioned and corrected. The police are therefore noncompliant to the rules and regulations which the public in general expects from them (Abdul & Aklima, 2021) Sydney-Agbor, Nwankwo, Iroegbu and Wisdom (2013) noted that there has been public negative perception about the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) which emanated from their poor performance in handling crimes and poor ethical conduct in the course of discharging their duties.

This according to these scholars has lowered the level of public confidence to the police; Adinde (2019) affirmed that cooperation and trust on the police are bound to be positive if the police exhibit democratic policing process. The Presidential Committee on Police Reforms in 2006 as stated in Odinkalu (2008) observed that police brutality is a common phenomenon during crime control- crowd control, public events and ceremonies, control of processions, protests, investigations, and at checkpoints. The committee also reported that extra-judicial killing is very rampant during such public engagements. In April, 2020, the Nigeria Human Right Commission reported that security agents had killed eighteen people in the first two weeks of lockdown. This figure was more than the number of national fatalities at that time (Asimi, 2020). The same source noted that some security operatives were accused of profiteering from the lockdown by taking bribe from motorists in exchange for free passage at the checkpoints. Other organized financial crimes like drug trafficking, cyber crimes, sale of fake medical products online were on the rise in spite of the ever presence of the security operatives like the Drug Law Enforcement Agency.

Section 4(a) of the Nigeria Police Act 2020 provides that the Police Force shall prevent and detect crimes, and protect the rights and freedom of every person in Nigeria as provided in the constitution, the African Charter on Human and Peoples Right and any other law

(b) maintain public safety law and order,

(e) discharge such duties within and outside Nigeria as may be required of it under this Act or any other law.

Stogner et al cited in Aliu (2021) noted that in periods of emergency, the police act and adjust their operational structure and system to be in tandem with the reality on ground. In addition to the statutory responsibilities, the arrangements are needed to sustain the existing order and pursue local policing activities Therefore, to ensure compliance to the police rules of engagement; the Nigeria Police Force outlined specific guidelines for policing during the Covid-19 pandemic emergency. These rules among others include managing public order situation. The rule stipulates that:

1. The police should wear personal protective equipment – including glove, eye protective equipment and disposable face-masks before coming in close contact with a crowd.
2. The police should stay calm
3. The police should explain the need for the Covid-19 preventative measures to the crowd and ask them to disperse for their own safety.
4. The police should use force only when absolutely necessary and to the extent proportionate to achieve the required result and in accordance with existing national legislation.
5. Clean and disinfect all equipment before or after the use.

Further to these guidelines, the Inspector General of Police cautioned the police officers not to conduct unnecessary arrests and detention of suspects as they work to ensure social distancing. The Inspector General of Police (IGP) also directed that the police strictly enforce all legitimate orders made to contain the spread of the virus while urging citizens to voluntarily comply (Partners West Africa, 2020). The IGP specifically urged the Force Provost Department, the X-squad, the Force Public Relation Department, the Complaint Response Bureau to carry out their oversight role of adequate evaluation and monitoring of officers to ensure compliance with the guidelines and bring erring personnel to justice. The IGP also enjoined citizens to cooperate with the police and other law enforcement officers as all hands are on deck to curtail and contain the virus in the country. (Umeh, 2021) In all these rules and measures, it is the responsibility of the law enforcement agencies championed by the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) to ensure compliance to the measure and obedience to the rules.

Olofin (2020) affirmed that comprehensive assessment of police response across most hard hit Covid-19 affected countries shows that policing the pandemic is an extraordinary task which is not necessarily peculiar to Nigeria. Olofin, (2020) affirmed that policing in a lockdown is a very complex task especially for the first time institutions like the Nigeria Police Force as this form of policing comes with profound implication for human right concerns. In a study by Abirisade (2021) entitled 'Account of Unlawful Use of Force and Misconduct of Nigeria Police in the Enforcement of Covid-19 Measures', the study adopted victim-centered approach involving qualitative in-depth interview with 71 participants. It was found that the police exhibited a significant aggression directed towards the public which include physical violence, hostility, intimidation, extortion and punishment. Female participants reported incidents of sexual harassments unwanted sexual advances and assault. In another study by Ajayi & Inasa-Thomas (2021) entitled 'Perception of Police Parade of Suspects among Residents of Eti-Osa During Lockdown in Lagos State, Nigeria, the study adopted a survey research design. A sample of 300 respondents were selected for the study. A percentage of the respondents affirmed that the parading of suspects before the public was a pretence to show that they are effective in their work.

### **Police Attitude to the Public and Public Cooperation during Covid-19 Pandemic**

The Nigeria Police is said to rank high in the index of corrupt public agencies in Nigeria. (West, 2020). Affirming this posits, Dambazau (2007) noted that a major contemporary issue of regular discussion in relation to policing in Nigeria is the extent of corruption. In terms of their attitude, and pattern of behaviour as it affects either the constable on the road block, or the officer investigating crime or performing routine law enforcement duties, the police are generally said to be corrupt; a situation in which the public has attributed to the problem of inefficiency in

the organization. The author further affirmed that police corruption manifests itself in a number of ways:

-Police corruption facilitates the commission of crime or the escape from justice by others, leading to more criminality in society.

-Where the police are deemed corrupt and inept by the wider society, people tend to opt for self-protection or seek revenge. The construction of high fences and establishment of personal security or community-self help security outfits.

Asimi (2020) however observed that since 2017, there has been noteworthy improvements by the Nigeria Police Force on effective complainant channel through various interventions, like the Force Complaint Resources Unit which has helped to address misconducts by police officers, The unit has deployed various techniques and tools in handling complaints and has contributed to a decrease in bribe-taking from about 46% in 2017 to 33% in 2018, according to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). Nonetheless, the police still have the highest prevalence of bribery reported in survey, a statistic borne out by Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer for Africa. Buttressing this ugly attitude of the Nigeria Police Force, Aliu (2022) observed that during the hit of the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria, there was appreciable compliance from the public; however, the hitherto existing illegalities like extortion and bribery fueled the public non compliance.

Aborisade and Ariyo (2021) noted that prior the Covid-19 pandemic, the Nigeria Police Force has been facing challenges of lack of legitimacy coupled with the employment of military force and might in the policing activities. This has impacted on police-community relation. The duo interviewed 16 respondents from police top-ranking officers who supervised the lockdown enforcement. The report showed that the police were not prepared for public health intervention and public resistance to the application of repressive force-led style of policing were identified as the major challenge to positive pandemic policing. In a report by Njoku, Akpeje, Neme, Adeaja and other security agencies have been accused of profiteering from the lockdown put in place to contain corona virus (covid-19) pandemic. It was further reported by these authors that residents in Lagos, Ibadan, Enugu, Umuahia, Jalingo and other major towns in Nigeria, rather than enforce the covid-19 pandemic restriction as expected, the security operatives; including the military and immigration personnel, were helping themselves to pecuniary gains.

### **Factors that Propelled Public Violence during Covid -19 Pandemic**

In Nigeria, the public's willingness to cooperate with the police seems to have been discarded. To an average Nigerian, the Nigeria Police represent terror and oppression in spite of their roles in the maintenance and sustenance of democracy. Ugwuoke (2010) notes that perhaps, the unwillingness of the Nigerian public to cooperate with the police explains why there are beehives of crime and criminal activities in the country; a situation that has so much degenerated to the point whereby armed robbers could barge into the house of the mother to a former President of Nigeria. It, therefore, seems to imply that any police officer, who stands out to fight crime effectively, must adhere to the democratic principles and believe in the public; hence crime is committed within a social milieu

Chapter 4 (Section 33) of the Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 provides detailed rights of every Nigerian that must be respected by personnel of the Nigeria Police Force. Although the right to freedom of movement is guaranteed, the suspension of this in a pandemic situation is for the interest of the public except for those who can move around on

essential duties. The complexities in policing the lockdown period was evidenced on some citizens wittingly violating the rules to test the capabilities of the law enforcement agencies at work and the police reacting to minor offences that ordinarily required instant correction. In all these circumstances, it is the fundamental role of the Nigeria Police Force to protect citizens. In a study by Ojedeokun (2021) entitled 'Covid-19 Pandemic Lockdown Enforcement: Strategies of the Nigeria Police Force and Lesson for the Future, the study was qualitative. Data were collected from media and government reports. It was found that a major pitfall of police operation was the highhandedness of some of the personnel in implementation of the directives from government.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Social Bond Theory**

Social Bond Theory was the brainchild of Travis Hirschi in 1969. The theory was later developed into social control theory. The thrust of the theory is that bonds exist in all aspects of society and as such, the relation of these bonds can be discussed. Hirschi (1969) theorized that social bonds do exist and when a bond is weakened or broken, the unusual behaviour by the individual may occur. Hirschi assumes that individuals are potential law violators, but are put under check because of the fear that the disapproved behaviour will destroy the relationships and reputations with friends, parents, neighbors, teachers and employers ( Sigel,2007). Social Bonds Theory proposes that people's relationships, commitments, values, norms and beliefs encourage them not to break the law. Thus, if moral codes are internalized and individuals have a stake in their wider community, they will voluntarily limit their propensity to commit deviant acts.

The four basic elements of social bond theory are attachment, commitment, involvement in conventional versus deviant or criminal activities and common value system within an individual's society or sub-group.

**Attachment:** According to Hirschi (1969), this refers to the level of psychological affection one has for others and institutions. For Hirschi, parents and schools are of critical importance in this regard where youths who form close attachment to their parents and schools will by extension, experience greater level of social control.

**Commitment:** Hirschi noted that people are less likely to misbehave when they know that they have something to lose. For juveniles, this could mean not wanting to look bad in front of friends, parents or teachers for having committed a crime – something for which shame from those whose opinion matters would be a likely consequence. The same applies to adults, as Hirschi would argue, whereby people would refrain from engaging in deviant activities that may threaten their employment or marriage-bond that again may serve as source of social control.

**Involvement:** This relates to the opportunity cost associated with how people spend their time. Hirschi notes that if people are spending their time, engaged in some form of pro-social activities, they are not by definition spending their time engaged in anti-social activities. For example, youths who are heavily involved in legitimate school- related activities – either academically, socially, or athletically will not be spending that same time destroying property, stealing things that do not belong to them. This does not imply that the youths will not engage in the behavior before or after the activities. Hirschi argues that at least toeing that line, such youth will not be committing delinquent acts.



Belief is the final type of social bond as postulated by Hirschi. This refers to the values associated with behaviours that conform to the law. The assumption being that the more important such values are to a person, the less likely he or she is to engage in criminal deviant behaviour. Relating the theory to the present study, human beings survive in any society because of roles individuals and institutions play in society. The negation of such roles would lead to the dysfunction of the entire system as functionalists would argue. The Nigeria Police Force is said to have failed in their fundamental role of maintenance of peace and order and protection of life and property of the citizens. Consequently, the Nigeria public has withdrawn their loyalty to the police. In Nigeria, there seems to have been negative perception of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) which emanated from their poor performance in handling crimes and poor work ethics exhibited by some of its members (Sydney- Agbor, Nwankwo, Iroegbu & Ezurike, 2013)

## **Method**

### **Study Design, Study Frame and Sample Size**

The study adopted mixed method of research. This is the type of research design whereby qualitative and quantitative data are collected and analysed for a particular study or series of studies. Mixed methods research represents research that involves collecting, analyzing, and interpreting quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or in series of studies that investigate the same underlying phenomenon (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2008). The study area was Enugu Urban, South-East, Nigeria. The area is comprised of four local government areas the Enugu-North and Enugu-East, Enugu-South and Nsukka. Out of the four, two local government areas were selected; Enugu-North and Enugu-South. The researcher's choice of Enugu Urban as the area of study was informed by the Human Rights Report that Nigeria in 2015 ranked 10<sup>th</sup> as the world worst human right offenders (Benjo 2015 in Ossai, 2017). The report was further supported by Avocate Sans Frontiledes; a non-governmental organization based in France that identified Anambra and Enugu States Commands of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) as the bane of human right abuse in Nigeria. Avocate Sans Frontiledes had it that out of 50 cases of torture and human rights abuses, 40 had to do with gunshot wounds. The organization further reported that such cases were perpetuated by officers and men of Special Anti-Robbery Squad Unit (SARS) (Ossai, 2017). Enugu urban is indeed the capital city of Enugu State, Nigeria. The general population of the study was 475151, from which a sample size of 400 was selected using Taro Yamen formula for sample determination. For the in-depth interview, 12 respondents were interviewed. Thus, in each of the selected areas of the study, three respondents were interviewed comprising of traditional rulers, chairmen of transport union political office holders, women leaders and students.

### **Data Collection and Setting**

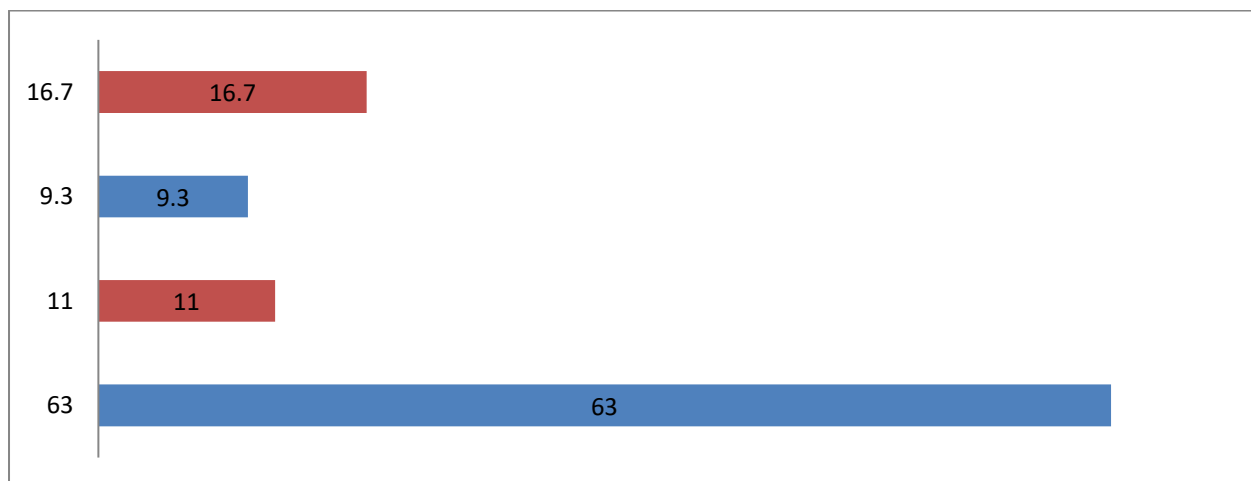
The instruments for data collection were questionnaire and In-depth Interview (IDI). The questionnaire was used in collecting quantitative data. Stevens (2022) noted that qualitative data is information that can be quantified. Thus, it can be counted or measured and given a numerical value. The in-depth- interview was used in generating qualitative data. Patton (1980) cited in Nnabude, Nkamnebe & Ezenwa (2019) affirmed that qualitative data involves detailed description of situation, events and people's interaction, direct quotation from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs and thoughts, and a portion or entire passage from documents, correspondence, records and case histories. Multiple stage sampling procedure was adopted for the study. The fishbowl method of simple random sampling technique was adopted in selecting the two out of four local government areas classified as urban. The researcher's limitation of the study to the urban area was because of urban population constant contact with the police.

### Data Analysis

For the quantitative data, questionnaires were processed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 20.0. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and graphic illustrations were used for data analysis. The qualitative data were processed using content analysis. The stated hypotheses were tested using chi-square test of significance.

### Results

**Research Objective 1:** To investigate how the public perceives police involvement in curbing the spread of Covid-19 pandemic in Enugu Urban, South-East Nigeria. The responses were presented in tables 1 and 2. First, respondents were asked how they perceived police involvement in curbing the spread of Covid-19 pandemic in Enugu Urban, South-East, Nigeria. Responses are presented in table 1.



**Fig. 1: Public Perception of Police Involvement in curbing Covid-19 Pandemic**

Fig 1 shows that a majority 196(63%) opined that the police were too hard on the people in the course of enforcing the Covid-19 pandemic order. However 29(9.3%) opined that the police were too kind and gentle to the public. The finding is in tandem with the data gathered from in-depth interview. One of the respondents said:

There has been an existing face-off between the police and the Nigerian public. The police maltreated the people without considering the existing poverty and lack prior the Covid -19 pandemic. The maltreatment was so harsh that in some area the public defiled the order to confront them physically. You can imagine someone without arms fighting people fully armed.

**Male, 66 years Traditional Ruler, Enugu North**

Another respondent stated thus:

I heard of the measures taken by other countries of the world to contain the pandemic, with all their facilities and expertise in virtually all fields and how it was difficult for them to cope I concluded that it was going to be too tough on the Nigeria public. Existence of law in Nigeria is for the poor and less privileged. Tell me why the police should allow some people to move about freely while the majority were confounded indoors, that showed compromise; the police compromised simple and short.

**Male, 56 years, Chairman, National Union of Road Transport workers, Enugu North.**

Respondents were further asked to evaluate the Nigeria police performance during the Covid-19 pandemic. Responses were presented in table 1.

**Table 1: Public Evaluation of police performance during Covid-19 Pandemic**

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
The police exercised their duties effectively	41	13.1
The police were ineffective in the discharge of their duties.	166	53.3
The police were not all that effective in the discharge of their duties	82	26.3
The police were clueless on how to handle the public.	22	7.0
Total	311	100

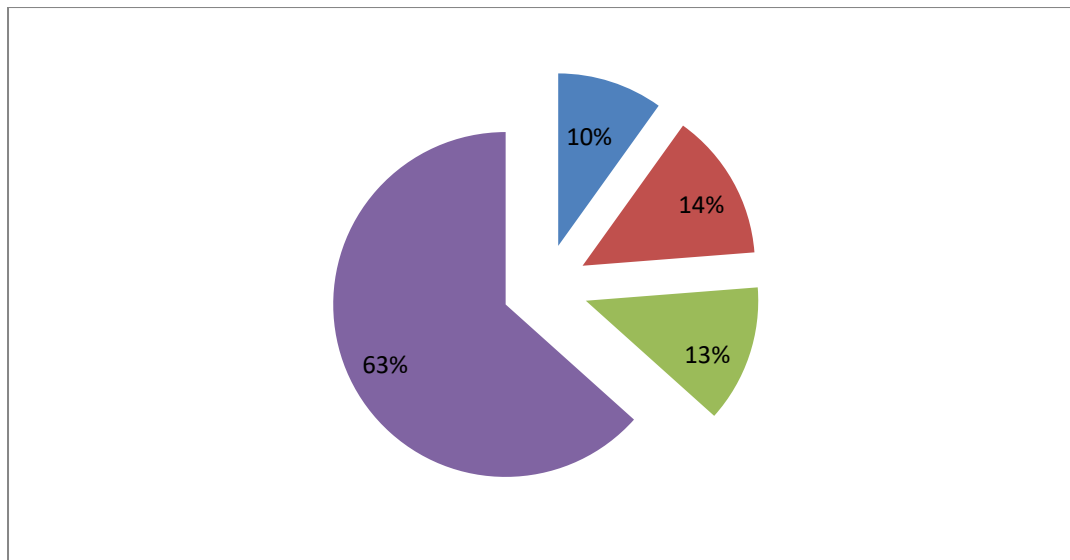
**Source: Field survey 2022**

Table 1 shows the evaluation of the performance of the Nigeria police during the Covid-19 pandemic. The majority of the respondents 166 (53.3%) opined that the police were ineffective in the discharge of their duties, while 22 (7.0%) affirmed that the police were clueless in the discharge of their duties. A respondent reacted thus:

As a student, I've concluded in my mind that anything that will make me have contact with the Nigeria police must be avoided. I was very sick during the Covid-19, I could not even go to the hospital or even say it out for fear of being tagged the ailment Covid-19 and invite police to come and force me to the hospital. A guy in my street suffered terribly in the hands of the police because he was down with malaria, the police came to know about it, the boy was forcefully taken to the hospital on the grounds of contracting Covid only for the doctors to diagnose him of malaria. This is definitely how not to do police work.

**Male 23 years University student, Enugu East**

**Research objective 2 :** To investigate how the police attitude to the public influence public cooperation during Covid-19 pandemic in Enugu Urban, South-East Nigeria. Respondents were asked the attitude of the police during the Covid-19 pandemic. Responses were presented in table 3, 4 and 5. First, respondents were asked the attitude of the police during the Covid-19 pandemic



**Fig 2: Attitude of the Police to the Public during Covid-19 Pandemic**

Table 2 shows the opinion of the respondents on the attitude of the police during the covid-19 pandemic. A majority of the respondents 198 (63%) opined that the police were not fair in treatment meted on the public and this made the public not to comply with the police, 31 respondents (10%) opined that the police were fair to the public and this enhanced public cooperation and compliance to the preventive measures. The opinion of the respondents was in tandem with the data from the in-depth interview. One of the respondents stated thus:

My brother, considering the attitude of the police to the public I ask what is the relevance of having the police in Nigeria? I said this because I've been to other climes; particularly in advanced economies from where we get these ideas, although none is completely free from brutalizing the public, the case of Nigeria is something else. The palliatives donated by wealthy individuals to cushion the effect of hunger were senselessly shared. Some of these items were kept till the end of the lockdown, only to be used by politicians for their campaign... very sad indeed.

**Female, 61 years Woman leader, Nsukka Local Government Area.**

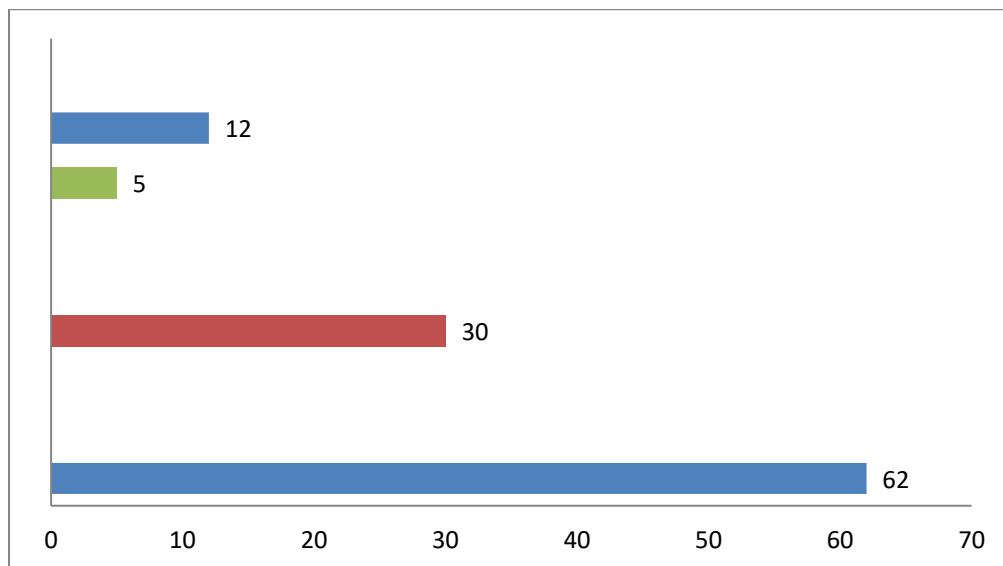
Respondents were further asked how the attitude of the police affected public cooperation during the Covid-19 pandemic. The responses were presented in table 2.

**Table 2: Ways Attitude of the Police affected Public cooperation during Covid-19**

<i>Responses</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
The police collected bribe and allowed those who can afford their requests to move freely.	52	17
The police used the period to showcase their superiority over the helpless public	43	14
The police educated the public on how best to protect themselves against the pandemic	31	10
The police violated the Covid-19 preventive measures yet insisted that the public must comply with those preventive measures.	185	59
Total	311	100

**Source: Field survey 2022**

Table 4 shows the opinion of the respondents on ways attitude of the police affected public cooperation during the covid-19 pandemic. A majority of the respondents 185 (59%) opined that the police violated the Covid-19 preventive measures yet insisted that the public must comply with those preventive measures. However, 31 (10%) opined that the police educated the public on how best to protect themselves against the pandemic. Respondents were further asked the police attitude to the public at the violation of the covid-19 order. Responses were presented in fig. 3.



**Fig. 3: Police Attitude to the public at the violation of Covid-19 order**

Fig.4 shows the opinion of the respondents on police attitude to the public at the violation of Covid-19 order. The majority of the respondents 193 (62%) affirmed that the police treated such person very brutally while 17 (05) respondents affirmed that the police taught such persons the right thing to do without inflicting any injury physically or psychologically. The response agrees with the data elicited from the in-depth interview. A respondent stated thus:

Are you aware of the existing face-off between the public and the police coupled with the seeming unabated extortion by the police?. If yes, then you don't need to ask me about the police attitude to the public. They have not changed.

The lockdown gave them the ample opportunity to exhibit their trademark. The police never obeyed the Covid-19 pandemic order, but uncountable number were arrested, some who could not afford the unofficial bail amount were detained in the police cell for days, against the IGP’s order. Mainly because of this ugly attitude many people; mainly the young ones defiled the order and were ready to face the consequences even death. And they really did.  
**Female, 49 years, Woman leader, Enugu East Local Government**

**Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses guided the study:

**Hypothesis 1:** There is significant relationship between public perception of police and compliance with the Covid-19 Pandemic in Enugu Urban.

**Table 4 :Chi-Square Test of Significance**

	Alpha level
Chi-Square	94.023 <sup>a</sup>
Df	1
Asymp. Sig.	.000

Result: From the above analysis shows that there is a significance relationship between public perception of police and compliance with the Covid-19 pandemic. This is because the P-value of 0.00 is less than the alpha level (0.05) showing that we’d reject the null hypothesis that asserts the two variables are independent of each other.

**Hypothesis 2 :** Police attitude to the public has significant influence on public cooperation with the police during the Covid-19 pandemic in Enugu Urban, South East, and Nigeria.

Table 5: Chi square Table of significance

	CHI-SQUARE LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE
Chi-Square	246.717 <sup>a</sup>
Df	1
Asymp. Sig.	.000

Result: From the above table, analysis shows that there is a significance relationship between attitude to the public has significant influence on public cooperation with the police during the Covid-19 Pandemic in Enugu Urban. This is because the P-value of 0.00 is less than the alpha level (0.05) showing that we’d reject the null hypothesis that asserts the two variables are independent of each other.

**Discussion**

The study investigated how the public perceives police involvement in curbing the spread of Covid-19 pandemic in Enugu Urban, South-East Nigeria. Finding shows that the public perceive the police to be too hard on the public and this has negative implication to the public’s compliance with the police. The finding agrees with the hypothesis that there is a there is a significance relationship between public perception of police and compliance with the Covid-19 pandemic. The finding equally corroborates with Hirschi (1969) who theorized that social

bond do exist and when a bond is weakened or broken, the unusual behaviour by the individual may occur. Hirschi assumes that individuals are potential law violators, but are put under check because of the fear that the disapproved behaviour will destroy the relationships and reputations with friends, parents, neighbors, teachers and employers (Segel, 2005; Sege, 2007). The preconceived public notion about the Nigeria police coupled with the display of unacceptable behaviour during the Covid-19 pandemic presented no other perception of the police by the Nigeria public other than the extension of the police negative character of extortion, trigger-happy, bullying and human right violators.

The study equally sought to investigate how the police attitude to the public influence public cooperation during Covid-19 pandemic in Enugu Urban, South-East Nigeria. It was found that attitude of the police affected public cooperation during the covid-19 pandemic. Reports and research findings point to the fact that the Nigeria police and other law enforcement agencies dehumanized the public and this aggravated public's negative reaction and discontentment with the police. This led to non-compliance with the stipulated Covid-19 pandemic preventive measures. The finding agrees with the hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between attitude to the public has significant influence on public cooperation with the police during the Covid-19 Pandemic in Enugu Urban. The finding equally corroborates with Travis Hirschi's theoretical assumption that the more important values are to a person, the less likely he or she is to engage in criminal deviant behaviour.

The study also sought to investigate the major factor that influenced public violence during Covid-19 pandemic in Enugu Urban, South-East Nigeria. It was found that the public was not happy because of the treatment meted on them by members of the police.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The long existing faceoff between the Nigeria Police and the Nigeria public still manifested in the enforcement of the Covid-19 pandemic measures. The face-off is primarily caused by the attitude of the Nigeria police on the public. The police treat the public with highhandedness and extort them at every slightest opportunity. These ugly behaviours were equally exhibited by the Nigeria Police Force during the enforcement of the Covid-19 preventive measures. The study recommended that:

1. There should be a special squad in the Nigeria Police Force specially trained to deal with policing the public in periods of health pandemic. Such officers should have knowledge of human health.
2. The Nigeria Police Force need to be decentralized into state police; in that manner, it will eliminate the over concentration of power at the centre and give the citizens the sense of belonging.
3. The Nigeria Police Force should be given the desired training in applying procedural justice at all times during investigation instead of brutal force and intimidation as a way of policing the nation.

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