
CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACTORS AND VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN NIGERIA (2018-2023)

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Abstract

The criminal justice actors in Nigeria are responsible for protecting and enforcing human rights. However, cases of human rights violations have often been reported by citizens and media houses against the police, the court, and the correctional institutions that were supposed to protect the rights of the citizenry. This paper examined the role of the criminal justice actors in the violations of human rights in Nigeria (2018-2023). Using a cross sectional survey design, data were sourced from documentary evidence including journals, newspapers, government publications, and internet materials, and analysed using the content analysis method. Guided by the Social Conflict Theory of Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Ralf Dahrendorf, the results showed that despite the extant laws that guarantee fundamental human rights in the country, violations of human rights are still perpetrated by erring members of the Criminal Justice System (CJS) in the country. The documented cases of abuse, from the extrajudicial killings by SARS and military forces to the torture and unlawful detentions by police, underscore systemic issues within Nigeria's criminal justice system. The paper therefore recommended adequate implementation and enforcement of existing laws on human rights. Also, the government should integrate comprehensive human rights training into the curriculum for police, judiciary members, and correctional staff. The government should establish or strengthen independent oversight bodies to investigate allegations of human rights abuses by law enforcement and other criminal justice actors. There should also be transparency in the investigation and prosecution of human rights violations as well as publication of findings and outcomes.

Keywords: Criminal Justice Actors, Violations, Human Rights, Extrajudicial Killings, Torture, Unlawful Detentions

Introduction

Human rights violations constitute a global phenomenon; and human rights organisations, international bodies, and civil society groups often monitor, document, and report these violations to hold perpetrators accountable and seek justice for victims. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted by the United Nations in 1948, outlines fundamental human rights to be universally protected (Asangausung *et al.*, 2021). It has significantly shaped global standards, but interpretations and implementations differ across countries. Human rights often emphasise individual freedoms, civil and political rights, such as freedom of speech, assembly, and religion. There is of course a strong focus on democracy and the rule of law. Some countries prioritise collective rights and economic and social rights over individual civil liberties. For instance, China emphasises economic development and collective stability over individual political freedoms (Arestis *et al.*, 2021).

Many scholars argued that human rights should be interpreted within the context of specific cultures and traditions, thus challenging the universality of human rights as defined by the UDHR (Rasheed and Omiyefa, 2014; Shodunke *et al.*, 2023). Human rights discourse is sometimes used as a political tool, with accusations of selective application and double standards by powerful nations. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch play a crucial role in monitoring and reporting human rights abuses globally, influencing public opinion and policy (Amnesty International, 2020). International Institutions like the United Nations Human Rights Council work to promote and protect human rights globally, though they often face criticism regarding their

effectiveness and impartiality. New human rights challenges are emerging, including digital rights, climate change impacts, and the rights of LGBTQ+ communities, further shaping the global discourse on human rights (Amnesty International, 2020).

Human rights are the basic rights and freedoms that belong to every person in the world, from birth until death (Amnesty International, 2020). According to Asangausung *et al.* (2021), they are based on principles of dignity, equality, and mutual respect. Human rights are inherent to all human beings, regardless of nationality, sex, ethnicity, religion, language, or any other status. These include the right to life, liberty, and personal security; freedom from torture and slavery; freedom of speech, assembly, and religion; the right to a fair trial, the right to work, the right to an adequate standard of living, the right to education, and the right to participate in cultural life (Ezeigwe, 2021).

Human rights are founded on the principle of non-discrimination. Everyone is entitled to human rights without discrimination of any kind. All human rights are indivisible and interdependent. The improvement of one right facilitates the advancement of the others. Likewise, the deprivation of one right adversely affects the others. Some numerous international treaties and conventions protect human rights, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Ezeigwe, 2021).

In Nigeria, fundamental human rights are guaranteed in the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) (LFN, 1999). Oftentimes, these rights have been violated by the components of the criminal justice system which include the police, the court and the correctional institution. Human rights violations occur when actions by state or non-state actors infringe upon the basic rights and freedoms to which all individuals are entitled (Onwuazombe, 2017). These violations can take many forms and can occur in any part of the world. Some common examples and types of human rights violations according to Iwarimie-Jaja (2012) include:

- i. Torture and Inhumane Treatment (Acts of torture, cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment or punishment by authorities or other entities).
- ii. Arbitrary Detention (Holding individuals without just cause, without proper legal procedures, or for extended periods without trial).
- iii. Discrimination (Denying individuals or groups their rights based on race, gender, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or other characteristics).
- iv. Freedom of Expression Violations (Suppressing or punishing individuals for expressing their views, including censorship, imprisonment, or harassment of journalists and activists).
- v. Violation of the Right to Life (Extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, or the death penalty without fair trial standards).
- vi. Lack of Due Process (Denying individuals a fair trial, legal representation, or the presumption of innocence).
- vii. Violations of Privacy (Unlawful surveillance, data breaches, or other intrusions into personal privacy without consent).

According to Bello and Meta (2022), the basic right and freedom that belong to a particular person in the world, irrespective of his/her background, how they choose to live or their religious affiliation from childhood till death is known as a human right. Hence it cannot be taken away but can be restricted sometimes. These rights are based on shared values like respect, dignity, equity, fairness, equality and independence. Based on the international protocol on human rights, no human person should be subjected to extreme human rights abuse in extreme situations. According to Okorie (2023), Akinade (2012) and Iwarimie-Jaja (2012) defined criminal justice actors as law enforcement officers, prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, and magistrates, each with different roles and responsibilities. Together, they strive to uphold the rule of law, protect individual rights, and ensure public safety. Law enforcement officers are among the first actors involved in the criminal justice system. They are responsible for investigating crimes, apprehending suspects, and gathering evidence to build cases. Law enforcement agencies, such as police departments and government agencies play an important role in maintaining law and order.

Shodunke *et al.* (2023), Asangausung *et al.* (2021), Ezeigwe (2021), Oyakhire (2021), and Rasheed and Omiyefa (2014) have researched on human rights violations in Nigeria. However, none of these studies

was based on a cross sectional survey between 2018 and 2023. This is the gap that this study intends to bridge. This paper examined the role of the criminal justice actors in the violations of human rights in Nigeria, between 2018-2023.

Literature Review

Shodunke *et al.* (2023) examined mob justice issues and their intersection with human rights in Nigeria. From 1152 participants recruited in Lagos, Nigeria using simple random and convenience sampling methods, the data was gathered via a structured questionnaire and analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences. The findings indicated that institutional problems and unethical practices in the criminal justice system aggravate public distrust. In conjunction with socioeconomic disparities, the distrust triggers individuals to adopt an unconventional approach (mob justice) against crime suspects for public security's sake. Such an approach violates suspects' rights to life, fair hearing, justice, and protection from degrading treatments as stipulated in the 1999 Nigerian Constitution and international human rights treaties which the country is a signatory to. However, the study advised the Nigerian state and criminal justice stakeholders to address structural and institutional issues that make mob justice an alternative form of justice appealing to the public.

Asangausung *et al.* (2021) investigated the issue of human rights violations by officers of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) unit of the Nigeria Police Force using Akwa Ibom State as a case study. The study was guided by the assumptions of social conflict theory developed by Karl Marx. This theory is best appreciated because of the conflicting nature of the social relationships between society and its law enforcement institutions. A descriptive survey design was employed. A structured questionnaire aided the collection of primary data. The non-probability sampling approach was used for the study which involved purposive and snowball sampling methods. The study population consisted of victims of human rights violations, ex-convicts, people who know about the activities of SARS and selected officers of the Nigeria Police Force from the age cohorts of 18 years and 65 years. Primary data were analysed using descriptive statistics.

Findings showed that the appearances of officers of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) are known for the show of force, torture, and incessant killings, and their outlook is always terrifying. Identifying an erring officer in SARS is always a difficult one. SARS is still in operation and violations of human rights are still on the increase, hence, the public outcry to scrap the SARS unit from the Nigeria Police Force. The study recommended that a competent court of jurisdiction must be ready to give a fair hearing to cases against the Nigeria Police Force on human rights abuses and compel the Inspector General of police to produce the erring officer to appear in court to face the consequences of his/her actions and inactions squarely. The SARS unit of the Nigeria Police Force should either be restructured with different orientations and operations with international best practices or stand the risk of being scrapped with compulsory retirement of all the officers attached to the unit.

Ezeigwe (2021) examined some of the constraints on efforts to formulate a comprehensive approach required to discourage human rights abuses and extra-judicial killing by Nigeria's Security Operatives, using the period of Coronavirus lockdown as a case study. The paper aimed to emphasize the salient point concerning the lacuna created by the newly amended Nigeria Police Act and Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 (as amended) on issues of human rights protection. The doctrinal method was adopted in data collection and analytical approach used in reviewing the extant laws, judicial decisions and opinions of experts on human rights abuses in textbooks, articles and internet sources. Through research findings, the matter of extra-judicial killings by Nigerian police is slowly becoming a yearly tradition that needs to be eradicated.

Oyakhire (2021) examined the protection of victims of crime and witnesses of Human Rights Violations in Criminal Prosecutions in Nigeria. This expository paper brought to the fore the importance of interrogating the issues of protection for victim-witnesses participating in criminal proceedings and ensuring accountability for the human rights violations of state actors in Nigeria. The paper concluded that there is hardly any information about the practice of witness protection in prosecutions involving human rights violations in Nigeria. It proposed a system to facilitate the protection of victim-witnesses testifying against perpetrators of human rights violations.

Rasheed and Omiyefa (2014) examined the challenges of human rights abuses in Nigeria. It also explores some conceptual clarifications and further examines various threats to human rights in the Nigerian society. The paper concludes by recommending among others, the strengthening of the independence of the judiciary, press freedom, democratic rules/principles, human rights education and public vigilance to curtail human rights abuses and promote good governance in Nigeria. This study exposed the gravity of human rights abuses in Nigerian democratic governance. It equally highlighted the effects of human rights abuses in Nigeria and made recommendations on how to prevent its occurrences in the future.

In summary, the literature reviewed showed that despite the laudable and inspiring constitutional provisions for the protection of human rights in Nigeria, there are varying degrees of human rights violations. The security agents perpetrate extra-judicial murder, rape, torture, or degrading punishment, and human rights violators are not held accountable as they are neither investigated nor brought to justice by the state. The state security agents, (police, army, state security officers) violate the rights of the people in Nigeria with impunity. These are widely implicated in cases of rape, torture and degrading and inhuman punishment, suppression of peaceful protests with excessive or lethal force in many states especially, oil-producing communities in violation of the right to the dignity of the human person (Onwuazombe, 2017).

Also, security forces employed overt and immoderate forces to implement their orders without following due processes. The military and police are constitutionally vested with the authority to protect lives and property but have mostly discharged this responsibility in the breach of the primary purpose of their establishment (Okorie *et al.*, 2021; Onwuazombe, 2017). Hence, these institutions have been extensively complicit or implicated in violations of rights, extrajudicial killings, and wanton destruction of property rather than protecting and safeguarding them (Asangausung *et al.*, 2021; Okorie, 2023).

Theoretical framework

The study was guided by the assumptions of the Social Conflict Theory of Karl Marx (1818-1883), Max Weber (1864-1920), and Ralf Gustav Dahrendorf (1929-2009). The foundational figure of conflict theory, Marx focused on class struggles and the conflicts that arise from economic inequalities. He argued that the state and its institutions serve the interests of the ruling class. While agreeing with Marx on the importance of economic factors, Weber also highlighted the significance of other forms of social stratification, such as status and party (political power). Dahrendorf extended conflict theory beyond just economic class, emphasizing the role of authority and how different groups compete for power and resources within society.

Major Tenets of Social Conflict Theory of Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Ralf Dahrendorf

- i. **Power and Inequality:** The theory posits that society is structured in ways that benefit a few at the expense of the many. Power is unequally distributed, with dominant groups using their power to maintain their position and control over resources.
- ii. **Class Conflict:** According to this theory, society is divided into classes that have conflicting interests. The ruling class (bourgeoisie) controls the means of production and the political system, while the working class (proletariat) is oppressed and exploited.
- iii. **Law as a Tool of Oppression:** Social Conflict Theory argues that laws and legal institutions are instruments of the powerful to maintain their dominance and control over the less powerful. The criminal justice system is seen as a mechanism to enforce conformity and suppress dissent.
- iv. **Focus on Change:** The theory emphasizes the potential for social change. Conflict between the ruling and subordinate classes can lead to social upheaval and transformation.

Applicability of Social Conflict Theory to Human Rights Violations by the Criminal Justice Actors

The Social Conflict Theory is a framework for understanding societal issues and inequalities, particularly in the context of power dynamics and resource distribution. This theory is highly applicable in explaining human rights violations by major actors in the criminal justice system in Nigeria.

- i. **Disproportionate Targeting of Marginalized Groups:** Social Conflict Theory explains why marginalized communities often face harsher treatment by the criminal justice system. These

groups are viewed as threats to the status quo and are targeted to maintain social order as defined by the powerful.

- ii. **Legislation and Enforcement Bias:** Laws may be written and enforced in ways that disproportionately criminalize behaviours associated with less powerful groups while protecting the interests of the elite. For example, drug laws often penalize users of certain substances more harshly, typically affecting poorer communities.
- iii. **Policing Practices:** The theory elucidates why policing practices may be more aggressive in poor and minority neighbourhoods. This can be seen as an effort to control and suppress populations that are seen as a threat to social order.
- iv. **Judicial Disparities:** Sentencing disparities, where individuals from marginalized groups receive harsher punishments for similar offenses, can also be explained through Social Conflict Theory. The criminal justice system reflects and reinforces existing social hierarchies.
- v. **Resource Allocation:** The distribution of resources within the criminal justice system often prioritizes the protection of property and interests of the wealthy over addressing the needs and rights of the less privileged. For instance, white-collar crimes may receive less attention compared to crimes more commonly associated with lower socio-economic classes.

In summary, the Social Conflict Theory provides a critical lens through which to examine human rights violations by the criminal justice system. By focusing on power dynamics and societal inequalities, it highlights how the actors of the criminal justice system can serve as an instrument of oppression and control, perpetuating existing social stratifications and injustices.

Methodology

The paper adopted a cross sectional survey design that used both descriptive and analytical tool to explain the prevalence of human rights abuse in Nigeria over a defined period of time (2018-2019). The study relied on documentary evidence sourced from the government reports, journals, human rights organizations' publications, international bodies' reports (United Nations and Amnesty International) and online materials. The information gathered was analysed using content analysis method.

Results

Synopsis of Human Rights Violations by the Criminal Justice Violators in Nigeria

- i. **The End SARS Protests and Lekki Toll Gate Shooting:** The Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) was accused of widespread abuses, including extrajudicial killings, torture, and unlawful detention. The #EndSARS movement gained momentum, leading to nationwide protests. On October 20, 2020, security forces opened fire on peaceful protesters at the Lekki Toll Gate in Lagos. Amnesty International reported that at least 12 people were killed, and many others were injured. The incident drew international condemnation and calls for accountability. The Nigerian government initially denied the shootings, but subsequent investigations confirmed the use of excessive force in Nigeria (Human Rights Report, 2020).
- ii. **Detainees Tortured and Killed by SARS:** Amnesty International reported that in 2020, security forces tortured and killed at least 10 detainees in the custody of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) in Awkuzu, Anambra State. Despite widespread outrage and calls for justice, accountability for these abuses remains limited in Nigeria (Human Rights Report, 2020).
- iii. **Mass Arrests and Extrajudicial Killings in Southeast Nigeria:** Between 2021 and 2022, the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and its security wing, the Eastern Security Network (ESN), clashed with Nigerian security forces. Reports emerged of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and arbitrary arrests. Human Rights Watch documented numerous cases where security forces were accused of killing unarmed civilians, including in communities in Imo, Anambra, and Abia states. While some investigations were initiated, widespread impunity for security forces persisted (Amnesty International, 2022).
- iv. **Crackdown on Shiite Protests:** In 2019, members of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN), a Shiite group, protested the continued detention of their leader, Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky. Security forces reportedly used excessive force to disperse protesters in Abuja and other cities, resulting in the deaths of dozens of IMN members and injuries to many others. Despite calls for accountability,

- there were few, if any, prosecutions of security personnel involved in the violence (Nigeria Human Rights Report, 2020).
- v. Allegations of Torture and Abuse in Police Custody: Between 2018 and 2023, there were numerous reports of individuals being tortured while in police custody across Nigeria. Methods reportedly included beatings, waterboarding, and electric shocks. While some officers were suspended or faced internal disciplinary actions, systemic issues and a culture of impunity often hindered meaningful accountability (Nigeria Human Rights Report, 2020).
 - vi. Killings by Nigerian Military in the Fight against Boko Haram: The military has been accused of committing human rights abuses in its fight against Boko Haram in the Northeast. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International documented instances where soldiers allegedly executed suspected Boko Haram members without trial, detained people in inhumane conditions, and abused civilians. Despite promises of investigations, accountability has been limited, with few soldiers being prosecuted or held responsible (Nigeria Human Rights Report, 2020).
 - vii. Harsh Treatment of Inmates in the Correctional Centres: Prison and detention centre conditions remained harsh and life-threatening. Prisoners and detainees reportedly were subjected to gross overcrowding, inadequate medical care, food and water shortages, and other abuses; some of these conditions resulted in deaths. Most prison facilities are overcrowded. As of October 2020, the total designed capacity of the country's custodial centres was 50,153 inmates. However, the same correctional facilities held 64,817 prisoners and approximately 74 per cent were inmates awaiting trial (Nigeria Human Rights Report, 2020).
 - viii. Other Human Rights Violations by the Police
There were numerous killings reported similar to the following examples. In January, police in Katsina opened fire after responding to a call at a wedding party, killing two and injuring three. On April 5, a police officer in Delta State killed a man for reportedly refusing to pay a 100 naira bribe at a checkpoint. The officer claimed the shooting was accidental. The officer was dismissed from the police force and faced prosecution for alleged murder.

In summary, these cases highlight the ongoing challenges of human rights violations by criminal justice actors in Nigeria. These cases are not exhaustive and human rights violations continue to be a concern in Nigeria. Addressing these issues requires robust legal reforms, improved accountability mechanisms, and sustained pressure from both domestic and international actors to ensure justice and uphold human rights.

Discussions

The results showed cases of human rights violations by the criminal justice actors in Nigeria between 2018 and 2023. In 2019, there was a crackdown on Shite members who were protesting which resulted in the deaths of dozens of IMN members and injuries to many others. Between 2018 and 2023, there were allegations of torture and abuse in police custody in all the states in Nigeria. Between 2018 and 2023, the military personnel were accused of committing human rights abuses in its fight against Boko Haram in the Northeast. In 2020, there were EndSARS Protests, and about 12 people were killed and many others were injured at Lekki Toll Gate in Lagos. Also, there were reports of torture and killing of at least 10 detainees in the custody of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) in Awkuzu, Anambra State in 2020. Between 2021 and 2022, there were mass arrests and extrajudicial killings in South East Nigeria and other parts of the country. These results align with the works of Shodunke et al (2023), Asangausung *et al.* (2021), Ezeigwe (2021), Oyakhire (2021), and Rasheed and Omiyefa (2014).

Significant human rights abuses involving criminal justice actors include unlawful and arbitrary killings; torture and cases of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment of suspects; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary detention by government and state security actors; political imprisonment; serious problems with the independence of the judiciary; arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy; serious restrictions on free expression, the press, and the internet, including the existence of criminal libel laws; substantial interference with the rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of association; serious acts of corruption; inadequate investigation and accountability for violence against women among others.

Under constitutional or statutory provisions, defendants are presumed innocent and enjoy the rights to: be informed promptly and in detail of charges (with free interpretation as necessary from the moment charged through all appeals); receive a fair and public trial without undue delay; be present at their trial; communicate with an attorney of choice (or have one provided at public expense); have adequate time and facilities to prepare a defense; confront witnesses against them and present witnesses and evidence; not be compelled to testify or confess guilt; and appeal. Authorities did not always respect these rights, most frequently due to a lack of capacity. Insufficient numbers of judges and courtrooms, together with growing caseloads, often resulted in pre-trial, trial, and appellate delays that could extend a trial for as many as 10 years. Although accused persons are entitled to counsel of their choice, there were reportedly some cases where defense counsel was absent from required court appearances so regularly that a court might proceed with a routine hearing in the absence of counsel, except for certain offenses for which conviction carries the death penalty. Authorities held defendants in prison awaiting trial for periods beyond the terms allowed by law.

Although the Constitution and laws provide for an independent judiciary, the judicial branch remained susceptible to pressure from the executive and legislative branches. Political leaders influenced the judiciary, particularly at the state and local levels. Understaffing, inefficiency, and corruption prevented the judiciary from functioning adequately. There are no continuing education requirements for attorneys, and police officers were often assigned to serve as prosecutors. Judges frequently failed to appear for trials. In addition, the salaries of court officials are low, and officials often lacked proper equipment and training. There was a widespread public perception that judges were easily bribed, and litigants could not rely on the courts to render impartial judgments. Many citizens encountered long delays and reported receiving requests from judicial officials for bribes to expedite cases or obtain favourable rulings. Although the Ministry of Justice implemented strict requirements for education and length of service for judges at the federal and state levels, no requirements or monitoring bodies existed for judges at the local level. This contributed to corruption and the miscarriage of justice in local courts.

In Nigerian correctional centres, there are cases of lack of potable water, inadequate sewage facilities, and overcrowding sometimes resulting in dangerous and unsanitary conditions. Diseases are pervasive in cramped, poorly ventilated correctional facilities, which have chronic shortages of medical supplies. Inadequate medical treatment caused some inmates to die from treatable illnesses, such as HIV and AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis. Although authorities attempted to isolate persons with communicable diseases, facilities often lacked adequate space, and inmates with these illnesses lived with the general inmate population. Correctional centres in Nigeria provided limited healthcare to inmates and transferred seriously ill prisoners to government hospitals. Also, some erring correctional staff misappropriates funds intended for inmate meals, leaving them impoverished and reliant on the goodwill of others to survive. In certain instances, authorities withheld food and medical treatment as a form of punishment or extortion, a development that reveals systemic abuses within the correctional system.

Conclusion

This paper examined human rights violations perpetrated by the criminal justice actors in Nigeria. The documented cases of abuse, from the extrajudicial killings by SARS and military forces to the torture and unlawful detentions by police, underscore systemic issues within Nigeria's criminal justice system. Ensuring accountability and justice for victims necessitates comprehensive legal reforms, robust enforcement of human rights laws, and the establishment of independent oversight mechanisms. Additionally, fostering a culture of respect for human rights through continuous training and community engagement is crucial. By taking these steps, Nigeria can work towards a more just and equitable criminal justice system that protects the rights of all its citizens.

In terms of contribution and originality, this paper highlighted the systemic nature of human rights violations within Nigeria's criminal justice system, emphasizing how entrenched power dynamics and institutional practices perpetuate abuse. By documenting specific cases of human rights violations from 2018 to 2023, this study provides a valuable historical record that can inform future advocacy, policy-making, and reform efforts. The analysis underscores the need for comprehensive legal and institutional reforms, pointing to specific areas such as police training, judicial independence, and accountability

mechanisms. The study bridged international human rights standards with local realities, providing a framework for how global norms can be adapted to address local challenges in Nigeria. It highlighted the crucial role of civil society organizations in monitoring, reporting, and advocating against human rights violations, demonstrating their impact and the need for their support.

There is a need to conduct longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impact of recent legal and policy reforms on reducing human rights violations within the criminal justice system. Perform comparative analyses with other countries facing similar challenges to identify best practices and successful strategies that could be adapted for Nigeria. Investigate the root causes of violence and abuse by criminal justice actors, including cultural, social, economic, and political factors, to develop more targeted interventions. Evaluate the effectiveness of existing accountability mechanisms, such as independent oversight bodies and internal disciplinary actions, in deterring and addressing human rights violations. Explore how technology, such as body cameras, digital record-keeping, and surveillance systems, can be effectively implemented to enhance transparency and accountability within the criminal justice system. Study the psychological and social impact of human rights violations on victims and their communities, and develop strategies to provide adequate support and rehabilitation. Examine how gender intersects with human rights violations within the criminal justice system, identifying specific challenges faced by women and other marginalized groups. Identify gaps between human rights policies and their implementation on the ground, exploring the barriers to effective enforcement and how they can be overcome.

Recommendations

Addressing human rights violations within Nigeria's criminal justice system requires a multifaceted approach. The paper recommended the following:

- i. Amend existing laws to align with international human rights standards. Ensure laws explicitly prohibit torture, unlawful detention, and other forms of abuse. Ensure that existing human rights protections are effectively implemented and enforced.
- ii. Integrate comprehensive human rights training into the curriculum for police, prison staff, and judiciary members. Regularly update and reinforce training programs to keep pace with new developments and international best practices.
- iii. Establish or strengthen independent bodies to investigate allegations of human rights abuses by law enforcement and other criminal justice actors. Ensure transparency in the investigation and prosecution of human rights violations. Publicize findings and outcomes to build public trust.
- iv. Foster a policing approach that emphasizes collaboration between the police and communities to build trust and improve safety. Educate the public on their rights and the mechanisms available for reporting human rights violations.
- v. Improve the infrastructure of detention facilities to meet international standards, ensuring humane conditions. Conduct regular, independent inspections of detention facilities to monitor conditions and compliance with human rights standards.
- vi. Implement digital systems for recording and tracking detainees to reduce instances of unlawful detention. Equip police officers with body cameras and use surveillance to ensure transparency and accountability during law enforcement operations.
- vii. Collaborate with international human rights organisations and bodies to adopt best practices and receive technical support. Ratify and implement international human rights treaties and conventions relevant to criminal justice.
- viii. Encourage and support the work of civil society organisations in monitoring, reporting, and advocating for human rights within the criminal justice system.

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