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DETERMINANTS OF POLICE MISCONDUCT IN NIGERIA: THE ROLES OF ORGANIZATIONAL STRESSORS, MORAL INJURY AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

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Abstract

Police misconduct remains a persistent challenge in Nigeria, undermining public trust and the legitimacy of law enforcement institutions. This study examined the role of organizational stressors, moral injury, and demographic characteristics as determinants of police misconduct in Nigeria. Using a cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 90 police officers, comprising 43 males (47.8%) and 47 females (52.2%), drawn from selected police formations. Measures assessed organizational stressors (excessive workload, role ambiguity, role conflict, time pressure, and organizational injustice), moral injury, demographic variables, and police misconduct. Pearson correlation analysis revealed significant positive relationships between police misconduct and excessive workload ($r = .126, p < .05$), role ambiguity ($r = .184, p < .05$), role conflict ($r = .059, p < .05$), time pressure ($r = .059, p < .05$), and organizational injustice ($r = .156, p < .05$). Simple linear regression analysis indicated that moral injury significantly predicted police misconduct ($\beta = .206, t = 1.974, p = .015$). An independent samples t -test showed no significant gender difference in police misconduct, $t(88) = -0.542, p = .590$, with a negligible effect size ($d \approx 0.11$). Univariate analysis of variance further revealed that age ($F(4,79) = 1.576, p = .189$), religion ($F(2,79) = 0.848, p = .432$), and their interaction ($F(4,79) = 0.971, p = .428$) did not significantly influence police misconduct. Overall, the findings demonstrate that police misconduct in Nigeria is significantly associated with organizational stressors and moral injury, while demographic variables exert minimal influence. The study highlights the need for organizational reforms and psychologically informed interventions aimed at reducing occupational strain and moral injury within the Nigerian Police Force.

Keywords: Police Misconduct, Organizational Stressors, Moral Injury, Strain Theory, Demographic Characteristics

1. Introduction

Police misconduct broadly referring to unlawful, unethical, or professionally inappropriate behavior by law-enforcement personnel remains a persistent governance and public-safety challenge in Nigeria. It encompasses a spectrum of behaviors ranging from corruption and extortion, unlawful arrest and detention, and procedural violations, to excessive use of force, torture, sexual violence, and extra-judicial killings. Beyond immediate victimization, repeated allegations of abuse and impunity weaken police legitimacy, erode citizen cooperation, and undermine the rule of law

conditions that can further intensify insecurity, vigilantism, and distrust in state institutions (Amnesty International, 2020). In Nigeria, these concerns have been repeatedly amplified by civil society and global human-rights reporting, particularly around the practices historically associated with the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) and other enforcement units (Amnesty International, 2020; Human Rights Watch, 2021).

The 2020 #EndSARS protests marked a watershed moment in the public contestation of police brutality and systemic abuses. While SARS was disbanded, post-

protest assessments and human-rights updates suggest that structural drivers of misconduct such as weak accountability, inadequate internal discipline, and contested reform implementation remain unresolved in many contexts (Human Rights Watch, 2021; Amnesty International Nigeria, 2024). Legal and policy responses, including provisions associated with complaints and discipline mechanisms (e.g., Police Complaints Response Units and related accountability reforms), reflect important institutional intentions; however, critical commentaries argue that effectiveness depends on operational independence, resourcing, enforcement consistency, and the political will to sanction misconduct (Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre [PLAC], 2022; Akinola, 2025). Empirically, this implies that “police misconduct” in Nigeria should not be examined only as the product of “bad actors,” but as an outcome shaped by organizational environments, psychological burdens of policing, and demographic/role-related risk differentials.

Contemporary scholarship increasingly conceptualizes misconduct as multi-determined emerging from the interaction of individual vulnerabilities, organizational climates, and situational pressures. In policing, officers operate in high-stakes environments marked by threat, uncertainty, and public scrutiny, often within institutions facing resource scarcity and complex political demands. These realities make organizational stressors especially salient. Organizational stressors include chronic workload pressure, role overload, ambiguous directives, inadequate staffing, poor equipment, unsafe working conditions, low remuneration, weak supervision, perceived injustice in postings/promotion, and punitive or inconsistent disciplinary systems. Such stressors can degrade self-regulation, heighten irritability and aggression, normalize cynical worldviews, and increase the likelihood of rule-bending and harmful discretionary practices especially when misconduct becomes informally tolerated or rewarded within subcultures (Alabi, 2020; Okoka, 2024). In Nigeria, stress-focused discussions also frequently highlight structural constraints insufficient logistics, high exposure to violence, and weak welfare systems that can fuel

burnout and maladaptive coping (e.g., alcohol/substance misuse), potentially increasing the risk of abusive encounters with the public (Okoka, 2024). Importantly, organizational stressors are not limited to “too much work.” They also include “organizational injustice” and leadership failures such as unfair punishment, favoritism, lack of voice, or betrayal by command structures. These conditions can intensify frustration and moral disengagement, and can shape a climate where shortcuts, extortion, and coercion become normalized. Nigerian legal and human-rights analyses repeatedly point to inadequate accountability mechanisms and weak enforcement as key enablers of recurring abuses, implying that institutional processes (complaints, investigation, and discipline) are not peripheral but central to understanding misconduct (Obidimma, 2025; Akinola, 2025).

While occupational stress has long been studied in policing, moral injury provides a distinct psychological lens for understanding how ethically injurious experiences may translate into harmful behaviors and impaired professional functioning. Moral injury refers to the profound distress that can arise after exposure to potentially morally injurious events (PMIEs) events that involve perpetrating, failing to prevent, or witnessing actions that violate deeply held moral beliefs, or experiencing betrayal by legitimate authority in high-stakes contexts (Papazoglou, 2019). Although initially developed in military research, the construct is increasingly applied to first responders and law enforcement, where officers may confront situations involving death, suffering, corruption pressure, institutional abandonment, or coercive orders that conflict with personal and professional ethics (American Medical Association Journal of Ethics, 2022; Papazoglou, 2019). In such contexts, moral injury can manifest as guilt, shame, anger, moral disorientation, emotional numbing, cynicism, and social withdrawal states associated with impaired judgment and reduced empathic engagement, which can plausibly increase misconduct risk (American Medical Association Journal of Ethics, 2022). Additionally, broader evidence across first responders indicates that moral injury is linked to adverse mental health

outcomes and burnout-related processes, especially where organizational constraints and lack of support are prominent (Rimon, Bryan, Southwick & Pietrzak, 2025).

Demographic characteristics do not “cause” misconduct in isolation, but they can shape exposure, vulnerability, and opportunity structures within policing. Age, gender, length of service, rank/cadre, education, and unit assignment can influence (a) contact frequency with the public, (b) assignment to high-risk duties (e.g., patrol, tactical units), (c) supervisory oversight, and (d) coping repertoires and professional identity formation. For instance, early-career officers may experience steep learning curves, high external pressure, and stronger susceptibility to informal peer norms; conversely, longer-serving personnel may experience cumulative burnout and cynicism, especially under chronic organizational strain (Alabi, 2020). Demographic factors can therefore be modeled as controls, predictors, or moderators helping to clarify whether stressors and moral injury operate similarly across groups, and whether targeted interventions are needed for particular cadres.

Accordingly, examining police misconduct in Nigeria through the combined lenses of organizational stressors, moral injury, and demographic characteristics offers three contributions. First, it advances explanatory precision by linking institutional conditions (stressors, justice, and leadership) to internal psychological pathways (moral injury symptoms and moral disorientation) that can influence behavior under pressure (Papazoglou, 2019; Raver & McElheran, 2023). Second, it supports policy relevance by identifying leverage points: organizational reforms that reduce stress and strengthen fairness may also reduce moral injury risk and its downstream consequences (Rimon et al., 2025). Third, it informs targeted interventions by clarifying whether demographic characteristics (e.g., length of service, cadre) meaningfully differentiate misconduct risk useful for training design, supervision intensity, and support allocation. In view of the foregoing, the present study aims to investigate the extent to which organizational

stressors, moral injury, and demographic characteristics predict police misconduct in Nigeria.

Police misconduct constitutes a persistent and systemic challenge within Nigeria’s criminal justice system, with far-reaching consequences for public trust, human rights protection, and internal security. Despite repeated reform initiatives, allegations of excessive use of force, extrajudicial killings, torture, unlawful detention, bribery, and extortion continue to be reported across the country. Empirical and institutional reports indicate that public confidence in the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) remains critically low. For instance, national survey data consistently show that fewer than 30–35% of Nigerians express trust in the police, while the majority perceive law enforcement officers as corrupt or abusive (Afrobarometer, 2022).

The scale of police misconduct became particularly visible during the 2020 #EndSARS protests, which were triggered by widespread allegations of brutality by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). Investigations by Human Rights organizations documented hundreds of reported cases of police abuse, including unlawful killings and torture, over the preceding decade. Amnesty International reported that between 2017 and 2020 alone, at least 82 cases of torture, ill-treatment, and extrajudicial executions linked to police units were credibly documented, with many incidents believed to be underreported due to fear of retaliation and weak accountability mechanisms (Amnesty International, 2023). These figures underscore the depth of the problem and suggest that misconduct is not merely episodic but structurally embedded.

While policy discourse in Nigeria has largely attributed police misconduct to institutional weaknesses such as inadequate oversight, poor training, low remuneration, and corruption these explanations offer only a partial understanding of the phenomenon. Officers within the same institutional environment often display markedly different behavioral outcomes, suggesting the influence of psychological and organizational factors. Nigerian police officers routinely experience chronic organizational stressors, including excessive

workloads, long working hours, and exposure to violence, role ambiguity, unsafe working conditions, and insufficient operational resources. Studies indicate that Nigerian officers frequently work shifts exceeding 12–16 hours, often without adequate psychological support, a condition associated with emotional exhaustion, burnout, and impaired self-regulation (Adebayo & Ogunleye, 2021).

The absence of integrated empirical research that simultaneously examines organizational stressors, moral injury, and demographic characteristics represents a critical gap in Nigerian policing scholarship. Without such evidence, reform efforts risk remaining reactive and structurally focused, neglecting the psychological mechanisms that sustain misconduct. Against this background, the present study investigates the determinants of police misconduct in Nigeria by examining (1) the extent to which organizational stressors predict misconduct, (2) whether moral injury independently predicts misconduct beyond organizational stressors, and (3) whether demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, length of service, cadre/rank) contribute to or condition these relationships. By integrating organizational, psychological, and demographic factors within one analytic model, the study seeks to generate evidence that can inform a more holistic approach to police reform one that combines accountability and institutional restructuring with occupational support and ethically grounded leadership.

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. What is the relationship between organizational stressors (excessive workload, role ambiguity, role conflict, time pressure, and organizational injustice) and police misconduct in Nigeria?
- ii. To what extent does moral injury influence police misconduct among police officers in Nigeria?
- iii. What is the significant gender difference in police misconduct among police officers in Nigeria?
- iv. To what extent do age and religion influence police misconduct among police officers in Nigeria?

Below are clear, properly worded alternative hypotheses, aligned with the research questions and the statistical analyses used in the study:

- i. There will be a significant positive relationship between organizational stressors (excessive workload, role ambiguity, role conflict, time pressure, and organizational injustice) and police misconduct among police officers in Nigeria.
- ii. Moral injury will significantly and positively influence police misconduct among police officers in Nigeria.
- iii. There will be a significant difference between male and female police officers in levels of police misconduct in Nigeria.
- iv. Age and religion will significantly influence police misconduct among police officers in Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Clarifications

Police Misconduct

Police misconduct refers to behaviors by law enforcement officers that violate legal provisions, professional codes of conduct, or organizational rules. Such behaviors include excessive use of force, corruption, extortion, unlawful arrest and detention, abuse of authority, and violations of human rights. Contemporary scholarship emphasizes that police misconduct is not solely an individual failing but is often shaped by organizational culture, institutional pressures, and psychological processes within policing environments (Skogan et al., 2021). In the Nigerian context, police misconduct has been widely reported and is closely linked to public distrust, weak accountability mechanisms, and strained police–citizen relations.

Organizational Stressors and Police Misconduct

Organizational stressors are chronic work-related demands and conditions that place sustained psychological and emotional pressure on employees. In

policing, these stressors include excessive workloads, long and irregular working hours, inadequate remuneration, insufficient equipment, unsafe working environments, role ambiguity, and inconsistent leadership. From a strain theory perspective, prolonged exposure to such stressors generates psychological strain that undermines self-regulation and increases the likelihood of maladaptive coping behaviors, including aggression and unethical conduct. In policing, these stressors commonly include excessive workloads, long and irregular working hours, role ambiguity, inadequate equipment, unsafe working conditions, low remuneration, limited career progression, and inconsistent leadership. According to strain-based perspectives, prolonged exposure to such stressors generates psychological strain that increases the likelihood of maladaptive coping behaviors, including aggression, rule violations, and unethical conduct.

Empirical research across policing contexts demonstrates a strong association between organizational stressors and misconduct-related outcomes. Studies have linked job stress to burnout, emotional exhaustion, impaired self-regulation, and heightened aggression among officers (Violanti et al., 2022; Shane, 2019). In African and Nigerian contexts, research indicates that police officers often operate under extreme conditions, working extended shifts with minimal welfare support, which exacerbates frustration, cynicism, and hostility toward civilians (Adebayo & Ogunleye, 2021). These findings align with strain theory's assertion that when legitimate coping resources are limited, individuals may resort to deviant or unethical behaviors as stress responses. However, while organizational stressors explain heightened risk for misconduct, they do not fully account for the moral and emotional dimensions of policing in contexts characterized by coercion, violence, and ethical ambiguity. This limitation has prompted growing scholarly interest in moral injury as a complementary explanatory framework.

Moral Injury and Police Misconduct

Moral injury (MI) refers to the psychological distress that arises when individuals perpetrate, witness, or are

unable to prevent actions that violate deeply held moral beliefs, often compounded by perceived betrayal from authorities or institutions. Although the construct originated in military psychology, a growing body of empirical research demonstrates its relevance to policing, a profession characterized by frequent moral dilemmas, coercive authority, and exposure to violence.

Empirical studies consistently show that moral injury among police officers is associated with adverse psychological states such as guilt, shame, anger, emotional numbing, cynicism, and disengagement that are known precursors to impaired judgment and unethical behavior. Quantitative research has linked MI symptoms to higher levels of PTSD, burnout, and emotional exhaustion among police officers, even after controlling for operational trauma exposure (Papazoglou & Chopko, 2017; Jinkerson & Battles, 2021). These outcomes are particularly relevant to misconduct risk because emotional dysregulation and moral disorientation weaken self-control and ethical decision-making under pressure.

Recent policing studies further suggest that moral injury is shaped by organizational conditions, including perceived injustice, lack of supervisory support, and inconsistent or unethical leadership. Officers who report institutional betrayal such as being pressured to engage in questionable practices or feeling abandoned by leadership after critical incidents exhibit stronger moral injury symptoms and more negative occupational outcomes (Raver & McElheran, 2023). This aligns with evidence that organizational injustice and weak ethical climates predict both moral distress and self-reported misconduct in law enforcement contexts (Wolfe & Nix, 2016). Although direct empirical tests linking moral injury to measured police misconduct remain limited, the available evidence supports a clear mechanistic pathway: organizational stressors and ethical conflicts increase moral injury, which in turn elevates the risk of maladaptive coping behaviors, including aggression, rule violations, and normalization of unethical conduct (Papazoglou, 2019; Griffin et al., 2022).

Demographic Characteristics and Police Misconduct

Empirical research examining the relationship between demographic characteristics and police misconduct has produced mixed and generally weak findings, suggesting that individual attributes such as gender, age, and religion may play a secondary role relative to organizational and psychological factors.

With respect to gender, several studies primarily from Western contexts report that male officers are more likely to be involved in use-of-force incidents and citizen complaints than their female counterparts, often attributed to gendered socialization and norms emphasizing dominance and risk-taking (Rabe-Hemp, 2008; Wolfe & Nix, 2016). However, other empirical studies indicate that gender differences in misconduct become negligible once organizational variables such as assignment type, supervision, and workload are controlled (Harris, 2014). Evidence from non-Western contexts remains limited, with emerging findings suggesting that hierarchical command structures and occupational stress may overshadow gender-based behavioral differences.

Research on age and police misconduct also yields inconsistent results. Some studies indicate that younger officers are more prone to misconduct due to limited experience and weaker impulse control (Terrill & Paoline, 2013), while others suggest that prolonged service may accumulate cynicism, burnout, and moral fatigue, potentially increasing misconduct risk among older officers (Violanti et al., 2022). Nonetheless, large-scale studies generally report small or non-significant age effects once organizational stressors are accounted for (Shane, 2019). The role of religion in police misconduct has received comparatively little empirical attention. Although religiosity is theoretically linked to moral reasoning and ethical self-regulation, empirical findings suggest that professional norms and organizational culture often override personal belief systems in highly institutionalized occupations such as policing (Kutnjak Ivković & Haberfeld, 2015).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design. The design was considered appropriate because it allows for the systematic examination of relationships among organizational stressors, moral injury, demographic characteristics, and police misconduct as they naturally occur within the policing environment. The cross-sectional approach is widely used in organizational and policing research to assess psychological and behavioral variables at a single point in time.

3.2 Population, Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The study was conducted among police officers serving in selected police formations in Nigeria. The target population comprised serving police officers across different ranks and departments who were actively involved in law enforcement duties at the time of data collection. The focus on active-duty officers ensured that responses reflected current organizational conditions and lived policing experiences. A total of 90 police officers participated in the study. The sample consisted of 43 male officers (47.8%) and 47 female officers (52.2%). Participants varied in age, religious affiliation, rank, and length of service. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select respondents who met the inclusion criteria: (a) being a serving police officer, (b) having at least one year of work experience, and (c) willingness to participate voluntarily. Purposive sampling was adopted due to access constraints and the sensitive nature of policing research in Nigeria.

3.3 Instruments for Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured self-administered questionnaire divided into five sections:

Section A: This section elicited information on respondents' gender, age, religion, rank/cadre, and length of service.

Section B: Organizational stressors were measured using an adapted composite scale drawn from established police and organizational stress instruments, notably the Police Stress Questionnaire developed by McCreary and Thompson (2006), the role

stress scales by Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970), and the organizational justice framework proposed by Colquitt (2001). The adapted scale consisted of 25 items assessing five dimensions: excessive workload (5 items), role ambiguity (5 items), role conflict (5 items), time pressure (5 items), and organizational injustice (5 items). Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), with higher scores indicating greater perceived organizational stress. Previous studies have reported good psychometric properties for the parent scales, with reliability coefficients ranging from .74 to .89. In the present study, the overall scale demonstrated acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha \geq .78$), with subscale reliabilities ranging from .71 to .85. Content and face validity were established through expert review, while construct validity was supported by significant correlations with police misconduct in theoretically expected directions.

Section C: Moral injury was assessed using an adapted occupational moral injury scale based on the Moral Injury Events Scale (MIES) developed by Nash et al. (2013) and later applied to policing contexts by Papazoglou and Chopko (2017). The adapted scale comprised 15 items measuring moral conflict, guilt, shame, anger, perceived betrayal by authority, and moral disorientation arising from work-related experiences. Responses were rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not at all true) to 5 (Extremely true), with higher scores reflecting higher levels of moral injury. Sample item: *"I feel troubled by actions I was involved in during the course of my duties that violated my moral beliefs."* The original scale has demonstrated strong psychometric properties, with reported reliability coefficients between .85 and .94. In the present study, the adapted moral injury scale showed good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha \geq .80$). Construct and criterion-related validity were supported

by its significant predictive relationship with police misconduct, consistent with moral injury theory.

Section D: Police misconduct was measured using a self-report scale adapted from prior policing integrity and misconduct measures, including those developed by Barker and Carter (1994), Kutnjak Ivković (2005), and Wolfe and Nix (2016). The adapted Police Misconduct Scale consisted of 12 items capturing abuse of authority, excessive use of force, corruption-related behaviors, and procedural or ethical violations. Responses were provided on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Very Often), with higher scores indicating greater tendencies toward misconduct. Previous research has reported acceptable reliability for similar measures ($\alpha = .70-.88$). In the current study, the scale demonstrated acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha \geq .75$). Face and content validity were ensured through expert review and contextual adaptation, while construct validity was evidenced by significant associations with organizational stressors and moral injury.

Overall, the instruments used in this study demonstrated satisfactory reliability and validity, supporting their suitability for assessing organizational stressors, moral injury, and police misconduct among police officers in Nigeria.

3.4 Procedure

The psychological instruments (questionnaires) employed in this study were administered covertly to the participants due to the sensitive nature of their job. Utmost confidentiality and respect were accorded to the participants since they requested that their identity should not be disclosed. Their responses were collected, collated and analyzed.

4. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Frequency Table Showing Demographic Characteristics of Respondents.

S/No	Items	Group	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	43	47.8
		Female	47	52.2
		Total	90	100.00

2	Age	20-36	11	12.2
		37-43	2	2.2
		44-50	20	22.2
		51-57	30	33.3
		58 & Above	27	30.0
		Total	90	100.00
4	Religion	Christianity	40	44.4
		Islam	47	52.2
		Others	3	3.3
		Total	90	100.00

Result in table 1 shows that 43 (47.8%) were male while 47 (52.2%) were female. On their age, 11 (12.2%) were between 20 – 36 years, 2 (2.2%) were between 37 – 43 years, 20 (22.2%) were between 44 – 50 years, 30 (33.3%) were between 51 – 57 years while 27 (30.0%) were 58 years and above. On the other hand, 40 (44.4%) were Christians, 47 (52.2%) were Islam while 3 (3.3%) were from other religious affiliations.

Hypothesis One

Hypothesis One stated that there would be a significant relationship between organizational stressors (excessive workload, role ambiguity, role conflict, time pressure, and organizational injustice) and police misconduct in Nigeria. This hypothesis was tested using a zero-order correlation matrix, and the results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Zero Correlation Showing the Relationship Between Organizational Stressors and Police Misconduct in Nigeria

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	Mean	SD
1 Excessive Workloads	-						87.73	10.77
2 Role Ambiguity	-.371**	-					49.77	20.63
3 Role Conflict	.508**	-.681**	-				83.10	18.84
4 Time Pressure	.508**	-.681**	.800**	-			83.10	18.84
5 Organizational Injustice	.067	.484**	.269**	.269**	-		43.11	14.70
6 Police Misconduct	.126*	.184*	.059*	.059*	.156*	-	39.73	4.47

** $p < .001$; * $p < .05$

Table 2 presents the zero-order correlation matrix showing the relationships between organizational stressors and police misconduct in Nigeria. The results indicate that excessive workload had a positive and statistically significant relationship with police misconduct ($r = .126, p < .05$). Similarly, role ambiguity was positively and significantly related to police misconduct ($r = .184, p < .05$). Further analysis revealed that role conflict exhibited a weak but statistically significant positive relationship with police misconduct ($r = .059, p < .05$). Time pressure also showed a significant positive association with police misconduct ($r = .059, p < .05$). In addition, organizational injustice

was positively and significantly related to police misconduct ($r = .156, p < .05$). Overall, all organizational stressor variables examined in this study demonstrated significant positive relationships with police misconduct. This indicates that increases in excessive workload, role ambiguity, role conflict, time pressure, and perceived organizational injustice are associated with corresponding increases in police misconduct. Conversely, lower levels of these stressors are associated with lower levels of misconduct. Based on these findings, hypothesis one, which stated that there will be a significant relationship between organizational stressors (excessive workload, role

ambiguity, role conflict, time pressure, and organizational injustice) and police misconduct in Nigeria, was supported.

Hypothesis Two

Table 3: Summary of Linear Rgression Showing the Influence of Moral Injury on Police Misconduct in Nigeria

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig	
		B	Std. Error	β			
1	Police Misconduct	Constant	34.154	2.864		11.926	.000
		Moral Injury	.065	.033	.206	1.974	.015

The results, as presented in Table 3, indicate that moral injury significantly predicted police misconduct. Specifically, moral injury had a positive and statistically significant effect on police misconduct ($\beta = .206$, $t = 1.974$, $p < .015$). This finding suggests that higher levels of moral injury are associated with higher levels of police misconduct among officers. The unstandardized coefficient ($B = .065$, $SE = .033$) indicates that for every one-unit increase in moral injury, police misconduct increased by .065 units. The regression constant ($B = 34.154$, $p < .001$) indicates the expected level of police misconduct when moral injury is held constant at zero.

Table 4: Summary of Independent Samples T-test Sowing Gender Differences in Police Misconduct in Nigeria

DV	Gender	N	Mean	SD	SE	t	df	Sig
Police Misconduct	Male	43	39.46	4.75	.724	-.542	88	.590
	Female	47	39.97	4.24	.619			

An independent samples t-test was conducted to examine gender differences in police misconduct among police officers in Nigeria. As shown in Table 4, male officers ($M = 39.46$, $SD = 4.75$) and female officers ($M = 39.97$, $SD = 4.24$) did not differ significantly in their levels of police misconduct, $t(88) = -0.542$, $p > .590$. To assess the magnitude of the observed difference, Cohen's d was computed. The effect size was small ($d \approx 0.11$), indicating a negligible practical difference in misconduct levels between male

Hypothesis Two stated that moral injury would significantly influence police misconduct in Nigeria. This hypothesis was tested using simple linear regression analysis, and the results are presented in Table 3.

Overall, the result provides empirical support for the hypothesis that moral injury significantly influences police misconduct in Nigeria. Consequently, the hypothesis was supported.

Hypothesis Three

Hypothesis Three stated that there would be a significant difference between male and female police officers in police misconduct. This hypothesis was tested using an independent samples t-test, and the results are presented in Table 5.

and female officers. According to conventional benchmarks, this effect size suggests that gender accounts for very little variance in police misconduct. Taken together, the non-significant t-test result and the very small effect size indicate that police misconduct does not meaningfully differ by gender in the present sample. Therefore, hypothesis three, which stated that there will be a significant difference between male and female police officers on misconduct, was not supported.

Hypothesis Four

Hypothesis Four stated that age and religion would significantly influence police misconduct among police

officers in Nigeria. This hypothesis was tested using univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA), and the results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Summary of Univariate Analysis of Variance Showing the Influence of Age and Religion on Police Misconduct in Nigeria

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig	p
Age	125.375	4	31.344	1.576	.189	.074
Religion	33.726	2	16.863	.848	.432	.021
Age*Religion	77.255	4	19.314	.971	.428	.047
Error	1571.538	79	19.893			
Total	143870.000	90				

R Square = .119 (Adjusted R Square = .007)

A univariate analysis of variance was conducted to examine the main and interaction effects of age and religion on police misconduct among police officers in Nigeria. The results indicate that age did not have a statistically significant main effect on police misconduct, $F(4, 79) = 1.576$, $p = .189$. This suggests that levels of police misconduct did not differ significantly across age groups. Similarly, religion did not exert a significant main effect on police misconduct, $F(2, 79) = 0.848$, $p = .432$, indicating that police misconduct did not significantly vary across religious affiliations. The interaction effect between age and religion was also not statistically significant, $F(4, 79) = 0.971$, $p = .428$. This result suggests that the combined influence of age and religion did not significantly affect police misconduct. The overall model accounted for 11.9% of the variance in police misconduct ($R^2 = .119$), although the adjusted R^2 (.007) indicates that the explanatory power of the model is weak after controlling for model complexity. Based on these findings, hypothesis four, which stated that age and religion would significantly influence police misconduct in Nigeria, was not supported.

4.1 Discussion of Findings

The study aimed to examine the influence of organizational stressors, moral injury, and demographic characteristics on police misconduct in Nigeria, drawing on strain theory and moral injury theory. The findings indicate that organizational and psychological

factors play a more central role in explaining misconduct than demographic variables. Consistent with the study's first aim, organizational stressors (excessive workload, role ambiguity, role conflict, time pressure, and organizational injustice) were significantly and positively related to police misconduct. This suggests that sustained organizational strain increases the likelihood of unethical and deviant behaviors. A plausible explanation is that chronic stress erodes self-regulation and heightens frustration, thereby increasing misconduct risk. This finding supports strain theory and aligns with prior studies linking organizational stress and injustice to police misconduct (Wolfe & Nix, 2016; Shane, 2019; Violanti et al., 2022).

The study also found that moral injury significantly predicted police misconduct, indicating that officers who experience guilt, shame, anger, and perceived institutional betrayal are more likely to engage in misconduct. This result supports moral injury theory and extends existing evidence that moral injury contributes to emotional dysregulation and ethical disengagement among police officers (Papazoglou & Chopko, 2017; Griffin et al., 2022). The finding is particularly important given the limited empirical research on moral injury in non-Western policing contexts.

Contrary to expectations, gender did not significantly differentiate police misconduct, suggesting that organizational culture and shared occupational

pressures may override gender-based differences. This finding is consistent with studies reporting minimal gender effects once organizational factors are considered (Harris, 2014), though it contrasts with research indicating higher misconduct among male officers (Rabe-Hemp, 2008).

Similarly, age and religion did not significantly influence police misconduct, indicating that demographic attributes exert limited direct effects. This aligns with research showing weak age effects after controlling for organizational stressors (Shane, 2019) and limited empirical support for religion as a direct predictor of misconduct in institutionalized occupations (Kutnjak Ivković & Haberfeld, 2015). Overall, the findings suggest that reducing organizational stressors and addressing moral injury may be more effective in curbing police misconduct than demographic-based interventions, reinforcing the need for organizational and psychologically informed reforms within the Nigerian Police Force.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the influence of organizational stressors, moral injury, and demographic characteristics on police misconduct in Nigeria. The findings demonstrate that organizational stressors and moral injury are significant predictors of police misconduct, while gender, age, and religion exert minimal direct influence. By foregrounding organizational and moral–psychological mechanisms, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of misconduct and underscores the limitations of demographic explanations. Overall, addressing police misconduct in Nigeria requires structural, ethical, and psychological interventions that target the conditions under which officers work and the moral challenges they face.

Based on the findings of this study, which established that organizational stressors and moral injury significantly predict police misconduct, while demographic factors exert minimal influence, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. Police authorities should prioritize reforms aimed at reducing excessive workloads, clarifying role expectations, and improving resource allocation. Given the significant positive relationship between organizational stressors and police misconduct, addressing chronic strain through improved staffing, clearer duty schedules, and adequate logistical support is essential for reducing misconduct tendencies.
- ii. The study’s findings highlight the role of perceived organizational injustice in predicting police misconduct. It is therefore recommended that transparent and fair procedures be institutionalized in promotion, discipline, performance appraisal, and grievance handling. Enhancing procedural and interactional justice can reduce frustration, cynicism, and unethical behavior among officers.
- iii. Since moral injury was found to significantly influence police misconduct, police welfare programs should integrate confidential psychological counseling, peer-support mechanisms, and ethical debriefings following critical incidents. These interventions would enable officers to process guilt, shame, anger, and perceived betrayal in healthy ways, thereby reducing maladaptive coping behaviors.
- iv. The influence of organizational factors underscores the need for ethical and supportive leadership. Supervisors should be trained in ethical leadership practices, stress-sensitive supervision, and early identification of psychological distress. Effective leadership can buffer the impact of organizational stressors and reduce the likelihood of moral injury among subordinates.
- v. Police training curricula should incorporate stress management, ethical decision-making, and moral resilience modules. Preventive training focused on coping skills and ethical reasoning can equip officers to manage high-pressure situations without resorting to misconduct.

Directions for Future Studies

Future research should employ longitudinal designs to establish causal pathways between organizational stressors, moral injury, and misconduct. Studies using mixed methods could deepen understanding of how officers experience moral injury in specific operational

contexts. Further research should test mediation and moderation models (e.g., organizational justice as a buffer) and extend sampling across regions and units to improve generalizability. Finally, scale validation studies tailored to Nigerian and African policing contexts would strengthen measurement precision and comparative research.

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