



## Catalyzing Change: Analyzing the Dynamics and Impact of EndSARS Protests in Nigeria

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**Abstract.** The EndSARS protests that swept across Nigeria in [insert year] marked a pivotal moment in the nation's history, representing a collective outcry against systemic police brutality and an impassioned demand for justice and accountability. Rooted in the discontent with the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), the movement garnered unprecedented momentum, drawing diverse groups into a unified call for societal change. However, given the current Nigeria situation after the EndSARS protest, does it p and social media activism impact on the socio-political landscape of Nigeria? It is in this regard, that this study adopts a comprehensive approach, combining qualitative and quantitative analyses to provide a nuanced understanding of the motivations behind the protests, the profile of the protesters, and the strategies employed to amplify their voices. Concerning this, ..... questionnaires were distributed among the respondents and the result obtained was analyzed using a descriptive and analytical method. The findings of the study unravel the intricacies of the EndSARS protests, shedding light on the diverse backgrounds of the participants and their shared grievances which is necessitated by bad governance. Furthermore, it assesses the immediate and long-term impacts of the protests on policy reforms, public perception, and the overall discourse surrounding governance and accountability in Nigeria. The study further conclude and recommend the need for a transformative potential of grassroots movements in challenging systemic issues. It emphasizes the need for sustained efforts to address the root causes of social discontent and advocates for continued civic engagement to ensure lasting change. It was further recommended that there is a need to include policy reforms, institutional changes, and ongoing dialogue between the government and civil society to build a more just and accountable society.

**Keywords:** EndSARS, Protests, Governance, Nigeria

### 1. Introduction

Nigeria's historical landscape serves as a backdrop to the current wave of protests, offering crucial insights into the nation's journey since gaining independence from British colonial rule in 1960 (Adkintola, 2010). The post-colonial era has been characterized by a complex interplay of factors, including political instability, corruption, and economic disparities. Most protests in Nigeria are not isolated events but rather a manifestation of long-standing grievances that have festered beneath the surface for decades (Aidonjio et al., 2022). Recent protests in Nigeria have ignited a global discourse, thrusting the nation into the spotlight as it grapples with a complex history of political, social, and economic challenges (Adiche and Iwuoha, 2022). Led predominantly by the youth, these protests have transcended mere demonstrations, evolving into a dynamic force that confronts deeply rooted issues, such as police brutality, governance deficiencies, and socio-economic inequality (Oaihimire and Aidonjio, 2023).

The genesis of the recent protests lies in the deeply troubling issue of police brutality, which reached a tipping point with the emergence of the #EndSARS movement. The Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a unit within the Nigerian Police Force, had become synonymous with allegations of human rights abuses, extortion, and extrajudicial killings (Aidonjio, et al., 2021). The youth-led protests, which gained momentum across the nation, were a direct response to these egregious violations, demanding an end to police brutality and comprehensive reform within law enforcement agencies. The protests unearthed a stark reality – a

fractured and malfunctioning policing system that necessitated urgent and systemic change. However, the protests are not solely centered around police misconduct; they reflect broader concerns about governance and accountability. The Nigerian youth, at the forefront of these demonstrations, articulated a collective dissatisfaction with a political system perceived as unresponsive and indifferent to their needs (Aidonojie et al., 2021). Beyond the immediate call to end police brutality, the protests became a rallying cry for better governance, transparency, and an end to the pervasive corruption that has plagued the country's political landscape. The chants and placards of the protesters echoed a collective demand for a more inclusive and accountable government (Masajuwa and Aidonojie, 2020).

Socio-economic inequality forms another crucial dimension of the protests, revealing the profound disparities within Nigerian society. Despite the nation's wealth in natural resources, a significant portion of the population faces poverty and limited access to basic amenities (Aidonojie and Egielewa, 2020). The youth-led demonstrations sought not only to address immediate concerns but also to challenge the systemic structures perpetuating economic inequalities. By advocating for policies that uplift the marginalized, create opportunities for all, and dismantle barriers hindering social mobility, the protesters confronted the broader issue of economic injustice, sparking conversations about a more equitable distribution of the nation's wealth (Adeeze, 2009). The global resonance of these protests cannot be understated. The international community closely monitored and responded to the unfolding events in Nigeria, with expressions of solidarity echoing from various corners of the globe. This global support not only emphasized the universal relevance of the issues raised by the protesters but also exerted diplomatic pressure on the Nigerian government to address the grievances of its citizens in accordance with international human rights standards (Abuwashina, 2020). The protests thus transcended national boundaries, shaping not only Nigeria's internal dynamics but also its relationships on the global stage.

In the midst of these transformative events, the Nigerian government faced the intricate task of balancing the need to address the legitimate concerns of the protesters with maintaining public order (Edetalehn and Aidonojie, 2023). The consequences of the government's responses were far-reaching, encompassing initial concessions as well as subsequent crackdowns. The complexities inherent in managing social movements became evident, underscoring the imperative for adaptive governance

that engages constructively with citizens' demands. Moreover, the protests became a profound learning experience for both the government and the youth activists (Adediran, 2020). The government learned that dismissing the concerns of its citizens could lead to widespread discontent and social unrest. Conversely, the youth activists grasped the power of collective action, the significance of sustained advocacy, and the necessity for strategic engagement with the broader public and international community (Aluwatosin, 2020).

It is concerning the above, that this study aims to delve into the multifaceted dynamics and far-reaching impacts of the recent protests in Nigeria, providing a nuanced analysis of the forces at play and their implications for the nation's future.

## **2. Historical Context of the Dynamics and Impact of EndSARS Protests in Nigeria**

To comprehend the intricate dynamics and profound impact of the EndSARS protests in Nigeria, one must delve into the nation's rich historical tapestry, which has woven a complex narrative of military rule, political corruption, ethnic tensions, and a persistent lack of basic services for its citizens (Gunyawan et al., 2023). These historical undercurrents have not only shaped the socio-political landscape but also acted as catalysts for the eruption of frustration, disillusionment, and an impassioned cry for change. Nigeria's history is marked by a series of transitions, with the post-colonial era witnessing the ebb and flow between civilian and military rule. The prevalence of military regimes has left an indelible mark on the nation, contributing to a legacy of political instability and a strained relationship between the government and the governed. The specter of military rule cast a long shadow over democratic aspirations, fostering a climate of mistrust and discontent among the populace (Aidonojie et al., 2021).

Political corruption, another enduring facet of Nigeria's history, has been a pervasive force, eroding the foundations of governance and public trust. The mismanagement of public resources, embezzlement, and a lack of accountability within the political sphere have given rise to a pervasive culture of corruption (Daniel et al., 2016). This backdrop of endemic corruption has fueled resentment among the citizenry, as they bear the brunt of a system that prioritizes personal gain over public welfare. Ethnic tensions form yet another layer in the historical context of Nigeria's challenges. The nation, with its diverse array of ethnic groups and cultures, has

grappled with the complexities of fostering national unity amidst regional disparities. Historical grievances and ethnic rivalries have at times been exploited for political gain, exacerbating divisions within the society and contributing to a sense of alienation among certain segments of the population (Adeghosa, 2015).

A glaring issue throughout Nigeria's history has been the inadequacy of basic services for its citizens. Despite being endowed with abundant natural resources, a significant portion of the population has faced challenges in accessing fundamental amenities such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure. This systemic failure to meet the basic needs of the populace has been a source of frustration, breeding a groundswell of discontent that reached a crescendo with the EndSARS protests (Afattore, 2020). Against this historical backdrop, the EndSARS protests emerged as a spontaneous and powerful expression of collective frustration, disillusionment, and the urgent need for substantive change. The protests were not isolated events but rather a manifestation of the cumulative impact of years of unaddressed grievances. The youth, recognizing the historical patterns of misrule, corruption, and social inequities, mobilized with a shared determination to break free from the shackles of a tumultuous past.

The call to end police brutality, particularly the actions of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), became a focal point not only because of its immediate significance but also as a symbol of the broader systemic issues that had plagued the nation for decades (Godwin, 2020). The protests became a platform for Nigerians to voice their concerns about the overarching challenges of governance, corruption, and socio-economic disparities, echoing the historical struggles that had shaped the nation's trajectory. In essence, the EndSARS protests must be understood as a culmination of historical forces, a manifestation of the collective memory of a nation grappling with the legacies of military rule, political corruption, ethnic tensions, and a lack of basic services. By contextualizing the protests within this historical framework (Adawe, 2015), one can grasp the depth of the issues at stake and appreciate the resilience of a generation determined to forge a new path for Nigeria, one that addresses the historical grievances and paves the way for a more just and equitable future.

### 3. Key Issues Leading to the EndSARS Protests in Nigeria

Against this historical backdrop, the EndSARS protests emerged as a watershed moment, bringing together a diverse range of grievances that had simmered beneath the surface for decades. The #EndSARS movement, sparked by the desire to dismantle the Special Anti-Robbery Squad's (SARS) culture of brutality and extortion, catalyzed a broader movement that transcended immediate concerns (Ailah and Collins, 2020). Led predominantly by the youth, who saw themselves as harbingers of change, the protests evolved into a multifaceted call for systemic reform addressing not only police misconduct but also the deep-rooted issues of corruption, governance deficiencies, and socio-economic inequality (Oloyede, 2018). However, some of the key issues that lead to the EndSARS protest are briefly examined as follows.

**EndSARS Movement Unveiling Systemic Police Brutality:** The genesis of the EndSARS protests can be traced to the #EndSARS movement, a grassroots campaign initiated to bring an end to the egregious brutality and extortion perpetrated by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a unit within the Nigerian Police Force. SARS had become synonymous with human rights abuses, extrajudicial killings, and a culture of impunity (Afattore, 2020). The movement gained swift momentum through social media platforms, particularly Twitter and Instagram, where harrowing stories of violence and abuse at the hands of SARS officers were shared with the world (Adawe, 2015). The hashtag #EndSARS became a rallying cry, uniting voices against police brutality and serving as a catalyst for broader discussions on the need for comprehensive police reform.

**Youth Leadership a Catalyst for Change:** Central to the success and resonance of the EndSARS protests was the prominent role played by young Nigerians, who emerged as the driving force behind the movement (Godwin, 2020). Viewing themselves as torchbearers of change, these youth activists exhibited exceptional organizational skills, strategic planning, and effective mobilization, leveraging the power of social media to galvanize support. Their ability to unite across diverse backgrounds and transcend regional and ethnic divides marked a departure from historical patterns, emphasizing a shared commitment to a common cause. The youth-led nature of the protests not only showcased the potential for a new era of leadership in Nigeria but also signaled a departure from the status quo,

challenging established power structures and demanding accountability.

**Socio-Economic Inequality:** Beyond the immediate call to end police brutality, the EndSARS protests brought to the forefront the deep-seated socio-economic inequalities plaguing Nigerian society. High levels of unemployment, pervasive poverty, and stark inequality served as kindling for the flames of discontent (Adeghosa, 2015). Young Nigerians, frustrated by a lack of opportunities and hindered by systemic corruption, demanded not only an end to police brutality but also a more comprehensive transformation of their socio-economic conditions. The protesters articulated a vision for a Nigeria where access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities would be more equitable, challenging the existing structures that perpetuated disparities. The demands went beyond a singular focus on law enforcement, signaling a broader call for systemic change that addressed the root causes of the nation's social and economic challenges.

In essence, the EndSARS protests were a confluence of interconnected issues that coalesced into a powerful movement for change. The #EndSARS movement exposed the deeply entrenched issues within law enforcement, highlighting the urgent need for police reform. The youth leadership brought dynamism and a fresh perspective, challenging traditional power dynamics and inspiring a generation to actively engage in shaping their country's future. The protests also acted as a social and economic awakening, with demands for justice extending beyond the realm of law enforcement to address the broader systemic inequalities that had long plagued Nigerian society. As the protests unfolded, they became emblematic of a collective desire for a more just, inclusive, and equitable Nigeria, with the potential to catalyze transformative change beyond the immediate concerns that initially sparked the movement.

#### Laws Concerning Peaceful Protest and the EndSARS Protests in Nigeria

In the context of peaceful protests and the EndSARS demonstrations in Nigeria, several laws and legal provisions come into play. It's essential to examine these laws to understand the legal framework that governs peaceful assembly and the potential implications for protesters. It's important to note that the legal landscape is subject to change, and the information provided here is based on my knowledge cutoff in January 2022.

The Nigerian Constitution ensures the right to freedom of expression and assembly, safeguarding these liberties in Sections 39 and 40. These constitutional provisions specifically protect the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. While the constitution constitutionally protects the right to peaceful protest, it's important to acknowledge that this right is not absolute and may be subject to limitations in the interest of public safety, order, and the rights of others. It's noteworthy that the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria explicitly affirms the right to protest, emphasizing that this right cannot be denied to the people under any circumstance. Sections 39 and 40 of the Constitution guarantee the people's freedom to protest or engage in peaceful processions, recognizing the right of individuals to associate, assemble freely, and express their opinions in protecting their interests. The constitution unequivocally guarantees the right to peaceful protest unless constrained by the provisions laid out in Section 45, which is not the primary focus of this discussion.

Judicial affirmation of the right to peaceful protest is evident in the case of *Inspector General of Police v All Progressive Peoples Party & Ors*, where the Court of Appeal asserted that the rights to demonstrate and protest on matters of public concern are fundamental rights individuals must possess and exercise without impediment, as long as no wrongful act is committed. This legal stance establishes that the constitution recognizes the people's right to protest as long as it does not necessitate invoking Section 45 of the Constitution. It's also important to acknowledge the existence of specific legislation, the Nigerian Public Order Act, that recognizes and regulates protests, demonstrations, rallies, or processions in Nigeria. While this Act provides a legal framework for regulating public assemblies, including peaceful protests, it has faced criticism for potentially infringing on constitutional rights to freedom of assembly and expression. Some argue that the Act grants excessive discretionary powers to law enforcement agencies. Section 1(1) of the Public Order Act recognizes the right to a peaceful protest, emphasizing the responsibility of each government of a state to ensure the safety of the state and individuals involved in such activities. However, concerns arise with Subsection 2 of the Public Order Act, which subjects the exercise of this right to the discretion of the Governor of the State, mandating protesters to obtain a license issued by the Governor, making any protest without such license illegal.

Significantly, the court has nullified Subsection 2, deeming it in violation of the provisions of the Nigerian Constitution that recognize the right to engage in peaceful protests. The court asserted that it goes against the essence of Section 40 of the Constitution, which does not envisage subjecting the right to protest, as granted under that section, to any form of approval. This stance finds support in the case of *Inspector General of Police vs. All Progressive Peoples Party & Ors supra*, where the Nigerian court drew upon the precedent set in the case of *Shetton v Tucker*. This precedent emphasizes that no government has the authority to suppress or suspend the fundamental rights of its citizens. Consequently, the Public Order Act cannot be wielded to maintain law and order by suspending the fundamental rights of Nigerian citizens.

The Police Act (2020) holds paramount importance as it serves as the primary legal framework governing the operations and conduct of the Nigeria Police Force. Enacted in 2020, this legislation outlines the powers, responsibilities, and limitations of law enforcement agencies, shaping their interactions with the public and ensuring accountability. The Act comprehensively delineates the powers bestowed upon the police, ranging from maintaining public order to enforcing laws and safeguarding citizens. It establishes a clear mandate for the Nigeria Police Force, outlining their duties in crime prevention, investigation, and overall public safety. A critical aspect addressed by the Police Act is the management of public order. The legislation likely stipulates the protocols and procedures that law enforcement must follow when dealing with public gatherings, protests, and demonstrations. This aspect becomes particularly pertinent in a democratic society, emphasizing the delicate balance between maintaining order and respecting citizens' rights to assemble and express their opinions.

Furthermore, in analyzing the Police Act (2020), a key consideration lies in the requirement for law enforcement agencies to respond proportionately to different situations. This involves using force only to the extent necessary and ensuring that responses are calibrated based on the level of threat or disturbance. Striking this balance is crucial to preventing excessive use of force and upholding human rights standards. The Act, in all likelihood, underscores the importance of respecting the rights of protesters. This involves protecting the freedom of expression and peaceful assembly guaranteed by the constitution. Law enforcement agencies are expected to operate within the legal boundaries set by the Act, ensuring that any interventions during protests are lawful, non-

discriminatory, and in line with human rights principles. To reinforce transparency and accountability, the Police Act likely establishes mechanisms for oversight and accountability. This may include provisions for independent investigations into alleged misconduct, disciplinary actions for violations, and avenues for citizens to lodge complaints against police misconduct.

Concerning the above, in conclusion, the Police Act (2020) plays a pivotal role in shaping the conduct of the Nigeria Police Force. Adherence to its provisions is not only a legal requirement but also a fundamental aspect of upholding the principles of justice, democracy, and human rights within the realm of law enforcement.

The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Ratification and Enforcement) Act (Cap A9, LFN 2004) holds significant relevance within the legal landscape of Nigeria, given its implications for human rights, particularly the right to freedom of assembly. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) Act is highly pertinent to Nigeria as it signifies the country's commitment to the protection and promotion of fundamental human rights within the African context. Enacted in 2004, this Act ratifies and enforces the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, a key regional instrument adopted by the Organization of African Unity (now the African Union) in 1981. One of the paramount rights enshrined in the African Charter is the right to freedom of assembly. Article 11 of the Charter explicitly recognizes the right of every individual to assemble freely with others, expressing their opinions and engaging in peaceful protests. By being a party to the African Charter, Nigeria affirms its commitment to upholding and respecting this crucial right.

The ACHPR Act serves as a mechanism for the domestication of the African Charter's provisions within the Nigerian legal system. Section 1 of the Act provides for the enforcement of the Charter's provisions, making them an integral part of Nigerian law. This integration underscores the government's obligation to respect, protect, and fulfill the rights enshrined in the Charter, including the right to freedom of assembly. The recognition of the right to freedom of assembly in the African Charter reinforces the protection of the right to peaceful protest in Nigeria. Citizens are entitled to express their opinions, participate in peaceful demonstrations, and engage in collective actions without unwarranted interference from the state. The ACHPR Act, by extension, solidifies this protection, emphasizing the

importance of safeguarding citizens' rights during protests. In the context of protests, the ACHPR Act empowers Nigerian courts to refer to international human rights standards, including those outlined in the African Charter. Section 12 of the Act provides that the provisions of the Charter may be invoked in Nigerian courts. This allows the judiciary to draw on the Charter's principles when adjudicating cases related to protests, ensuring that international human rights standards serve as a guide in protecting the rights of individuals involved in such activities. By incorporating the African Charter into domestic law, the ACHPR Act strengthens the adjudication of human rights cases in Nigeria. Courts can consider the Charter's provisions, along with other relevant domestic laws, when interpreting and applying the law in cases involving the right to freedom of assembly. This contributes to a more comprehensive and rights-based approach to legal proceedings related to protests. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (Ratification and Enforcement) Act plays a pivotal role in reinforcing the protection of human rights in Nigeria, particularly the right to freedom of assembly. Its integration into domestic law provides a framework for upholding international human rights standards, ensuring that the right to peaceful protest is recognized, respected, and safeguarded within the Nigerian legal system.

The Terrorism (Prevention) Act, 2011, is a crucial piece of legislation in Nigeria that serves as a legal framework for preventing and combating acts of terrorism. It plays a pivotal role in addressing the evolving challenges posed by terrorism, both domestically and internationally. Below is an expansion on the relevance and potential concerns associated with the Terrorism (Prevention) Act, along with an analysis emphasizing the need for judicious application to prevent the infringement of constitutionally protected rights.

The Terrorism (Prevention) Act, enacted in 2011, holds immense relevance in the context of contemporary global and regional security concerns. Its primary purpose is to provide a comprehensive legal framework for preventing, addressing, and combatting acts of terrorism within the borders of Nigeria. The Act equips law enforcement agencies with the tools and authority necessary to respond effectively to the complex challenges posed by terrorist activities. The core focus of the Terrorism (Prevention) Act is to counteract and prevent terrorism. The Act defines acts of terrorism, establishes offenses related to terrorism, and prescribes severe penalties for individuals or groups involved in terrorist activities. This includes

provisions for the freezing of assets, prosecution of financiers, and the establishment of special courts to handle terrorism-related cases. The Act reflects Nigeria's commitment to international efforts to combat terrorism. Despite its vital role in addressing terrorism, there have been legitimate concerns about the potential misuse of the Terrorism (Prevention) Act. Critics argue that the broad language used in defining terrorist offenses could lead to its application beyond its intended scope, potentially infringing on constitutionally protected rights, including the right to freedom of expression and assembly. There is a risk that the Act might be used to suppress legitimate dissent under the guise of counterterrorism efforts.

The analysis of the Terrorism (Prevention) Act underscores the critical importance of judicious application. Law enforcement agencies must exercise caution and adhere strictly to the rule of law to prevent the Act from becoming a tool for unwarranted suppression of civil liberties. Provisions within the Act should be applied in a manner that respects constitutional rights, ensuring that the fight against terrorism does not compromise the fundamental principles of democracy and human rights. To address concerns about potential misuse, the implementation of the Terrorism (Prevention) Act must align with the constitutional rights guaranteed to Nigerian citizens. Legal safeguards and oversight mechanisms should be in place to ensure that individuals are not arbitrarily targeted or subjected to abuse of power under the pretext of counterterrorism measures. This includes rigorous adherence to due process, fair trials, and protection against torture or other forms of ill-treatment. A delicate balance must be maintained between national security imperatives and the protection of individual rights. The Terrorism (Prevention) Act should be implemented in a manner that effectively addresses the threats posed by terrorism while upholding the principles of justice, fairness, and respect for human rights. Striking this balance requires continuous scrutiny, periodic reviews of the Act, and a commitment to transparency and accountability in its enforcement.

Concerning the above, while the Terrorism (Prevention) Act, of 2011, is instrumental in addressing the serious threat of terrorism, its implementation must be approached with a keen awareness of potential concerns about misuse. Striking a balance between security imperatives and the protection of constitutionally guaranteed rights is crucial for upholding the rule of law and preserving the democratic principles that underpin Nigeria's legal system.

Drawing from the aforementioned, the Nigerian Constitution stands as the paramount and inviolable legal authority on the right to protest, with all other laws obliged to align with its dictates or yield to its supremacy. The validity of the Public Order Act is contingent upon its consistency with the provisions of the Nigerian Constitution. In Nigeria, the right to protest is unequivocally guaranteed by the constitution, thereby conferring legal legitimacy on movements such as the EndSARS protest.

It is pertinent to underscore that the recognition of the right to protest extends beyond the national legal framework, finding resonance in certain international conventions and treaties. Nigeria's commitment to these international agreements is evident as a signatory. Notably, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1981) is one such international instrument acknowledging the right to protest. Articles 18, 19, and 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights explicitly affirm the freedom of thought, the right to self-expression, and the right to peaceful assembly and association. However, Article 29 of the declaration imposes the condition that the exercise of these rights must align with the just requirements of public order, morality, and the well-being of a democratic society. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), a multilateral treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, also upholds the right to a peaceful protest. Nigeria's ratification of the ICCPR on July 29, 1993, renders the Covenant legally binding and enforceable in the country. Article 21 of the ICCPR explicitly validates the people's right to hold protests, stipulating that individuals or groups have the freedom of peaceful assembly as long as it does not obstruct the rights of others, public order, public safety, and morality.

Concerning the above, Nigeria's legal framework acknowledges and protects the right to peaceful protest. However, the practical implementation of these laws has been a subject of debate, with concerns raised about potential abuses of power. Legal scrutiny and advocacy for adherence to constitutional principles are essential to ensure that peaceful protests are facilitated rather than hindered by the legal system.

#### **4. Challenges or Gaps in Laws Concerning Peaceful Protest and the EndSARS Protests in Nigeria**

Despite the legal framework in Nigeria that ostensibly supports the right to peaceful protest, there are significant challenges and gaps in the

implementation and protection of this right, particularly evident during the EndSARS protests. Several issues contribute to these challenges:

#### **5.1 Excessive Use of Force by Law Enforcement**

One of the primary challenges lies in the excessive use of force by law enforcement agencies during protests. Incidents during the EndSARS protests, such as the Lekki Toll Gate shooting, raised serious concerns about the disproportionate use of force against peaceful protesters. In this regard, while the Constitution guarantees the right to peaceful assembly, there is a gap in the practical enforcement of this right. Law enforcement agencies sometimes resort to heavy-handed tactics, undermining the constitutional protections for peaceful protesters.

#### **5.2 Vagueness and Ambiguity in Laws**

The Public Order Act and other relevant laws contain vague and ambiguous provisions, giving broad discretionary powers to law enforcement authorities. This lack of clarity can result in inconsistent application and potential abuse. The ambiguity in these laws creates room for subjective interpretation, allowing authorities to curtail protests on questionable grounds. There is a need for clearer legal standards to prevent arbitrary restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly.

#### **5.3 Limited Accountability and Impunity**

The lack of accountability for law enforcement officers involved in human rights violations during protests is a critical issue. Perpetrators often go unpunished, contributing to a culture of impunity. While legal mechanisms for holding individuals accountable exist, their effectiveness is hindered by systemic issues, including inadequate investigations, a lack of transparency, and insufficient judicial independence.

#### **5.4 Criminalization of Peaceful Protest**

There have been instances where peaceful protesters are arbitrarily arrested and charged with offenses such as unlawful assembly or disturbing public peace. The criminalization of peaceful protest through broad and vague legal provisions contradicts the constitutional guarantee of the right to assemble peacefully. There is a need for legislative reforms to ensure that individuals exercising their constitutional rights are not unfairly targeted.

### 5.5 Limited Protection for Whistleblowers

Activists and individuals who expose wrongdoing or misconduct, even within law enforcement agencies, often face threats, harassment, and persecution. The legal framework lacks adequate protection for whistleblowers, discouraging individuals from coming forward with information on police brutality or other violations. Strengthening whistleblower protection laws is crucial to ensuring accountability and transparency.

### 5.6 Inadequate Consultation with Civil Society

Laws related to public order and protests are often formulated without sufficient input from civil society organizations and stakeholders. The absence of inclusive consultations leads to laws that may not adequately address the diverse needs and concerns of the population. Involving civil society in the legislative process can help create more effective and balanced legal frameworks.

Concerning the above, while Nigeria has legal provisions affirming the right to peaceful protest, the challenges and gaps in the practical application of these laws are evident. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive legal reforms, increased accountability mechanisms, and a commitment to upholding constitutional rights. Strengthening the legal framework and fostering a culture of respect for human rights are essential steps toward ensuring that peaceful protests are not only legally protected but also genuinely facilitated and respected by the authorities.

## 5. Methodology

In investigating the dynamics and impact of the EndSARS protests in Nigeria, a comprehensive research methodology is employed, utilizing a hybrid approach that blends both qualitative and quantitative methods. This approach is designed to capture the multifaceted nature of the social movement and provide a nuanced understanding of its implications. The qualitative component of the study employs a doctrinal approach to delve into the theoretical underpinnings and legal frameworks that surround the EndSARS protests. This involves a thorough review of existing legal documents and regulations pertinent to protests and civil unrest in Nigeria, with a particular focus on understanding the legal context within which the protests unfolded. Additionally, an extensive examination of scholarly literature, including online journal articles, academic

publications, and textbooks, is conducted to enrich the study with theoretical insights and contextual background.

On the other hand, the quantitative facet of the research employs a non-doctrinal approach to gather primary data on the dynamics of the EndSARS protests. Utilizing structured questionnaires, the study seeks to ascertain the motivations, demographics, and experiences of the protesters. The questionnaire also aims to capture the broader societal impact of the protests and gathers opinions on the effectiveness of various strategies employed during the movement. This method allows for a more direct engagement with the participants and provides a statistical basis for analyzing trends and patterns within the protest movement. Data obtained through the questionnaire are subjected to rigorous mathematical, numerical, and statistical analyses in a descriptive format. This approach facilitates the identification of key trends, patterns, and correlations, offering valuable insights into the factors that fueled the protests and their implications for societal change in Nigeria. The combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods ensures a comprehensive and holistic examination of the EndSARS protests, contributing to a deeper understanding of their dynamics and lasting impact.

### 5.1 Sample Size and Technique

The research involved 203 participants residing in different Federal Republic of Nigeria geopolitical zones. A simple random sampling technique was employed for respondent selection in response to the questionnaire to ensure a fair representation. The choice of this method is justified by its simplicity, making it an uncomplicated way to identify respondents (Aidonojie et al., 2023; Imoisi and Aidonojie, 2023; Aidonojie et al., 2023; Aidonojie and Edetalehn, 2023; Aidonojie, 2023; Idahosa et al., 2023, Aidonojie et al., 2022). Additionally, it is considered preferable to select participants from a diverse and heterogeneous nation (Aidonojie et al., 2022; Oladele et. al., 2022; Aidonojie et al., 2022; Aidonojie et al., 2021). Furthermore, adopting a simple random sampling technique is based on its recognized attributes, including its resistance to influence, thereby minimizing the likelihood of biased results (Aidonojie et al., 2020; Aidonojie and Odojor, 2020; Aidonojie et al., 2020).

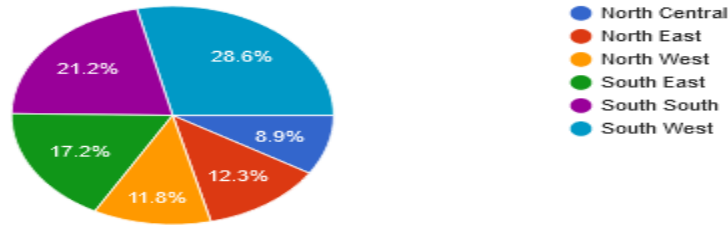
#### Data Presentation and Analysis

The data generated or obtained in this study is therefore analysed as follows:

**Research Question One:**

**Which of the following Geopolitical zones in Nigeria do you reside in?**

203 responses



**Figure 1:** Respondents identifying the residential area of the geo-political they reside in Nigeria

S/N	Geo-political Zones in Nigeria	Responses of Respondents	Percent
1	North Central	18	8.9%
2	North East	25	12.3%
3	North West	24	11.8%
4	South East	35	17.2%
5	South South	43	21.2%
6	South West	58	28.6%

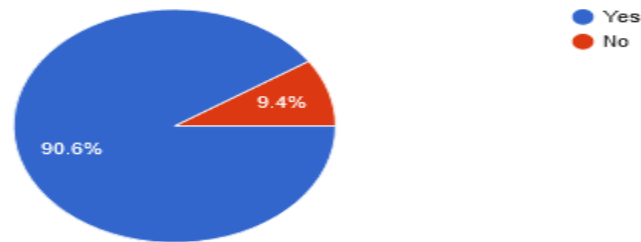
Table 1: Valid respondents identifying the state they live or reside in Nigeria

Figure 1 and Table 1 above are valid clarification and identification of the various places in the geo-political zone where the respondent resides in Nigeria.

**Research Question Two:**

**Did you witness the EndSARS protest in Nigeria?**

203 responses



**Figure 2:** Identification of the End SARS protest

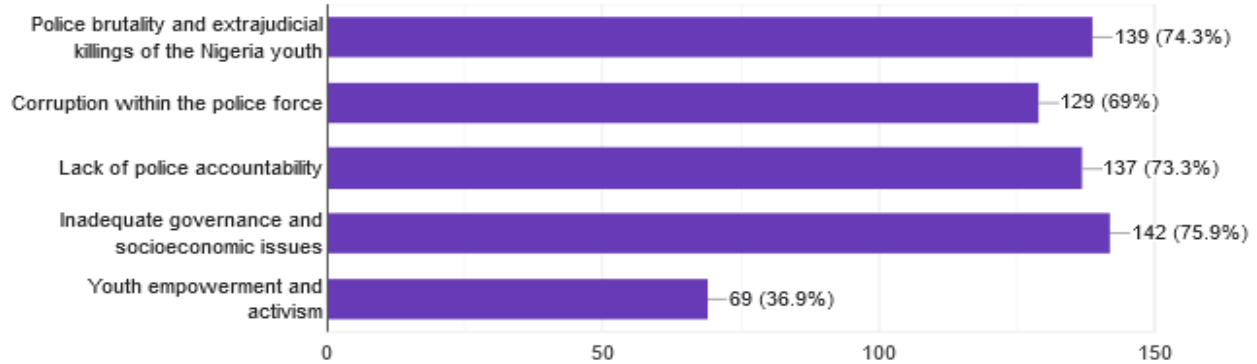
	Response	Percent
Valid Yes	184	90.6%
Valid No	19	9.4%
Total	203	100%

**Table 2:** Valid confirmation of EndSARS protest

Figure 2 and Table 2 above are respondents' valid identification as a witness of the EndSARS protest in Nigeria.

**Research Question Three:  
Which of the following motivated the EndSARS protest in Nigeria? You can tick more than one option**

187 responses



**Figure 3:** Identification of cluster of causes of the EndSARS protest in Nigeria

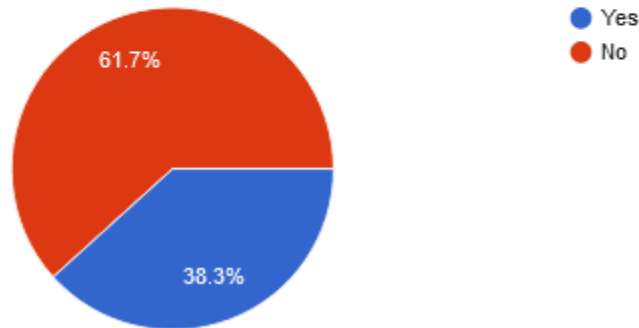
Causes of the EndSARS protest in Nigeria	Cluster of Response	Percentage
Police brutality and extrajudicial killings of the Nigeria youth	139	74.3%
Corruption within the police force	129	69%
Lack of police accountability	137	73.3%
Inadequate governance and socioeconomic issues	142	75.9%
Youth empowerment and activism	69	36.9%

**Table 4:** Valid cluster of causes of the EndSARS protest in Nigeria

Figure 3 and Table 3 are valid clusters of identifying of the various causes of the EndSARS protest in Nigeria.

**Research Question Four:  
Do you agree that the government has adequately addressed the demands of the EndSARS protesters?**

188 responses



**Figure 4:** Confirmation of if the EndSARS demand has been sufficiently addressed

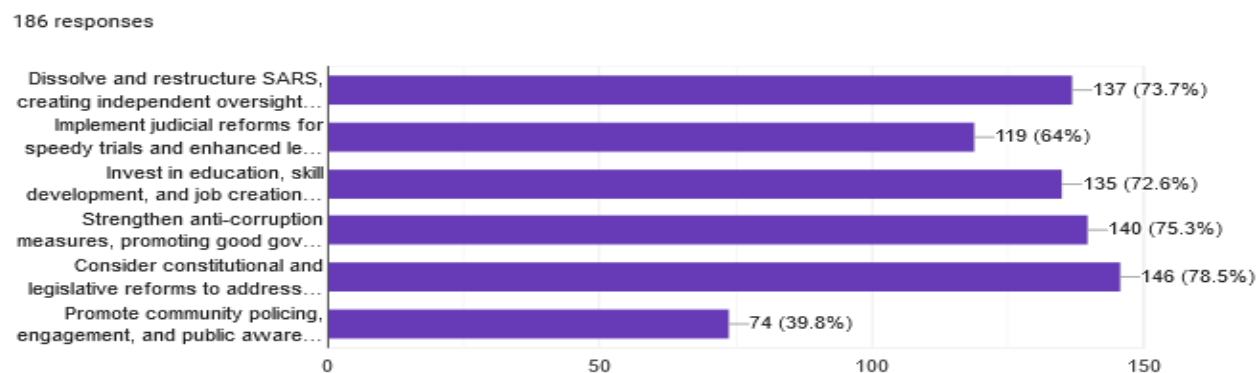
	Response	Percent
Valid Yes	72	38.3%
Valid No	116	61.7%
Total	188	100%

**Table 4:** Valid confirmation of if the EndSARS demand has been sufficiently addressed

Figure 4 and Table 4 are respondents' confirmation of the government's ability to address the EndSARS demand.

**Research Question Five:**

**What specific policies or reforms should the government prioritize in response to the protests? You can tick more than one options**



**Figure 5:** Identification of policies or reform in responding to the EndSARS protest in Nigeria

Possible policies and Reforms to respond to the EndSARS demand	Cluster of Responses	Percentage
Dissolve and restructure SARS, creating independent oversight for police accountability.	137	73.7%
Implement judicial reforms for speedy trials and enhanced legal protections against police abuse.	119	64%
Invest in education, skill development, and job creation for youth empowerment.	135	72.6%
Strengthen anti-corruption measures, promoting good governance practices.	140	75.3%
Consider constitutional and legislative reforms to address systemic issues.	146	78.5%
Promote community policing, engagement, and public awareness campaigns.	74	39.8%

**Table 5:** Valid cluster of identification of policies or reform in responding to the EndSARS protest in Nigeria

Figure 5 and Table 5 are a respondent valid cluster of identification of possible policies or reforms to respond effectively of the EndSARS demand.

**6. Discussion of Findings**

The data obtained pertains to the questionnaire distributed to the respondents in the study titled "Catalyzing Change: Analyzing the Dynamics and Impact of EndSARS Protests in Nigeria" is hereby analyse as follows. The data presented in Figure 1 and Table 1 provides a comprehensive overview of respondents' residential distribution across various geo-political zones in Nigeria. Notably, a majority of respondents reside in the South West (28.6%), followed by the South South (21.2%) and the South East (17.2%). This geographical diversity is crucial in ensuring a well-rounded representation of perspectives on the issues under investigation. Figure 2 and Table 2 shed light on respondents' experiences and awareness of the EndSARS protest in Nigeria. A significant majority (90.6%) affirm having witnessed the protest, while a smaller percentage (9.4%) indicate otherwise. This high level of acknowledgment indicates the widespread impact and visibility of the EndSARS movement among the study participants.

In Figure 3 and Table 3, respondents provide insights into the causes of the EndSARS protest in Nigeria. The identified clusters of causes include police brutality and extrajudicial killings of Nigerian youth (74.3%), corruption within the police force (69%), lack of police accountability (73.3%), inadequate governance, and socioeconomic issues (75.9%). This nuanced understanding highlights the multifaceted nature of the issues that fueled the protest. Figure 4 and Table 4 capture respondents' perspectives on whether the demands of the EndSARS protest have been sufficiently addressed by the government. A notable 61.7% of respondents express skepticism, indicating that there is a perceived gap in the government's response to the demands raised during the protest. The data in Figure 5 and Table 5 delve into respondents' recommendations for policies and reforms to effectively address the EndSARS demands. Key clusters of responses include the dissolution and restructuring of SARS with independent oversight (73.7%), judicial reforms for enhanced legal protections (64%), investment in

youth empowerment through education and job creation (72.6%), strengthening anti-corruption measures (75.3%), and considering constitutional and legislative reforms (78.5%). These suggestions reflect a comprehensive approach to addressing the systemic issues that led to the EndSARS protest.

Concerning the above, the findings reveal a diverse and informed respondent base with a deep understanding of the socio-political issues surrounding the EndSARS protest. The data underscores the importance of considering these varied perspectives when formulating policies and interventions in response to the demands of the EndSARS movement.

## 7. Conclusion/Recommendations

In conclusion, the EndSARS protests in Nigeria emerged as a powerful force for catalyzing change, transcending regional and socio-economic boundaries to become a collective expression of dissatisfaction with systemic issues. The dynamics of the protests, rooted in long-standing grievances against police brutality and a lack of accountability, underscore the urgency for comprehensive societal reform. The impact of the movement extends beyond immediate policy changes, permeating the national consciousness and sparking conversations on governance, human rights, and civic engagement. The resilience and unity demonstrated by diverse participants in the protests highlight the potential of grassroots movements to instigate meaningful transformations. As Nigeria navigates its path forward, the lessons from the EndSARS protests underscore the imperative for sustained dialogue, institutional reforms, and continued civic involvement to forge a more just and accountable society.

Concerning the above, it is therefore recommended as follows:

- Advocacy for comprehensive reforms within law enforcement agencies to address systemic issues contributing to police brutality and misconduct.
- Prioritize civic education initiatives to empower citizens with knowledge of their rights and responsibilities, fostering a more informed and engaged populace.
- Implement responsible media regulations to counter misinformation and enhance the role of media in shaping constructive public discourse.

- Actively involve and include the youth in policy-making processes, acknowledging their role as catalysts for positive change.
- Foster international collaborations and partnerships to leverage global support for human rights, governance, and accountability initiatives within Nigeria.

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