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Department of Political Science and Public Administration

**THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN CREATING POLITICAL
AWARENESS AND IN THE MOBILIZATION FOR SOCIAL
PROTESTS IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF THE ENDSARS
PROTEST**

Master Thesis

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that in the preparation of this thesis, scientific ethical rules have been followed, the works of other persons have been referenced in accordance with the scientific norms if used, there is no falsification in the used data, any part of the thesis has not been submitted to this university or any other university as another thesis.

Oluwasola Michael ADEOTI.

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SUMMARY

The role that social media plays in democracy has drawn the attention of scholars with several research conducted. In this regards scholar have conducted different research on several topics and issue. This research work investigates the role played by social media in creating political awareness and as a tool for mobilization of social protests. In Nigeria, just like in several other democracies, both old and nascent, social media has emerged to rival the traditional media by becoming a public sphere through which citizens can collectively deliberate and discuss socio-economic and political matters as they affect their lives and the entire country.

Though social protests have always been a part of Nigerian political history and development, the EndSARS Social Protest was unique and spectacular in terms of the critical and central role played by social media, especially Twitter. In this social protest, it was massively used and deployed by participants to sensitize and mobilize Nigerians, raise their political consciousness and awareness, give confidence to Nigerians that after all, with the power of social media, they have the power to engage the government and hold it accountable for its actions and inactions. Fueling the engine of social media as a vehicle for social movement is its readiness to promote inclusiveness and accessibility by ordinary citizens, both in old and nascent democracies. It is in this regards that young Nigerians played a critical role in the EndSARS social movement as the social media provided them with a platform to get involved in the governing process of their country, jettisoning conservative and apathetic politics of the older generation for radical, critical and political activism.

Hence the purpose of this research is to investigate the impact of social media on political awareness and in mobilizing for social protests. For its analysis, the research relies on four important concepts: Public Sphere, Democracy, social media and Social Movement. These concepts are very key to understanding the role of social media in promoting political efficacy and social protests and demonstrations. We find them appropriate in analyzing shades of ideas regarding the social media providing a public sphere through which citizens can be made to trust their ability to engage their government, influence its decisions, policies, and programs, hold it accountable and even change it.

Key Words: Public Sphere, social media, Social Movement.

ÖZET

Sosyal medyanın demokraside oynadığı rol, yapılan çeşitli araştırmalarla bilginlerilgisini çekmiştir. Bu bağlamda bilginlerilgisini çeşitli konularda farklı araştırmalar yapmışlardır. Bu araştırma çalışması, sosyal medyanın siyasi farkındalık yaratmada ve toplumsal protestolar için bir seferberlik aracı olarak oynadığı rolü araştırıyor. Nijerya'da, hem eski hem de yeni oluşan diğer birçok demokraside olduğu gibi, sosyal medya, vatandaşların yaşamlarını etkileyen sosyo-ekonomik ve politik meseleleri toplu olarak tartışabilecekleri ve tartışabilecekleri bir kamusal alan haline gelerek geleneksel medyaya rakip olacak şekilde ortaya çıktı. Sosyal protestolar her zaman Nijerya siyasi tarihinin ve gelişiminin bir parçası olmasına rağmen, EndSAR Sosyal Protestosu, sosyal medyanın, özellikle de Twitter'ın oynadığı kritik ve merkezi rol açısından benzersiz ve muhteşemdi. Bu toplumsal protestoda, Nijeryalılar duyarlı hale gelmek ve harekete geçmek için kitlesel olarak seferber oluyor, siyasi bilinçlerini yükseltmek, Nijeryalılara, sosyal medyanın gücüyle, hükümeti devreye sokma ve eylemlerinden ve eylemsizliklerinden onu sorumlu tutma gücüne sahip olduklarına dair güven verin. Bir sosyal hareket aracı olarak sosyal medyanın motoruna yakıt sağlayan şey, hem eski hem de yeni oluşan demokrasilerde sıradan vatandaşlar tarafından kapsayıcılığı ve erişilebilirliği teşvik etmeye hazır olmasıdır.

Sosyal medya onlara ülkelerinin yönetim sürecine dahil olmaları için bir platform sağladığından, eski neslin muhafazakar ve kayıtsız siyasetini radikal, eleştirel için bir kenara attığından, genç Nijeryalılar bu bağlamda, EndSARS toplumsal hareketinde kritik bir rol oynadılar ve politik aktivizm.

Dolayısıyla bu araştırmanın amacı, sosyal medyanın siyasi farkındalık ve toplumsal protestolar için seferberlik üzerindeki etkisini araştırmaktır. Araştırma, analizi için dört önemli kavrama dayanmaktadır: Kamusal Alan, Demokrasi, sosyal medya ve Toplumsal Hareket. Bu kavramlar, sosyal medyanın siyasi etkinliği ve sosyal protestoları ve gösterileri teşvik etmedeki rolünü anlamak için çok önemlidir. Vatandaşların hükümetle ilişki kurma, kararlarını, politikalarını ve programlarını etkileme, sorumlu tutma ve hatta onu değiştirme yeteneklerine güvenmelerinin sağlanabileceği bir kamusal alan sağlayan sosyal medyayla ilgili fikir tonlarını analiz ederken bunları uygun buluyoruz.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kamusal alan, sosyal medya, Sosyal hareket.

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ABBREVIATIONS

GSM	:	Global System of Mobile
SARS	:	Special Anti-Robbery Squad
NEC	:	National Electoral Commission
NPC	:	Northern People's Congress
NCNC	:	National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons
AG	:	Action Group
UPP	:	United People's party
NNDP	:	Nigerian National Democratic Party
PPPRA	:	Petroleum Product Pricing Regulatory Agency

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1. Statement of Problem

The Nigerian political history (both colonial and post-colonial periods) is characterized by mass protests and demonstrations. Behind these protests and demonstrations was poor government performance and the failure of the government (both military and democratic regimes alike) to meet the expectations and aspirations of the citizens. In nascent democracies, like Nigeria, the people don't want and prefer democracy by default. Instead, it is evaluated based on the ability of the democratically elected government to meet citizens' expectations and aspirations. These expectations include leadership accountability; public goods, such as food, water, health, shelter, transportation, telecommunication; employment; liberalization of the economy; eradication of corruption and adequate provision of internal security for lives and property (Schmitter, 1994:66).

Unfortunately, government, democratically elected, has largely failed in fulfilling these expectations as citizens are often faced with countless pains and challenges concerning their wellbeing, welfare and survival. These threats and challenges facing the citizens include poverty; lack of opportunity; lack of access to quality and affordable medical care; lack of durable and clean water; high rate of unemployment; infrastructural decay; plundering of the nation's treasury by the political class; denial and gross violation of fundamental human rights of citizens; exclusive politics and lack of security for life and property of citizens. With this situation there is a palpable disconnect between the government and the citizens, leading to democratic disenchantment and providing sufficient conditions for social protests and demonstrations in the country. Social protests and demonstrations become attractive and important options for the impoverished and marginalized Nigerians to express their views, anger, and frustration against the Nigerian state and its agencies (Shigetomi, 2009: 24).

The above conditions surely informed the EndSARS social movement and a series of mass protests in 2020. Though precipitated by police brutality, the protests were remotely propelled by anger, frustration and hopelessness suffered by Nigerians arising from embedded issues like poverty, increasing rates of unemployment, insecurity and violence, repressive and anti-people policies and programs, marginalization, deprivation of resources, flagrant violation of citizens' right, electoral malpractices are recurrent decimals in the history of Nigeria which have at different times led to social protests (Adewole et al., 2012: 26; Anon, 2012 a, 2012b; Susannah, 2009: 15). The protests were mostly organized and led by young Nigerians.

Unique and spectacular about the EndSARS social movement was the critical and central role played by social media, especially Twitter and Facebook. Prior to the incursion of the Global System of Mobile (GSM) into Nigeria in 2002, the nation's political space had been dominated by the traditional media (both print and electronic) as an instrument for sensitizing and mobilizing Nigerians towards democratic politics (Enemaku, 2005:40; Nkwocha, 1999:15; Ojenike, 2005:20;). More so, the nation, prior to 1999, had been experienced a prolonged and an entrenched authoritarian rule. This traditional mass media was severely hampered regarding its role in giving voice to Nigerians and deepening democracy.

The shortcomings and limitations associated with the traditional mass media in participatory democracy in Nigeria prompted the organizers and participants of the EndSARS social movement to bypass it and relied solely on social media for political efficacy and mobilization. They used the social media to raise the political consciousness and awareness of the public and give them the confidence that after all, with the power of the social media, they have the power to engage the government and hold it accountable for its actions and inactions (Ngozi, 2018:20).

The spontaneity of the protest, its near-national spread, level of coordination and organization, the active and heavy involvement of the youth, the helplessness of the government, arising from its lack of control over the kind of information and news in circulation and the global interest generated by the protest brought to fore the debate and concern over what impact the social media has on the democratic politics of the country.

1.2. Aims and Objectives of Study

The main aim of the thesis is to investigate the impact of social media on political awareness and mobilization of the citizenry in Nigeria with the EndSARS Protests as the Case study, with a focus on Twitter. In this protest, social media was massively used to raise the trust, confidence, awareness and, consciousness of Nigerians towards their ability to engage their government, create political awareness on socio-economic and political matters, hold her accountable for its actions or inactions, attend to the wellbeing and welfare of the citizens, abide by the provisions of the constitution and mobilize protests and demonstrations. A survey and interviews were conducted to realize the aim and objectives of the thesis. Other objectives of the thesis are:

- To investigate the cause(s) of the EndSARS mass protests.
- To investigate whether the social media is an effective tool and alternative for creating political awareness and mobilization for protests and demonstrations.
- To investigate whether the citizens can hold accountable their government using the social media.

- To examine whether the social media constitutes a public sphere.
- To know whether social media provides an alternative for political activists to getting their opinions, views, and messages across to the public.
- To investigate the challenges and limitations facing the social media in promoting political participation and democratic consolidation.

1.3. Research Questions

Primarily, this thesis sets out to know whether the social media has an impact on political efficacy and mobilization of protests and demonstrations in Nigeria. Thus, relevant to this main research questions are the following micro research questions:

- In what ways is Twitter deployed for political activities in Nigeria?
- Do social media constitute a public sphere?
- Do social media provide an alternative for social and political activists getting their opinions, views, and messages on public matters across the Nigerian citizens?

1.4. Hypothesis of the study

The following hypothesis have been developed in line with the tenets of this study. The hypotheses have been developed in null form.

H₀: The social media constitutes an incentive for online users to participate in mobilizing for social protests.

H₁: The social media plays a critical role in the formation and shaping of collective opinion of citizens about their government, its institutions, and policies.

H₂: The social media brings about high degree of connectivity which makes social protests have huge and pervasive impacts.

1.5. Significance of Study

First, this thesis adds up to the various literature available on the role of social media on promoting political efficacy, participation and democratic consolidation in Nigeria. It examines how social media helps political efficacy and social protests and demonstrations.

Second, this thesis will help in examining social media as an effective tool and alternative for creating political awareness and mobilization for social protests and demonstrations. It will help to shed more light on how the social media provides an alternative for political and social activists and citizens for getting their opinions, views and messages to the public.

Lastly, the thesis will shed light on the challenges and problems faced by social media as it is used for political activities and suggestions shall be made on how it can be used for consolidating democracy in Nigeria.

1.6. Scope and Limitations of Study

The scope of this study is the role of social media in political efficacy and mobilization of protests and demonstrations in Nigeria. It examines the use of social media for political activities in the form of raising the awareness and consciousness of the citizenry and mobilizing them for protests and demonstrations (Loader and Mercea 2012). The thesis examines how the internet was used by the organizers and participants of the EndSARS Protests for political activities, using both qualitative and quantitative methods to gather data. The EndSARS Protests constitute the case study of this thesis, though prior to this protest was a protest in 2012 known as the #OCCUPYNIGERIA and the social media played a critical role in its success (Hari, 2014). Furthermore, our research work will be narrowed down to Twitter leaving out other social networks.

This is informed by the consideration for feasibility, differences among these social media platforms, and the differences in the services rendered by these sites' vis-a-vis information sharing. Hence, the variations in impacts and roles they have on democratic politics. Narrowing down the research scope to Twitter is also informed by its popularity in Nigeria, especially young Nigerians. Twitter played key roles in the EndSARS in Nigeria that took place in 2020.

The thesis relies on various research methods for gathering relevant data for social medial users, social media platforms and the views of experts on the subject matter.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Introduction

For this research four concepts will be useful for our analysis. These concepts are: **Public sphere, Democracy, social media, and Social Movement.** These concepts and theories are very critical to understanding the role of social media in promoting political efficacy and social protests and demonstrations. We find them appropriate in analyzing shades of ideas regarding the social media providing a public sphere through which citizens can be made to trust their ability to engage their government, influence its decisions, policies, and programs, hold its accountable and even change it.

2.2. Public Sphere

Discourse on media and its role in development often begins with and centers on Jurgen Habermas's work, "The Structural transformation of Public Sphere". This work is relevant to the theoretical analysis of the development of the media, the new media and its impact and role in democratic politics.

Jurgen Habermas gave account of the origin and transformation of the public sphere in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (See Habermas ([1960] 1989; 1992; and 1995). He carried out a sociological explanation the creation, growth and the decay of the bourgeois public sphere marked by rational-critical debate and discourse on relevant political matters.

According to him, "the bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people who come together as a public (Habermas [1962] 1989: 27). It is this platform where rational debates on important political matters take place and supporting parliamentary democracy with democratic ideas and values which include the concept of equality, human rights and justice (Habermas, 1991: 69). He believed public sphere has certain structural features, norms and practices which are congruent to rational debates on issues of political relevance.

Here, little or no attention is given to the individual debaters and discussants, but attention and focus was on the strength of arguments which were more driven by rational and critical reasoning. Citizens, intellectually and literary equipped, pulled together in the state, criticized the decisions, policies, and decisions of the state (Ibid: 120). There was an emergence of new civic sphere which emerged in the eighteenth century to satisfy the hunger for an open and free space where information on matters of political relevance were openly and freely exchanged and debated. On the rise was also literacy, accessibility to relevant information critical to political matters and

critical and the emergence of a free press which gave voice to the people (Habermas, 1989). It ushered in, for the first time, a new kind of critical journalism which became a platform for critical political debate (Habermas, 1991: 60).

Habermas (1989: XI) further came up with three “institutional criteria” as necessary conditions for the evolution of the public sphere, irrespective of the where the critical discourse and debates take place, be they the Britain’s coffee houses, France’s salons or the German Tischgesellschaften. These institutional criteria are **disregard of status**- it disregarded status in totality; **platform of common concern**-issues formally strictly reserved for church and state prerogative became problematized by private individuals and **inclusivity**- everyone became a participant and discussant in the socio-economic and political discourse of the society. All these institutional criteria were common denominations in all the bourgeois societies. And this bourgeois public sphere was well nurtured and supported by the 18th century liberal democracy which emphasizes equality, freedom, liberty, and free press. The liberal democracy also advocates for the separation of the civil society from the purview of the church and government. The liberal democratic press is meant to be the megaphone of the private individuals and not that of the government. The autonomous sphere of critical and rational discourse however became decay due to industrialization and the rise of mass popular media. The bourgeois public sphere experienced decay due to the consumeristic push that pervaded the society. With this mass popular media, individual citizens degenerated from being newsmakers to consumers of news. The press lost its freedom as a megaphone of the opinion of the individual citizens and became mouthpiece of the powerful political forces in the society. The media derailed from its hitherto critical and rational role and became conservative when it became commercialized, and profit driven. It became sustained by profit generated through commercial advertisement (Habermas, 1992).

In Habermas’s voice, “...the mass media have on the hand attained an incomparably greater range and effectiveness-the sphere of the public realm itself has expanded correspondingly. On the other hand, people have been moved ever further out of this sphere. The more people's effectiveness in terms of publicity increased, the more they became accessible to the pressure of certain private interests, whether individual or collective. Whereas formerly the press was able to limit itself to the transmission and amplification of the rational/critical debate of private people assembled into a public, now conversely this debate gets shaped by the mass media to begin with" (1991: 188).

It is quite important to know that Habermas' public sphere, as it is with every other work, isn't perfect as it has been critiqued by some scholars. They have identified certain deficiency in the

Habermas' public sphere. For instance, its Susen (2011: 4), though concedes useful insights into the structural transformation of the public sphere in the early modern period, "it does not provide an adequate theoretical framework for understanding the structural transformation of public spheres in late modern societies". The Marxists critiqued it from class perspective, feminists from the gender angle, and the liberal-conservative scholars harped on the relevance of the private interest over the general will (Outhwaite, 2009: 11).

2.3. Democracy

Recently, the attempt to conceptualize democracy has witnessed the emergence of two major approaches or perspectives-the normative or idealist approach and the procedural or formalistic approach. Central to this controversy is what constitutes democracy, by what standards or criteria should adjudge a regime democratic, what are the benchmarks by which we conclude that one political system is democratic and the other undemocratic.

According to the first approach, democracy cannot be divorced from certain democratic values, among of which rule of law and people's rights are very important. A government is democratic to the extent that there is observance of the rule of law, equality of all citizens and when fundamental rights citizens are protected and guaranteed. Democracy, they argue, does "the will of people", exists for the "common goods" of the citizens (Huntington, 1991:7).

However, twentieth century witnessed the ascendancy of the procedural approach and the universal acceptance of election as the basic standard for identifying a democratic government. Critical to this approach is that a political system is democratic to the extent that political leaders are selected "through competitive elections by the people they governed" (Ibid: 6). Schumpeter, a leading figure in this approach opines "the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of competitive struggle, for the people's votes" (cf. Huntington, 1991:7).

Huntington also opines that a political system is democratic to the "extent that its most powerful collective decision makers are elected through fair, honest and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote." The Impossibility of direct democracy in modern representative political system also informs Dahl to come up with what he calls "polyarchy." Polyarchy, Dahl opines, is a political system with six democratic institutions- "elected officials; free, fair and frequent elections; freedom of expression; alternative sources of information; associational autonomy; and inclusive citizenship" (Dahl, 1991: 85-90).

Considering the above two approaches, one cannot but conclude that each tends to complement each other. This arises from the fact that every political institution is “norms, ideas and values that exert their influence on democratic institution like elections. This position is echoed by Diamond (2003) as he points out that “beyond the electoral, liberal democracy encompasses a vigorous rule of law with an independent and nondiscriminatory judiciary; extensive individual freedoms of belief, speech, publication, association, assembly and so on; strong protection for rights of ethnic, cultural, religious and other minorities; a pluralistic civil society, which affords citizens multiple channels outside of the interests and values; and civilian control of the military”.

Obviously running through all above approaches to conceptualizing democracy is the deliberative feature of modern liberal democracy and this was highlighted in the Habermas' public sphere. In democratic politics, citizens participate in the process of governance, engage in discussions on issues of socio-economic and political importance, express their opinions which input into the process of decision making (Fishkin, 2009: 11). This is the participatory democracy emphasized in the Habermas' public sphere and which made parliamentary democracy possible (Habermas, 1991: 69).

As state earlier in this section, public sphere is the participatory platforms where in existence are political parties which citizens identify and sympathize with. These parties have manifesto which tell the citizens what they stand for and hope to implement when they ascend to power. Hence, in practice, citizens' role in this situation is primarily limited to voting periodically and the main deliberation on important political matters is the sole duty of the elected representatives. Information on the activities of the elected representatives and deliberations on the parliamentary floor gets to the citizens through the media. Through same media, citizens' voice is heard by the elected representatives. With the mass media commercialized and becoming less of the voice of the masses but more of the powerful political forces in the society, voting on election day is a means by which citizens exercise power over their leaders, hold them accountable for their actions or inactions and the main means by which legitimacy is conferred on the government, its decisions, policies, and programs (Della, 2011: 802). The decay of the public sphere, as argued by Habermas, comes with the reverse in the role hitherto played by media-initially its content was determined by the debates and rational discourse put up by the citizens. However, this changed as the public now debated what was pushed to them by the media (Castells, 2007: 241). Disenchantment sets in as masses realize their power over the mass media slip away from them and taken over by the major political actors in the society.

Frustration and disenchantment resulted into the need and search for an alternative and independent source of news free of control and manipulation by the powerful political forces in the society. This search for an alternative independent news channel is congruent with a new form of democracy-participatory democracy; a form of democracy where contending public matters or issues are critically deliberated and debated by the public and decisions to be eventually taken is decided by that view or position that seems superior in argument. It is a form of democracy which gives to the masses the power to determine the content of public debates and deliberation, gives more participatory role in the decision-making process of their country (Barber, 1984: 173; Della, 2011: 803; Habermas, 1998; Zittel, 2007: 17, Nylen, 2003: 27). Herein lies the social media, a news channel available for the masses to freely and openly deliberate, discuss socio-economic and political issues, criticize government decisions, policies, and programs, promote equal and inclusive access to information relevance to governance. Here, citizens determine the contents of deliberation and discourse and take ownership of governance. In a way, a semblance to classical or direct democracy, as practiced by the ancient Greek! This is what the new media offers.

2.4. Social Media

As a point of departure, it quite important to reinstate our scope of social media since the term seems to be large and complex. In the array of this gamut of what social media covers, and as defined by this research scope of studies, social media shall be taken to be the Twitter.

There is no universal definition for the concept of social media as scholars tend to give different meanings and conceptions to it. Wikipedia defines social media as “interactive technologies that allow the creation or sharing/exchange of information, ideas, interests and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks”. Gaining access to the services provided by the social media is only possible through their web-based apps which users download on the laptops, desktops, and mobile devices such as smart phones and tablets. With these web-based apps, the social media create interactive and dialogical platforms through which individuals, communities and organizations create, share and exchange information, ideas, interests, images, videos and other forms of expression. Social media differ from the traditional media in many ways, among which are in terms of quality, usability, accessibility, frequency, and immediacy.

Boyd and Ellison (2007: 1) define social media as “web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system”. For Kaplan and Haenlem (2010), social media is an internet supported platform anchored on technology and ideological foundations of Web 2.0. The Australian Electoral Commission (2010) defines social media as an

"online tools and Web sites that facilitate many-many communications between users. Specific examples include Facebook and Twitter, but may also include more regional or niche services, and more longstanding collaborative environments such as web-based forums and wikis". Furthermore, Constantinides and Fountain (2008) define it as an online network of users promoting free flow of ideas and knowledge through effective generation, dissemination, sharing, editing of informational content. It is a blueprint that allows for a mass broadcasting (Cohen, 2009: 12). Dewing (2012: 1) defines it as strategy for online exchanges which allows for a user-created content or joining online community-blogs, wikis, social bookmarking, Twitter, YouTube etc. It is a social network which allows for civic engagement and connecting with others (Stelzner, 2009: 4).

2.5. Social Movement

The social mobilization capacity of the social media brings to bare the phenomenon of social movement. One of significant uses to which social media has been put into is mobilizing the masses to bring about social change with wide-ranging effects and consequences. In other words, with social media birthed social movement through which the masses are mobilized. Social movement, in this case, is a mass body of people with shared interest in either bringing about or stopping a social change. It involves many a group of people coming together to stop or effect change, social, political or the two combined (Blumer, 1956). Tilly (2004: 3) defines social movement as an important platform provided for a collection of ordinary people to participate in public politics. It is a "collective challenges to elites, authorities and other groups or cultural codes by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interactions with elites, opponents and authorities" (Tarrow, 1998). Dani Mario (1992) conceptualizes social movement as having three criteria: "a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and /or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of shared collective identity".

Social movement can thus be defined as a vehicle through which the mass citizens, ordinary and influential, effect change in the social or political or socio-political, life of the country. This aim and capacity of the social movement in mobilizing the mass people for a change is as well shared by social media. With social media, ordinary and influential individuals are activated and moved into taking debate, discourse, and critical deliberation on issues of political relevance.

They empowered to create news independent of the government and traditional mass media and share information which otherwise the government would have wanted to be kept away from the public (Loader, e tal, 2011: 759). With the social media, the ordinary people can keep a watch on the government, exposing it where it has gone beyond what is permitted by the constitution and

mobilize them into taking appropriate action aimed at getting the government to serve the interest and will of the people (Castells, 2009: 4134).

The capacity of the social media in propelling social movement is further amplified by its inclusiveness and easy accessibility by ordinary people, especially in old democracies. It is also highly accessible by young people who are more always at the forefront of most social movements. For the young people, social media grant the opportunity to get involved in the governing process of their societies, jettisoning the conservative and apathetic politics of the older generation for radical, critical, and political activism. The new media has expanded the horizon of democratic politics beyond the ritual act of periodic voting and now there is more interest in keeping a watch on the elected public office holders after election, making their voices known on national issues, seeking for an alternative source of information and news outside what is offered by the government and the traditional media, mobilizing for grassroots politics to complement for the social media activism and challenging the reigning order or idea.

CHAPTER THREE

THE HISTORY OF SOCIAL PROTESTS IN NIGERIA

3.1. Social Protests and Mobilization in Nigeria Prior to the Emergence of the Social Media

The tradition of social protests and mobilization remain a part of the political process in Nigeria, even prior to the emergence of social media. Protests and activism (in both colonial and post-colonial, military, and democratic regimes) have always been used by political leaders, political parties, political associations, and labor unions for mobilizing the people, creating and raising their political awareness and consciousness, holding government accountable and forcing the government to consider or reconsider her decisions, policies and programs. As a matter of fact, social protests and mobilizations were a very rampant political phenomenon in the country during the colonial period and prior to 1960 when Nigeria got her sovereignty.

The colonial Nigeria witnessed nationalists, activists and labor union leaders organizing and mobilizing Nigerians against the British Colonial government and its policies. They created and raised the political consciousness and awareness of the people against the discriminatory and racial policies, rules and laws of the colonial government, forced and compelled the British Imperial government towards bringing about certain socio-economic and political changes and development in the country and fought for self-determination and independence. Movements and associations (both political and tribal) were formed and represented the platform for engaging and conscientizing and in the absence of social media, the protests manifested and took various forms such as print, radio, music, cities, and villages. And many of these movements and associations were formed and led by young vibrant Nigerians among whom were Herbert Macaulay, Obafemi Awolowo, Nnamidi Azikiwe, H. O. Davies, Ernest Okoli, Ahmadu Bello, Olufunmilayo Ransome Kuti, (Anifowose, 1980; Mochizuki, 2009: 208.).

3.1.1. The Aba Women Riot of 1929

Among the major and significant social protests and mobilization witnessed during the colonial and pre-independent Nigeria was the Aba Women Riots of 1929. This was an effective and a non-violent social protest led by women in some cities in the Southeastern Nigeria against the British colonial government and its policies seen by the protesters as anti-people. Thousands of women were mobilized in Calabar and Owerri to protest oppressive and repressive policies imposed by the British Imperial administration. In the absence of strong local administrative system in the Southeastern Nigeria, the British colonial government had established Warrant Chiefs. These Warrant officers were to be given certain political powers which were equally exercised by traditional institutions in the Southwestern and Northern Nigeria (Dorward, 1983; Judith, 1971; Nina, 1982). Unfortunately, this was quite strange to the socio-cultural nature and history of the people who were acephalous and republican in nature. At

a point in time, the Warrant Chiefs became increasingly oppressive, imposing draconian rules and regulations on the local people, seizing property belonging to the people, illegal detention and imprisonment of people defined as being defiant as they tried to hold challenge the draconian rules and regulations by the Warrant Chiefs and holding them accountable (Mahmood M., 1996). The situation further deteriorated and tense following the decision of the British Colonial government to impose special tax on the women as it attempted to increase its revenue drive. Occupying a central position in the trade and the supply chain of food in several cities in the country, the women rose up against these anti-people policies of the colonial government and disrupted the commercial activities in the country. Peaceful means chanting and dancing on the streets and calling out of the Warrant Chiefs and forcing them to resign their positions. However, the riot took a violent dimension as protesters began to attack stores and banks owned by the Europeans and broke into prisons and prisoners released. The government violently responded to this protest and the protesters as it sent out and deployed colonial police and troops to quell the situations (Judith, 1971). Live arms and ammunitions were used against the protesters in Calabar and Owerri. At the end of this two-month riot, over 50 women were killed and over 100 women were wounded. However, the British Colonial government halted its attempt to impose a tax on the market women and reformed the warrant chief's system of administration as their (warrant chiefs) were now curbed and checked.

3.1.2. The Iva Valley Miners' Strike of 1949

The Iva Valley Miners' Strike, November 1, 1949, and its attendant massacre is another was another remarkable social protest and mobilization witnessed during the colonial era in the history of Nigeria. The British Imperial government had heavily relied on the coal industry in Nigeria for growing, developing, and rebuilding her post Second World War domestic economy. It was a war that saw her expending both material and human capital. She had incurred huge debt in the execution of the war, hence required huge capital to restart her economy, rebuild infrastructure, pay off her debts to countries, such as the United States, men who had served in the British armed forces, veterans of guerrilla warfare in the Southeast Asia. Some of these economic and industrial reforms obviously generated some discontentment among workers and Nigerians, in general. Consequently, the British Labor Party (the ruling party as of then), in tandem with the prevailing economic reality, formulated and implemented certain economic and industrial policies and reforms in Nigeria and her other colonies.

For instance, the British colonial government had introduced "rostering" system which involves the casualization of workers. With this method, workers weren't paid their full salaries as these would be paid later in future. The miners, who were never at peace with this system, which had been declared illegal, began to fight for back-pay owned to them for the period of casualization. The workers also had

the supports of the Zikists independence movement-a 333movement made of radical and Marxist-oriented individuals (Anifowose, 1980; Jaja, 1983). Enugu had remained a home and breeding ground for radical political idea. Besides demanding for the payment of their rostering, the workers demanded for upgrading of the mine hewers to artisans and the payment of housing travelling allowances. All these demands were roundly rejected by the management, and this led to embarking on strike by the workers and the later responded by sacking over fifty workers. The management also ordered for the removal of all the explosives as they linked the strike to the growing agitations for independence and in which the Zikists Movement was one of the leading voices. Removing the explosives seemed to be very difficult, hence, making the management drafting in troops from the Northern part of the country.

Violence broke out on November 18, 1949, when a British policeman known as Captain F. S Philip became terrified of the miners and saw their action as subversive (Jaja: 1983). More miners began to come in and join the protest in their hundreds. Philip became jumpier and had misconstrued and mistaken the strips of red cloth (the workers actually used this to show their solidarity) which the workers had tied to their helmets and cloths as paramilitary insignia. As workers continued to dance and chant, an act meant to keep up the spirit of the striking workers, Philip became more agitated and fearful. Out of panic, he shot a young man, Sunday Anyasado who had just married. He also shot at and killed a machine man called Livinus Okechukwuma and a tub man called Okafor Ageni, who had come of the mining demanding to know what was going on. Many more miners were shot in the back, leaving several dead and wounded. At the end of the mayhem, twenty-one men were shot dead and fifty-one men injured.

3.1.3. The Western Region Crisis of 1965

Another remarkable social protest in the colonial and pre-independent Nigeria was the Western Region crises of 1965 (Diamond: 1988). The political significance of this crisis lies in the fact that it had its root in the Action Group crisis of 1962 and was the one of the propelling factors for the January 15, 1966, military putsch (this could also be regarded as a form of social protest, especially based on the reasons given by the plotters of the coup) organized and led by Emmanuel Ifeajuna, Kaduna Nzeogwu and their fellow plotters. The crisis was later known as Operation Wetie in the local parlance to reflect and convey the degree of wanton destruction of lives and property and carnage which occurred as result of the crisis. The crisis disrupted relative peace and development which the West had enviably known for as the region became a war zone where political thugs and urchins took over and reign terror on the people (Anifowose, 1980).

Like stated above, the crisis had its root way intra-party fighting and rivalry within Action Group (a party heading and controlling the Western Regional Government and leading the opposition against the Northern People's Congress at the federal parliament) which pitted Chief Obafemi Awolowo and those party members loyal to him and Chief Ladoke S. Akintola and his loyalists. The 1959 Federal Election saw Awolowo leading the party at the federal level and having resigned his premiership position in the Western region, there was to shop for his replacement. After enough political maneuvering and consultations, Akintola was chosen to replace Awolowo, hence became the premier. The party also witnessed some electoral victory over its main regional rival, the NCNC, in the 1959 federal election as it won more seats in the West and consolidated its power in the region. The party's focus was thus shifted on planning how to how to spread its influence nationwide and gain power at the federal level. Whereas all the party agreed on this big plan of their party, there was no consensus on the political pathway to adopt and follow, hence herein lies the crisis.

With the failure of the party to secure the total number of votes required to form the government at the federal level, there was need for it to form political alliance and a National Government with other parties in the parliament. While Akintola strongly favored forming a national government that would include all the ruling political parties, including the Northern People's Congress, Awolowo and other party leaders vehemently opposed to it. The Awolowo's camp preferred forming political alliance with the NCNC and teaming up together to contest the next federal election against the NPC (Diamond: 1988).

Besides this disagreement over the pathway towards forming a national government which pitted Awolowo's camp against the Akintola's camp, the former had leveled certain allegations which bordered on anti-party against the later. This was one of the several subject matters which further divided the party at her convention at Jos in February 1962 (Anifowose, 1980). Disciplinary actions were taken against Akintola, Ayo Rosiji and other Western Regional ministers who had worked out of the convention because of the disagreement on several matters. Certain political offices were reshuffled, the post of the Deputy Leader was abolished and Akintola was found guilty by the Executive Committee of the party on twenty-four charges to which he pleaded guilty and asked for forgiveness. The party was also adamant that Akintola leave his position as the Deputy Leader and Premier of the region. The Governor of the region, Sir Adesoji Aderemi was requested to execute Akintola's removal from the premiership position. While Akintola accepted his removal as Deputy Leader, he vehemently opposed his removal as premier. He was eventually removed by the governor following the petition signed by most of the party members withdrawing their loyalty and support for Akintola and by the virtue of the power conferred on the governor under Section 33 (10) of the Region's Constitution.

While Akintola challenged his removal in a lawsuit at the High Court in the region, Alhaji Dauda Adegbenro was appointed by the governor as the premier in May 1962. Proceeding to seek for a vote of no confidence against Akintola in the regional assembly on May 24 1962 was disrupted by Akintola's camp. This ended up in a bloody and violent fighting which witnessed members going physical, throwing chairs at one another across the floor and seizing and smashing of mace and police was brought in to disperse members from the building. This led to dissolving the assembly by the federal government. The federal declared a state of emergency in the region on May 29 1962 before an emergency session of the Federal Parliament, a step it deemed necessary as maintaining law and order in the region but which was challenged by Awolowo. This was followed by the appointment of Dr. Moses A. Majekodunmi, a successive gynecologist, senator and Federal Minister of Health, as the Sole Administrator of the West. He was given and exercised the power to detain and restrict persons, including the all the main political actors involved in the crisis (Anifowose, 1980).

Subsequent developments suggested the biasness of the Federal government, its hatred for Awolowo with his political party and the support for Akintola, his supporters and NCNC members. It was an opportunity to silent Awolowo and his political party in the West. For example, while the restriction order on Akintola, his supporters and members of NCNC was lifted that on Awolowo and his supported was retained and sustained. A commission of enquiry-the Coker Commission- was also set up and headed by Judge George Baptist Coker. It was to probe into the financial dealings of the corporations belonging to the Western Region. Its findings and recommendations found Awolowo and other Action Group members guilty of financial misappropriation while Akintola was exonerated. Awolowo and some members of the AG were also accused and alleged of conspiring and planning to overthrow the Federal Government. Large quantities of arms and ammunition were said to have been imported into the country for this purpose. They were thus charged with treasonable felony and conspiracy to overthrow the Federal Government. Awolowo was sentenced 10 years while Anthony Enahoro and others were sentenced to 15 years.

This consequently took Awolowo out of the political equation in the country and the eventual demise of Action Group. In the absence of these main political rivals, the state of emergency ended on December 31 and Akintola was reinstated as Premier and Head of Government of the Western Region. A coalition government was formed between Akintola's party with Action Group United People's Party, UPP and the NCNC and AG became the opposition party. This political development marked the background and influenced the social protests and political violence that greeting the 1965 Western Regional Elections. Going into the election were Action Group, NNDP-a new party formed by Akintola and NCNC. The election was characterized by all kinds of staggering electoral malpractices as it was

massively rigged in favor of NNDP. Several AG candidates were massively rigged out of the contest and with no hope of getting redress in the court of law, these candidates and their supporters took law into their hands. There were riots, looting, arson and murder political opponents. Houses, vehicles and property belonging to the opposition, including human beings, were burnt with gasoline. Hence, the protest named “Operation Wetie” in the local parlance. This social protest spread across the whole of Western Region and resonated across the country and the situation became quite chaotic and tense and required the intervention of the Federal Government. Unfortunately, the political neutrality of the Federal Government was doubted by majority of the people, leaving region and the people in a precarious condition. It was this social protest, its attendant political violence and other social protests-like the Tiv Riot-in the country that led to the coup de’ etat on January 15, 1966, and led by Major Kaduna Nzeokwu and other four majors.

3.1.4. June 12 Presidential Election Annulment Social Protest

This is another social protest stands out in the political history of Nigeria. It was social protest that threw the country into an absolute political disequilibrium and the precipitous direction the nation was heading towards was apparently palpable. Tension arose, not because of the annulment itself, but the failure of the Babangida administration to offer convincing reasons for its annulment, Babangida’s surreptitious manipulation of the various segments (especially the military and ethnic groups) in the country to perpetuate his rule, and the eventual “ethnicization” of the annulment which pitched the South against the North.

The Presidential election involved two major political parties as the constitution had provided for a two-party system. These parties were the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and The National Republican Convention (NRC). Representing the former was Chief Moshood Kashimawo Abiola, a Yoruba Southerner and Alhaji Bashir Tofa, a Hausa-Fulani from the North. It was an election that attracted both local and global attention because of the prolonged and entrenched military rule in the country and eagerness of the Nigerians to transit to a democratic rule. Nigerians, across all ethno-religious divides, were prepared, ready and happy to participate in the electioneering process which was to foreclose the prolonged and entrenched military rule and make Nigeria a democratic country once again.

However, the electioneering process began to suffer a derail just a few days to the election and sow the seed for the social protests that greeted the rude and shocking annulment of the presidential election. An association, the Association for Better Nigeria, led by the maverick Arthur Nzeribe, believed to have the backing of certain powerful individuals within the military and other civil associations, had

approached Abuja High Court seeking court injunction to restrain the National Electoral Commission (NEC) saddled with conducting various elections in Nigeria from going ahead conducting the election. However, NEC, under the leadership of Professor Humphrey Nwosu, amidst the questionable court injunction restraining it from conducting the election, went ahead with it and later turned out to be freest and fairest election in the Nigeria's post-independence existence (Levis, 1994: 326).

Unfazed by the mischievous court injunction, the NEC went ahead to conduct the presidential election, which was in tandem with the both the domestic and national pulse. The election was conducted nationwide peaceful and was hailed and adjudged the freest and the most credible and transparent in the history of the country's electioneering process. It was an election which united Nigerians, irrespective of their ethno-religious and economic class. The election was also hailed by election observers and the international communities.

After the second day of the election, NEC began to release and announce the results which "indicated that Abiola had garnered an electoral victory that bungled the country's traditional ethnic, regional and religious fracture lines" (Suberu, 1997: 283).

Unfortunately, this "convivial mood of the nation was to be short lived as once again the ABN got an order by the Abuja High Court restraining the NEC from releasing the results" (Osaghae, 2004: 239). This singular action of the Abuja High Court created confusion and chaos within the judiciary as there was counter-injunction ordered by High Court rulings in Benin, Ibadan, Lagos and Akwa, with NEC challenging the injunction in Kaduna Court of Appeal. While this gridlock continued, on 23rd June, government announced the annulment of the election, suspended the NEC and ordered courts not to entertain any cases related to the election. Reasons were given by the military government led by General Ibrahim Babangida for annulment of the election results and these reasons never well down with majority of Nigerians. The reasons given weren't strong enough convince Nigerians, especially from the South where Abiola was from. Reactions that followed this annulment once again reopened and reignited the ethno-religious rivalry and suspicious between the North and South. For some, particularly the Yoruba, 12 June Election was annulled by the military, an institution dominated by the North, to forestall the emergence of a Southerner as the president of the nation.

The annulment threw the country into political turmoil as it was vehemently condemned and resisted by various civil society organizations and labor unions. The social protest against the military and the annulment of the election was more intense in South where citizens organized and mobilized against the government. Protesters demanded for the complete release of the election results which Abiola was obviously in the lead. They also demanded for the release of Abiola, declare the winner, and swear in

to take charge of the government. The protests spread across the country and received attention of the international community. The social protests turned violent as the military responded by using maximum and brutal force against the protesters. Hundreds of Nigerians were killed, and property worth billions of Naira was destroyed as the military continued to use violence against the people.

As the violence continue, with the civil society organization not ready back down, and the country on the verge of disintegrating, Babangida was forced to step aside, and an interim government set for the purpose of forming a government of national unity. Unfortunately, the interim national government was unable to stamp its authority and maintain law and order as its legitimacy was questioned. As violence continued, the ING, headed Chief Ernest Shonekan, a Southerner, failed to maintain law and order, it was overthrown by the military led by General Sani Abacha. The new military also traditionally relied on the use of force to halt the protests as civil society leaders were targeted, harassed, intimidated and even some were assassinated. Chief M.K.O Abiola also went ahead to declare himself the president-elect, a move which prompted the military to up its reign of violence on Nigerians. Abiola was arrested and incarcerated. This was also further geared the civil society associations to increase the tempo of their protests and calling for sanctions against the government by international community¹.

3.2. Social Protest and Mobilization in the Emergence and Era of social media

The Twitter arrived in Nigeria in 2006 and since then there has been a tremendous increase in the numbers of Nigeria using it, hence becoming one of the largest social media platforms in the country. While it has been serving different benefits and deployed into different uses, Twitter has played a significant role in several social protests in Nigeria. It has been deployed for political enlightenment and education, getting the citizens to get involved in political discourse as it affects their government and their country, holding the government accountable for its decisions, policies, and program, effecting reversal of certain government decisions and mobilizing citizens for social protests (Noel, I and Nwachukwu, E: 2019). In other words, the incursion of the social media platforms, such as the Twitter, into the Nigeria political space effectively provided an alternative to traditional media for sensitizing and mobilizing Nigerians towards democratic politics (Enemaku, 2005; Nkwocha, 1999; Ojenike, 2005). In this regards, two social protests in Nigeria in which the Twitter played a very key role shall be examined. These are the #OccupyNigeria Protest and the EndSARS Protest.

3.2.1. Occupy Nigeria Mass Protests

This social protest movement began in Nigeria on Monday 2nd of January 2012 as a response to and rejection of fuel subsidies removal by the federal government as led by President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (Hari: 2014). This issue of fuel subsidies has always been a very controversial, sensitive, and thorny public policy issue which has always set the labor movement, civil society groups, human rights

activists and other group against the federal government. The federal government has always based its decision on the increasing financial burden on the federal government coupled with foreign exchange crisis; corruption which experts said have prevented the fuel subsidies from even alleviating suffering of the low income earners and unable to end fuel scarcity; drop in global oil price which has makes continuous subsidy payment unsustainable; diversion and smuggling which allows for the diversion of a large volume of petroleum products by corrupt senior government officials in collaboration with dubious oil marketers and transport owners and; the need to liberalize the oil sector which will lead to more players and competition in the (Ibid).

The above thus informed the eventual increase in fuel pump price on 1 January 2012 following the announcement by the Executive Secretary of the Petroleum Product Pricing Regulatory Agency, (PPPRA), Reginald Stanley.

However genuine and scientific are reasons given by the government, the policy remains very unpopular among the labor movements, civil society groups and human right activists and have vehemently kicked against it and mobilize Nigerians against the government. The antagonists of fuel subsidy removal argued that the policy is anti-people and that the government is obviously insensitive to the poor conditions of Nigerians which will be further worsen when fuel subsidy is removed. They argue that Nigerians live on less than \$2 per day making it difficult to access and enjoy the necessity of life. Petroleum remains the mainstay of Nigeria economy with every other sector and other seemingly unrelated items tied to it. Consequently, increasing the fuel pump price, they argue, will lead to increase in the cost of provision of goods and services and the prices of consumer goods. This they say will further increase poverty in the country. So, Nigerians, across the country and socio-economic structure of the country, disapproved fuel subsidy removal (Ibid).

It wasn't thus a surprise the massive resistance and social protests that greeted the eventual increase in fuel pump price announced by the government. Protesters, across the country, came out in large multitudes to protest against the government decisions, streets in major cities were occupied, petrol stations shut down and human barriers were formed along motorways. Labor movements, civil society groups and human rights activities mobilized Nigerians, called for and embarked on strike and mass protest. The protest was virtually dominated young Nigerians who were much more encouraged and motivated by the involvement and participation of prominent individuals in the entertainment industry, including the Femi Anikulapo Kuti, Seun Anikulapo Kuti, sons of the late Afrobeat legend, Fela Anikulapo Kuti, Sound Sultan, Daddy Showkey, Olamide and Don Jazzy. These also included prominent activist like Yinka Odumakin, Shehu Sani, prominent religious leaders like Pastor Tunde

Bakare. Protesters were entertained and treated to different songs to keep the tempo of the protests and the protesters. Food, water and other necessities were also provided to sustain protesters (Hari: 2014).

These celebrities also leveraged on their large followers by connecting to their followers on various social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. As the government violently responded by dispersing protesters from protest grounds, intimidating, harassing and arresting protesters and media houses, these social media platforms provided an effective alternative for conversing with protesters, educating them, exposing the inadequacies of the government and mobilizing Nigerians. Celebrities successfully used the social media platforms to connect with many people, including their fans in the country and the outside world to the protest. With the social media, the government was unable to silent Nigerians as they provided a public sphere for Nigerians to voice and expression their opposition to fuel subsidy removal, the growing frustration in the country and the insensitivity of the government to the poor living condition of the poor masses.

It was effectively used to raise the political consciousness and awareness of Nigerians, boost their confidence to hold government accountable and responsible to its decisions (Hari, 2014). A Facebook group, Nationwide Anti-Fuel Subsidy Removal: Strategies and Protests-was created on January 2, 2012 with an over 20,000 members within few days. So also were student websites in schools' blogs and Twitter where Nigerians were actively engaged

The intensity and widespread of this protest aided by the social media eventually compelled the government to make concede some concession and re-evaluate its decision and put in place certain reforms and palliatives to cushion the effects of economic hardship in the country. For instance, the government commenced mass transit programmed aimed at reducing the effects of the subsidy removal on transportation and reduced the petrol pump price by 30% by bringing it down to 97 Naira.

3.2.2. The EndSARS Protests

The EndSARS was a social protest in which the social media played a very remarkable and huge success in mobilizing Nigerians to express their displeasure towards police brutality and the highhandedness of the state security apparatus in the country. The protest had actually begun in 2017 by a human right activist, Segun Awosanya, popularly known as Segalink, as a Twitter campaign, using the hashtag EndSARS and aimed at protesting against the reoccurrence brutalization of young Nigerians by the notorious special unit of the Nigerian Police Force, the Special anti-robbery Squad, (SARS).

The initiators of the protest demanded campaigned for the disbandment of the unit by the government. While the campaigners were able to get justice for some Nigerian youths brutalized and abused by the

officers in this unit, Nigerians' rights were continuously brazenly violated by officers of the SARS. They were continuously accused of several violation of human rights, illegal stop and searches, illegal arrests and detention, extortion, extrajudicial killings of innocent Nigerians, harassment of women sexually and brutality against men. All these continued despite the pleas from Nigerians to the government to something about these notorious police unit. These atrocious activities of the SARS were adequately reported on national newspapers, television, and radio stations, especially in the South where the majority of these violations were taking place. They were also documented, published and reported by various human rights organizations, like the Amnesty International.

The campaigners continued to step up the pressure and give the issue a national outlook, a petition was signed by over 10,195 people and submitted to the National Assembly. This publicity given to the campaigns, steps were taken by the government to reform the SARS, with the government ruling out the outright disbandment of the unit. Unfortunately, these reforms never produced the desired result and significant change in the operation and conducts of the SARS. There continued to be daily reports on newspapers, television and radio stations of inhuman treatments Nigerians continued to suffer in the hands of the SARS. The youth were profiled by the police as criminals who engage in internet fraud known in the local parlance as "Yahoo Boys", hence regularly harassed by the police. Besides this brutalization of Nigerians by the state security apparatus, there were also some embedded issues which tended to increase the frustration among the Nigerian youths. This included poverty, like poverty, increasing rates of unemployment, insecurity and violence, repressive and anti-people policies and programs, marginalization, deprivation of resources, flagrant violation of citizens' right, electoral malpractices are recurrent decimals in the history of Nigeria which have at different times led to social protests (Adewole et al., 2012; Anon, 2012 a, 2012b; Susannah, 2009).

On 3 October 2020 the Twitter campaign which began with the hashtag EndSARS resulted into massive demonstrations across the major cities in the country following more revelation of gross abuse of citizens' rights, including gruesome killing of innocents Nigerians by the police force. At this point the social media (Twitter as the case here) was massively used and deployed to condemn the extra-judicial killings by the police. There was forceful and vehement outrage on the social media as about over 27 million tweets carrying the hashtag on the Twitter.

With the protests spreading nationwide and receiving the supports of Nigerians living abroad and global attention, the lack of control over the social media by the government became obvious as it struggled fruitlessly to curtail the protest. Unlike the traditional media, it lacks the capacity to control the use the social media and the damaging information about the government being spread it.

With government feeling the pressure from within and outside the country, the head of the Nigerian Police Force, Mr. Mohammed Adamu announced the dissolution of the SARS police unit and promised further reformation of the police force generally. Protesters were asked to leave various streets in the major cities across the country and give the government a chance to gradually and fully address those various matters raised by the protesters. However, protesters refused to yield to the plead by the government as they expressed doubt over the sincerity of the government given the fact that the SARS had been banned on four previous occasions.⁵ The frustration of the government regarding its inability to control the social media became very glaring and this culminated in the use of brutal force to disperse the protesters across the country. This was the sad situation at the Lekki Toll Gate, the heartbeat of the protest in Lagos and the entire country. Though shrouded in controversy, the government was accused of sending in the Nigerian Military which was alleged to have fired at unarmed protesters. This alleged killing became known as the Lekki shootings.

CHAPTER FOUR

CASE STUDY

4.1. Introduction

This section shall focus on the analysis of the EndSARS Protest which took place on the 3rd of October with attention given to the role of Twitter in creating and raising the political awareness and mobilizing for social protests. It is divided into sections regarding the method for gathering our data. The first section questionnaires were used to gather our data while in the second section we used interview.

On Thursday 8 October 2020 Nigeria witnessed nationwide protests known as EndSARS organized as outrage and anger against police brutality, gross violation of Nigerians' rights and extra judicial killing by security personnel. While the whole security apparatus in the country has records brutality and gross infringement of citizens' rights, these protests were primarily directed at a notorious unit of the Nigerian Police Force, the Special Anti-Robbery Squad, SARS. Though set up in the late 1992 to fight crimes concerning robbery, motor vehicle theft, kidnapping cattle rustling and firearms, the SARS became a national concern and worry as its officers turned their weapons against the Nigerian Citizens. Gradually its officers began to illegally take up responsibilities not known to the law, violate citizens' rights, intimidating and harassing Nigerian youths and even engaged in extra judicial killings. Hence the End SARS Campaign which had its origin in December 2017 and led by Segun Awosanya, demanding for an end to the brutality and extra judicial killings perpetrated by the SARS. The campaign, which was an online interest group, began on the social media with the hashtag #EndSARS on the Twitter. The demand was for the federal government of Nigeria to scrap and end the deployment of SARS. Within the little time the hashtag #EndSARS was created, it gained massive frequency and currency as many Nigerians began to post online horrible experiences they encountered with the men of the SARS. The social movement also gained the attention of the international media as many of them began to give its media coverage.

With both nationwide and global support, the social movement received, and pressure mounted on the federal government to address the issue of police brutality and extra judicial killings, the federal government called for the immediate overhauling of the police unit in response to the reports of human rights violation. The national head of the Nigerian Police Force, the Inspector General of Police was given an order by the presidency to embark on reforming the police unit and was to investigate the various complaints and allegations leveled against some of the officers of the unit. Of course, certain reforms were carried out, among which included the decentralization of SARS from the force headquarters in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

However, little difference was made by these reforms as the officers of the SARS continued to brutalize the citizens, grossly violate their rights, intimidate, and harass Nigerians and kill innocent citizens. This came to crescendo in October 2020 when a young Nigerian was murdered in cold blood in the front of the Wetland Hotel, Ughelli, Delta State, in the South-south geopolitical zone of the country. Videos of this gruesome killing were all over everywhere as it trended on the social media. With no time, this gathered momentum as the protests moved from online to the streets and leading to nationwide protests. Of course, the protests gained massive awareness following the coming in and involvement of certain popular social media influencers, among whom were Rinu, FK, Kelvin Odanz, Dr. Dipo Awojide and many others.

Unique and spectacular about the protests was the critical and central role played by the social media, especially Twitter and Facebook. The advent of the Global System of Mobile (GSM) meant bypassing the traditional media (it could not be relied upon due to shortcomings and limitations associated with it regarding its freedom and facilitating a robust participatory democracy) by organizers and participants of the social movement. Hence, for the organizers and participants of these protests, the social media constituted a public sphere for political awareness, mobilization, meaningful discussion on national issues, holding the government and its official accountable.

However, getting to know the various ways to which the social media was deployed, for what purposes during the protests and its impacts on the success of the social movement, involves us conducting sample surveys. That is, taking out a sample population from the universal population to be studied. Our objective in this section is therefore finding how the Twitter was deployed for political activities during the EndSARS mass protest, whether the social media constituted a public sphere for the mass movement, whether it provided an alternative voice for social and political activists in Nigeria during the protests,

As stated in the previous chapter, this research also sourced its data through administering questionnaires on the deliberately selected respondents. Coupled with the about interviews, this sample survey further helped us to know the views of the participants and those involved in the EndSARS protests on the big role played by the social media (Twitter) played in the protests. That is, taking out a sample population from the universal population to be studied. Hence, several relevant questions were asked to answer the objectives and research questions raised by this research. The survey, as stated earlier on, covered 6 states of the federation (one each from the six geopolitical zones), with 150 respondents (50 each from the 3 senatorial districts) in each state. This helps to give our findings a national outlook and high precision level.

4.2. Questionnaire

A summary of the social background of the sample is presented in the table below.

Table 1: Social and Economic Characteristics of the Sample

Number of people surveyed	900
Male/Female Ratio	54.5%, 24.5%
Median Age	45
Occupation	
Students	35%
Unemployed	30%
Artisan	15%
Security Personnel	5%
Others	15%
Geopolitical Zones	
South West	16.6%
South East	16.6%
South South	16.6%
North West	16.6%
North East	16.6%
North Central (Abuja)	16.6%

4.3. The Twitter deployed for socio-political activities during the EndSARS mass protest.

Our findings affirm the fact that the social media was massively used for various socio-political activities by the organizers and participants of the EndSARS Protests which was primarily precipitated by police brutality and highhandedness of the state security apparatus in the country. The protest derived its name from the slogan that started in 2017 as a Twitter awareness and campaign against police brutality and gross violation of citizens' right and has the hashtag EndSARS. The Twitter was effectively used for various political activities during the EndSARS Protests, and this was as result of the liberal nature of the social media. And that of all the various social media platforms the Twitter seems to enjoy most popularity as it was extensively deployed by the participants of the mass movement for various political activities. This extensive use of the Twitter and other social media was propelled and driven by the large access to cell phones and the internet by many Nigerians, especially the youths.

This driver of the social media is given credence to by the International Telecommunication Union, ITU (2013) which suggests that Nigeria has the highest percentage rate of mobile phone penetration and internet usage in Africa. Hence, it isn't a surprise the extensive use of the Twitter during the EndSARS Protests for various political activities in the country.

The massive popularity received by the social media, especially the Twitter was also as result of the undue government influence over the traditional media, many of which were reluctant in giving the mass protest a wide coverage. Prior to the mass movement, the government has been accused by the opposition parties and many of its critics of intolerance to views and opinions that are critical of its various socio-economic and political policies, decisions and programs. The strict rules under which the traditional media (both electronic and print) operate, the frequent clampdown on media houses and harassment, arrest and even killing of journalists by suspected state security agencies relatively hampered its capacity to provide the platform for Nigerians to air their critical voices against the government, its agencies, decisions, policies and programs. The organizers and participants in the EndSARS protest had no confidence in this media to provide a platform for unhindered and unmediated political discourse, debates and to raise political consciousness, awareness, efficacy, and mobilization.

On the question on "where did you know about the EndSARS Protests"? majority of our respondents said they got to know about the protests on different social media. 65% of our respondents said they heard about the protests on the social media, while 40% said they heard it on the traditional mass media- 10% from the television, 15% through the radio and 10% on the newspapers.

Table 2: Where did you know about the EndSARS Protests?

	Respondents (%)
Television	10
Radio	15
Newspaper	10
Social Media	65

Our respondents were also asked on which of the social media platforms they mostly follow to share and get information and updates on the EndSARS Protests. 55% mentioned Twitter, 15% went for WhatsApp, 5% for Instagram and 25% mentioned FACEBOOK.

Table 3: On which social media platform were most active during the protests?

	Respondents (%)
WhatsApp	15
Instagram	5
FACEBOOK	25
Twitter	55

Our respondents were also asked whether agree that Nigerians were able to discuss and share their views on police brutality and violations of Nigerians rights by the security officers in the country. To this question, overwhelming majority, 70% strongly agreed while 2% strongly disagreed.

Table 4: Do agree that Nigerians were able to discuss and share their views on police brutality and violation of Nigerians rights by the security officers in the country?

	Respondents (%)
Strongly Agreed	70
Agreed	22
Strongly Disagreed	2
Disagreed	8

We also asked our respondents whether they agreed that the EndSARS Protests received more coverage on the social media than on the traditional media (both print and electronics). Again, to this question, 70% strongly agreed while 4% strongly disagreed.

Table 5: Do agree that the EndSARS Protests received more coverage on the social media than on the traditional news media?

	Respondents (%)
Strongly Agreed	70
Agreed	22
Strongly Disagreed	4
Disagreed	4

Our respondents were also asked whether they agreed that social media was massively used by the organizers and participants of the EndSARS protests because it was relatively free from the control of and manipulation by the government. Again 70% agreed while 3% strongly disagreed 2%.

Table 6: Do you agree that social media was massively used by the organizers and participants of the EndSARS Protests because it was relatively free from the control of and manipulation by the government?

	Respondents (%)
Strongly Agreed	70
Agreed	22
Strongly Disagreed	3
Disagreed	5

4.4. The social media as a public sphere

The whole of essence of the concept of public sphere lies in providing a democratic environment that allows individuals to gather to freely discuss, deliberate, and identify issues and matters as they concern the society with the aim of influencing political decisions. It abhors the dominance of the public communication by the government and encourages the democratization of the inputs that produce political decisions. Hence, the public sphere, according to Jurgen Haberman (1991), is "made up of private people gathered together as a public and articulating the needs of society with the state".

The social media, like the mass media, gives to the individuals a democratic platform to freely gather as a public to discuss and express their thoughts, ideas, views, and opinions on issues of national importance. Based on the various questions we asked, our respondents suggest that the social media constitutes a public sphere in Nigeria.

For instance, our respondents were asked whether they agree that, with the evolvement of the social media, more Nigerians have been more politically active in the political process of their country. To this question, 65% strongly agreed, 20% agreed,

Table 7: Do you agree that, with the evolvement of the social media, more Nigerians have been more politically active in the political process of their country?

	Respondents (%)
Strongly Agreed	65
Agreed	20
Strongly Disagreed	5
Disagreed	10

We also asked them whether they agree that the social media allows for a free exchange of ideas, views and opinions on the socio-economic and political issues in the country. 68% strongly agreed to the question while 4% strongly disagreed.

Table 8: Do you agree that the social media allow for a free exchange of ideas, views and opinions on the socio-economic and political issues in the country?

	Respondents (%)
Strongly Agreed	68
Agreed	20
Strongly Disagreed	4
Disagreed	12

65% of our respondents strongly agreed that the social media can contribute in developing the discussion and the public debates. However, 12% strongly disagree.

Table 9: The social media can contribute to developing the discussion and the public debates.

	Respondents (%)
Strongly Agreed	65
Agreed	20
Strongly Disagreed	12
Disagreed	3

Our respondents were also asked whether they agree that the social media have contributed to the democratization of the Nigerian society by creating an environment suitable discussion and agreements

among Nigerians and between Nigerians and public officials. To this question 80% strongly agreed while 3% strongly disagreed.

Table.10: Do agree that social media have contributed to the democratization of the Nigerian society by creating an environment suitable for discussion and agreements among Nigerians and between Nigerians and public officials?

	Respondents (%)
Strongly Agreed	80
Agreed	10
Strongly Disagreed	3
Disagreed	7

Concerning the liberal and democratic nature of the social media, 75% of respondents strongly agreed that the social media eliminate the dominance of the Nigerian government over the public communication, while 3% strongly disagreed.

Table 11: The social media eliminate the dominance of the Nigerian government over the public communication.

	Respondents (%)
Strongly Agreed	75
Agreed	18
Strongly Disagreed	3
Disagreed	7

Since the social media is believed enjoys relative freedom and free from the dominance of the government, majority of our respondents strongly believe that it provides an alternative political voice for social and political activists. It creates an opportunity to bypass and not to rely heavily on the traditional media for information about the government, its officers, its policies and alternative narratives to that of the government. In this case, 80% of the respondents strongly agreed that the social media provides an alternative political voice for both the social and political activists and 2% strongly disagreed.

Table 12: Do you agree that social media provides an alternative political voice for both social and political activists?

	Respondents (%)
Strongly Agreed	80
Agreed	16
Strongly Disagreed	2
Disagreed	2

Considering the role played by the social media (especially the Twitter) in creating awareness for the protests and providing a platform for Nigerians to deliberate and discuss the matter of police brutality and other related matters, majority of correspondents strongly agreed that the social media constitutes a public sphere. Through the Twitter lots of Nigerian youths were able to relay and share the horrible experiences they had with the operatives of the SARS. Several evidence, including pictures and videos were twitted and re-twitted on the Twitter platform.

Table 13: The social media, by providing the platform for creating awareness on and deliberating and discussing police brutality and other related matters, constitutes a public sphere.

	Respondents (%)
Strongly agreed	90
Agree	8.0
Strongly disagree	1.0
Disagree	1.0

Our respondents were also asked questions bordering on the social media being an effective tool and alternative for political awareness and mobilization for protests and demonstrations. Questions were asked on how effective the social media was in creating and raising the political awareness of Nigerians towards organizing and mobilizing for the EndSARS mass protests.

Table 14: The social media (Twitter) effectively helped in creating and raising awareness of Nigerians and mobilizing for protests and demonstrations.

	Respondents (%)
Strongly agreed	80.0
Agree	10.0
Strongly disagree	4.0
Disagree	6.0

Majority of our respondents held the opinion that human rights and social activists, party oppositions and the citizens generally have in social media an alternative platform to independently source for information, get their messages and views across to the public. They have this sense of security and freedom regarding the social media providing an alternative to the traditional media which faces certain limitations in freely disseminating information, views, and opinions contrary to the status quo. They attributed the success recorded by the EndSARS protests to this feature of the social media.

Table 15: The social media (Twitter) provides an alternative political awareness and mobilization for human rights and social activists and citizens generally.

	Respondents (%)
Strongly agreed	80.0
Agree	12.0
Strongly disagree	2.0
Disagree	6.0

When our respondents were asked on their view concerning the citizens being able to hold their governments and leaders (both elected and appointed) accountable through the social media, overwhelming majority were affirmative. For instance, 80 percent strongly agreed that, through the social media, citizens can pile up pressure on their government and leaders and hold them accountable for their actions.

Table 16: social media creates an avenue and empower citizens to hold their government and leaders accountable.

	Respondents (%)
Strongly agreed	80.0
Agree	12.0
Strongly disagree	2.0
Disagree	6.0

Majority of the respondents (65%) strongly agreed that the EndSARS Protests was a huge success and 10% of the respondents strongly disagreed.

Table 17: Do you agree that the EndSARS Protests recorded some huge successes?

	Respondents (%)
Strongly agreed	65.0
Agree	5.0
Strongly disagree	10.0
Disagree	20.0

4.5. Police Brutality, Gross Violation of Citizens' Rights and Underlining Socio-economic and Political Problems Precipitated EndSARS Protests

On the question on the reason (s) for the EndSARS protests, the general view was that the habitual gross abuse of the fundamental human rights of Nigerians, majority of whom youths were, by the Nigerian police was responsible for the protests. Overwhelming majority (90 %) of the respondents linked the protest to the incessant horrible and gruesome experiences Nigerians have had with the notorious special unit of the Nigerian Police Force, the Special Anti-robbery Squad (SARS).

Table 18: The EndSARS was because of the gross abuse of Nigerians’ rights by the men and officers of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad, (SARS)

	Respondents (%)
Strongly agreed	90
Agree	7.0
Strongly disagree	2.0
Disagree	1.0

Furthermore, 85% of our respondents agreed that the officers and men of the SARS incessantly flagrantly abused the fundamental human rights of several Nigerians and engaged in nefarious, including extra judicial killing. To this same question, 2% of our respondents strongly disagreed.

Table 19: The officers and men of the SARS have incessantly flagrantly abused the fundamental human rights of several Nigerians and engaged in nefarious, including extra judicial killing.

	Respondents (%)
Strongly agreed	85.0
Agree	9.0
Strongly disagree	2.0
Disagree	4.0

Convincing majority (85%) was of the view that the federal government largely failed to respond appropriately to the public cry on the need to address these abuses by the men of the SARS. They agreed that the protests came to being at a point when the nefarious activities, which included extra judicial killings, became unbearable and a national embarrassment. An extreme small size of the respondent (10%) was of the view that government had taken some steps and reforms to reform the Nigerian Police Force generally.

Table 20: The Federal Government of Nigeria, despite the public cry over the need to address the issue of abuses of Nigerians’ rights by the officers and men of the SARS, failed to respond appropriately.

	Respondents (%)
Strongly agreed	85.0
Agree	6.0
Strongly disagree	7.0
Disagree	3.0

A large size of the respondents was of the view that, besides the police brutality, the protests were fueled by embedded issues like poverty, increasing rates of unemployment, insecurity and violence, repressive and anti-people policies. The socio-economic and political situation, from the views of these respondents, created a misery, frustrations, hopelessness, a sense of deprivation and disconnect between the citizens and the government. Hence, 90% of them agreed that this socio-economic and political situation created and added fuel to the EndSARS mass protests.

Table 21: Poor government performance as manifested in increasing poverty rates, hunger, rising unemployment, insecurity for lives and property further fueled the EndSARS protests.

	Respondents (%)
Strongly agreed	90
Agree	8.0
Strongly disagree	1.0
Disagree	1.0

4.6. INTERVIEW

In this section we shall present the findings of the interviews conducted. We conducted interviews to compliment the data collected through the questionnaires. While collecting data using questionnaires are cost effective, time-efficient, and easy objective evaluation, personal interviews tend to provide detailed information about the research questions with some sort of statistical precision. They afford us the opportunity to unveil the story marking participants' involvements and experiences and detailed information on the research questions set out to be answered. They enabled us to do follow up with individual respondents whom questionnaires had been administered (McNamara, 1999).

We asked open-ended questions during the interviews to improve our chances of extracting unbiased responses from the interviewees. To manage adequately manage the direction and focus of the interviews, closed ended questions were also asked from the participants (Creswell, 2012; McNamara, 1999).

To maintain some consistency, we were guided by certain guidelines while conducting the interview. For instance, we carefully identified the would-be interviewees (30 were selected), decided on the type of interviews we would use, audiotape was provided for recording the questions and responses, brief notes were also taken during the interview, a clement and comfortable environment was provided for the interviewees, the consents of the interviewees were also obtained, etc.

Furthermore, the interviewees were promised that their identities and privacies would be protected and would not be exposed to any risk of retribution because of the interviews. Hence, to protect their privacies and while satisfying the basic requirements and conditionalities of documentation of the research, we only identified these interviewees by their common names and numbers. In addition to their common names are their roles in the political development especially the EndSARS Protests and their status in the society were mentioned. Below is a brief information about some of the individuals interviewed for the purpose of this research work:

Interviewee 1, student union leader in University of Lagos, UNILAG.

Interviewee 4, an Economic graduate job seeker from Ota, Ogun State

Interviewee 3, a prominent social media influencer in Abuja, the nation's federal capital.

Interviewee 2: Former student union leader from Benin City, the capital of Edo State, a state in Southern Nigeria.

Interviewee 5: An undergraduate student in the department of Political Science, University of Abuja

Interviewee 6: A medical doctor in Lagos

Interviewee 7: A Caterer in Port Harcourt, the capital of Rivers State in Southern Nigeria

4.6.1. The Twitter deployed for political activities during the EndSARS mass protest.

We asked our interviewees what prompted their involvement and participation in the EndSARS Protests and what political activities was the Twitter deployed for and many gave different but related reasons for their participation. For some, that would be the first time they would be participating in protests and getting involved in the political process of their country. Many of the interviewees also confirmed that the social media helped in raising their political consciousness and awareness. For instance, one of the interviewees has this say when asked what prompted their involvement in the protests:

According to Interviewee 1 “With the little or no control of the Nigerian government over the social media we had a sense of freedom and liberty to freely express our misgivings and displeasure towards the incessant harassment, intimidation, illegal arrests and even killing of Nigerian youths by the Nigerian Police Force. While this has unfortunately been going on before now, the government failed to address the issue of police brutality and gross violation of the fundamental human rights of Nigerians by the dreaded SARS, a special unit of the Nigerian Police Force created to fight armed robbery in the country. Twitter provided for us what the traditional media couldn’t offer us and that is a platform to raise the political awareness and consciousness among the Nigerian youths and free from undue influence of the government”.

For Interviewee 4,

“I had always been apathetic and indifference towards the politics with no interest in the political process of the country. However, I became political conscious and aware through engagement and interaction with many other Nigerian youths who are heavily present on the social media, especially twitter. Prior to the EndSARS mass protest I had mainly used Twitter to transact business, source for and relate with clients for various products which I market. However, with the EndSARS protest, I was able to engage with other concerned youths on discourse on the brutality of the Nigerian Police Force and other security agencies and other prevailing socio-economic and political issues as they affect Nigerian youths. For instance, I became more aware of the issue of corruption among both elected and appointed government officials, the impacts of corruption on the wellbeing and welfare of Nigerian citizens and the link between corruption and infrastructural deficits that bedevil the Nigerian state. I got to know all this through some politically aware youths, some active youth leaders and professionals who used the Twitter to educate, raise political consciousness and mobilize myself and other youths towards political action”.

On what and how the social media was deployed during the protests, Interviewee 3 had this to say, the Twitter was used “for sharing politically relevant information about the government, educating protesters on the socio-economic and political happenings in the country, and on their fundamental human rights such as the right to protest, freedom of speech and expression, association and assembly, etc. We also educate protesters on the need for peaceful protests so as to not give to the government any legitimate excuse and opportunity to deploy its instrument of violence on the protesters. This we successfully did our protest ground.”

For Interviewee 2 says, “During the EndSARS mass protest I and some of other youths within our community effectively used the Twitter to solicit and raise funds and other materials which were needed to mobilize youths for the protests and sustain the spirit of the social movement. With the fund raised, we were able to buy vests, caps, arm and wrist band which we branded with inscriptions speaking and appealing to course of the EndSARS protest and prevailing socio-economic and political situations in the country. These were used as souvenirs and distributed to participants of the EndSARS protests to wear and brandish on protest grounds. We also used some of the funds raised to print and paste posters and placards to further raise awareness. Through the Twitter we were able to get across to some individuals and organizations to appeal for food and drinks for participants on protest grounds. We were also able to get the service of some Nigerian musicians and DJs who entertained and treated protesters to different songs, especially songs by the late Afro music legend, Fela Anikulapo-Kuti,

whose songs exposed the bad governance which has always characterized the Nigerian government. Fela's songs didn't not only help in sustaining the spirit of the protests but also educated protesters (most of whom weren't born while Fela was alive) on bad governance and maladministration which Nigeria is historically known for."

Interviewee 1, who played an active role in the organization and coordination of the mass protests, also added that: "Twitter played at least three critical roles in EndSARS mass protests. It was deployed for coordination of the various activities which are critical to the success of the protests, catching and attracting global attention for the protests and calling out and exposing the government, prominent individuals in the corridors of power who are against the protests and the will of the people. We effectively and actively use the Twitter to share and spread information on concerning protests venues, give protesters update information about the progress and new development about the protests and also breaking news within and outside Nigeria. To catch and attract global attention and increase the intensity of the mass protests, several hashtags (for instance, #EndSARS, #endPoliceBrutality, #SARSMUSTEnd, etc.) were created. This helped to give a wider coverage of the protests and conversations on the state of the nation. Through tweeting and retweeting, celebrities and social media influencers used many of these hashtags to amplify the conversations around the protests and the general socio-economic and political situations in the country. All this would have been difficult or even impossible without the Twitter."

Interviewee 5 also shares her experience during the protests and how effective Twitter was in engaging, sensitizing, and mobilizing fellow students for participation in the protests. According to him:

"We deliberated on the social disconnect between the government and the yearnings of the citizens which manifested in the refusal of the government to address the issue of police brutality in the country. We have gotten to a point where we the youth could no longer bear harassment by these notorious police unit. We are profiled by the SARS as criminals and our rights are grossly violated, molested, extorted, illegally arrested, and detained and forceful and unlawful dispossession of our property, which include physical cash. There were also several cases of killing of innocent Nigerians in different parts of the country and the youth constituted most of these victims. Hence, a young undergraduate, I saw the EndSARS protests as call to duty to fight for the rights of young people in the country and was ready to sacrifice everything within my reach. Through the Twitter I got across to many fellow students, educated on what the social protest was all about and sensitized them towards seeing an end to police brutality in the country by participating in the protests. I also encouraged those students who might

have been grossly abused by the SARS to share their experiences on Twitter and a great number of them did.”

For Feyikemi ‘FK’ Abudu, a member of the Feminist Coalition, the role of Twitter in the success of the protests lies in the way it was deployed for fund raising to run the protests and supports participants. According to her,

“In collaboration with some individuals, I was able to use Twitter to raise funds to seek the release several protesters arrested during the protests, disburse funds for the treatment of injured protesters and also, the feeding of protesters.”

Still on the various ways the social media was deployed during the protests, Obianuju Catherine Ude, A.K.A. DJ Switch,

“I live-streamed the Lekki protests on Instagram on the evening of October 20, affording those who were not at the scene of action the opportunity to have a glimpse of what was going on at the protest ground”.

For Interviewee 6, it was about using the Twitter to provide medical attention and treatment for protesters. She said,

“I am a medical doctor and very committed to these protests and making my contribution to the success of the protests. Through twitter I was able to mobilize like-mind medical doctors and health workers to attend to the medical needs of the protesters. During the protests I shared information about where to get medical assistance via my Twitter handle while also mobilizing other health workers to join the cause”.

On why she joined the protests, Interviewee 7 said:

“While buying groceries at the market, I remembered how, in 2019, SARS raided some boys in the compound and they wouldn’t let us out of the compound, as much as we tried to explain to them that we were not involved. While trying to explain, one of them cocked his gun and pointed it at me. I was very scared that day. This memory prompted me to join these protests police brutality and extra judicial killings by officers of the SARS. At the first day that I cooked I went online and asked people that I needed who could assist me. The response was amazing, and it prompted me to do more. I donated cash, foodstuff, water, brought cars for delivery.”

On the concerns and criticisms identified with the social media, especially those said to be detrimental to democracy, political stability, peace, and unity of the country.

To these questions our findings also confirm the concerns and criticisms that are generally often raised against the social media vis-a-vis its certain detrimental effects on democracy, political stability and peace and unity of the polity, especially deeply divided countries like Nigeria. With little or no control over the information and news content of the social media by the Nigerian government, our findings confirm cases of cyber bully, wide spread of fake and false news on the Twitter primarily aimed at influencing public optic of the government and its decisions, policies and programs. We also confirm the use and spread of hate, factitious and divisive information which were capable of further opening ethno-religious fault lines in the country. Interviewee 1 stated that:

"To counter the propaganda and lies being spread by the government on publicly owned media and private media owned by certain individuals in or with connection to government, we had to spread fake and false news to tarnish discredit and the image of the government before the public and to enjoy both local and international sympathies and supports for the EndSARS protests. Several images and pictures were doctored to suit our narratives and were widely spread through twitting and re-twitting by on the Twitter. We also tried to curse, harass, and intimidate online certain individuals who seem to be sympathetic to the government."

The wider support given to the mass protests by celebrities locally and globally is an attestation to how effective and active the Twitter was during the mass movement. Celebrities, ranging from footballers to singers and artistes, both locally and globally joined the conversations around the protests and expressed support and solidarity for protesters and appealed to government to attend to their demands. On the list of local celebrities include Wizkid, Falz, Femi Anikulapo Kuti, Seun Anikulapo Kuti, popular Yoruba actors like Yomi Fabiyi, Adeniyi Johnson, and many others. On the list of the international celebrities include American pop singers Beyonce Knowles, Rihanna, Estelle, Trey Songz, Chance the Rapper, Nigerian footballer Odion Ighalo, the British-Nigerian world heavy weight boxer Anthony Joshua, actor John Boyega and the rest.

On her Twitter handle, Beyonce had this say:

"I am heartbroken to see the senseless brutality taking place in Nigeria. There must be an end to SARS. We have been working on partnerships with youth organizations to support those protesting for change. We are collaborating with coalitions to provide emergency healthcare, food, and shelter. To our Nigerian sisters and brothers, we stand with you." (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-54629449.amp>)

4.6.2. Social media as a public sphere

Our findings also establish the fact that the social media, in this case the Twitter, constitutes a public sphere during the EndSARS mass protests. The Twitter provided a platform, not only to express misgivings and displeasure towards the brutality of the Nigerian Police Force, but also for rational debates and discourse on important political matters that bother on governance in Nigeria. It serves as a platform for driving and promoting democracy and its values such as freedoms and liberties, human rights and justices, socio-political inclusivity. It satisfies Nigerians hungers for an open and free space where they can openly and freely discuss, debate and exchange views, opinions and beliefs on relevant political matters. Twitter creates for protester a platform for a common concern among protesters and devoid of status but an inclusive participation on rational discourse, debates and exchange of ideas, views, opinions and beliefs. It made protesters, not a consumer of news but a newsmaker.

According to Interviewee 1,

“Twitter, during the EndSARS mass protests, afforded me the opportunity to engage with several young Nigerians on socio-economic and political challenges bedeviling Nigeria. We discussed and debated on relevant contemporary political matters bedeviling Nigeria among which are corruption, kidnapping, Boko Haram insurgency and banditry in the North east, herdsmen-farmer crisis, tribalism and nepotism, ethno-religious marginalization which seem to characterize the Buhari-APC-led government, political passivity of many Nigerian youths, the worrisome growing intolerance of the government to views and opinions critical of the government and its decisions, policies and programs, I also engaged with others, through the Twitter, the thorny issue of Nigerian federalism, which many of the discussants I engaged with agreed that it characterized with so much imperfection and that solving many of the problems facing Nigeria required getting restructuring the country along a true federalism.”

Similarly, Interviewee 6,

“The Twitter is amazingly distinct from the traditional media in terms of the freedom and right granted to Nigerians to freely express their views and opinions on the government and its decisions, policies and programs. Unlike the traditional media, the Twitter, during the EndSARS mass protests, constituted an open, inclusive and free social space for discourse on the myriad of socio-economic and political challenges that are facing the country. The platform aided participatory democracy in the sense that all one needed to hook up for discussion and debates with other like minds on the state of the nation was just an android phone connected to the internet and this was affordable by millions of the participants of the EndSARS protests. The government has little or no control over the Twitter and its news content,

hence individuals was never afraid of being arrested, harassed, and intimidated. Rather waiting to be fed with news favorable to the government, individuals are newsmaker themselves.”

With the Twitter representing a public sphere for rational debates and discussion on government’s decisions, policies and programs, Nigerians are better placed to question their leaders and hold them accountable for their actions or inactions. This played out during and after the EndSARS mass movement when federal government was compelled to take certain decisions and address some salient matters thrown up by the protests. This is the view expressed by Interviewee 5. According to her:

“Though the federal government didn’t really attend to several of the demands raised by protesters during the protests, the decision to eventually ban the loathed Special Anti- Robbery Squad (SARS) and the decision by some state to set up panels of inquiry into cases of alleged violation of human rights by the SARS gave the protesters some sense of victory and the impression that we the social media provide an alternative platform to demand greater accountability from their leaders.”

For Aisha Yesufu, one of the most prominent leaders of the protests and a co-founder of the Bring Back Our Girls Movement, the social media constituted a public sphere. According to her,

“On Twitter I had the opportunity of meeting, interacting and engaging with many brilliant Nigerian youths. I was amazed by their high level of intelligence as reflected in the quality of discourses they engaged in. They engaged me on different social-economic and political issues that were of national significant. Twitter thus afforded many of them the platform to gather, interact and relate together, articulate, share and exchange views on the socio-economic and political situation in the country. This they freely do without any fear, intimidation, and harassment by government security agents as the government had little or no control over the public sphere provided by Twitter”.

4.6.3. The social media provide an alternative voice for and political activists in Nigeria.

Social media is so much celebrated in free societies mainly because of the alternative it has created for individuals, communities, and organizations vis-à-vis information about their government, the people, and other developments in the society. Prior to the emergence of social media, what citizens get to read about their government and happenings within their society was purely the prerogative of the traditional media. This was also the case in Nigeria where the traditional media hitherto exercised an unlimited and unbridled power to determine what worth reporting and publishing. Pre social media era was an era few, but powerful journalists had the sole power to create and kill information. As a matter of fact, it was an era where the media was readily more at the service and mercy of the powerful, the dominant, the voiceful and less for powerless and dominated and voiceless.

Hence, the social media are seen as liberalizing the information and communication industry by providing an alternative for accessing and creating information as it affects individuals, communities and organizations.

Hence, one participant clearly stated in the interview that:

“Now we have in the social media an alternative communication channel for bringing to the public space what the government loves hiding from the citizens. Through the social media we expose the corruption among both the elected and appointed public officers and mobilized against them. We are able to expose the government and mount pressure on it against any anti-people decisions, policies and programs.”

Another interviewee 3 has this to say:

“On social media platforms, especially the Twitter, Nigerians get educated about the budget of the federal government and that of each state of the federation. In a simple language, the national and state budgets are simplified, deliberated, critiqued and discussed in a way that Nigerians can easily understand. With this Nigerians are encouraged monitor the implementation of the budget and ultimately holding their leaders accountable.”

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

This research work has examined the role of the social media in creating political awareness and mobilization for social protests in Nigeria, with a case of the EndSARS Protests. It established that the social media constitutes a public sphere which provides an alternative for citizens to converse, deliberate, discuss, and express their views on the social and political matters in the country. It focused on the role Twitter played in the EndSARS Protests which was embarked upon on 23 October 2020, mostly organized and led by young Nigerians as, initially as an expression against police brutality and later, as demand for good governance. Most importantly, the research established that social media plays critical role in democracy and deepening and consolidating democracy.

The research work heavily relied on a theoretical framework important to explain relevant concepts- public sphere, democracy, social movement, and social media. From the data gathered and analyzed, it was established that Twitter is a relatively free and liberal platform for people to converse, deliberate, discuss and express their views. Unlike the traditional media, it was established that the government has little or no control over the social media. Participants in the protest freely debated, deliberated on socio-economic and political matters, socialized and educated themselves about the politics of the country and shared news and experiences concerning the political situation in the country. All this they believed couldn't be possible by relying on the traditional media.

Through its theoretical framework, this research work also established that the ability of the social media to promote political awareness and unity of purposes regarding making government accountable and responsive to the agitations of the people. As a public space, it provided a platform which brought together, with a unity of purpose, Nigerians from different socio-cultural background for a constructive conversation on the political development in the country. Here, it was the message that really matters and not the messengers.

It was also established that, though protesters were united in their agitation during the protest, there was some level of intimidation, harassment and the use of abusive language against some individuals who have contrary opinions and views regarding the protest. These individuals were seen as working against the collective interest and objective of the protests, they were defined as pro-government and betrayal. The social media was full of all kinds negative languages targeted at this people.

There was also concern over the nation's national security as the government alleged foreign sponsorship and interference. The government accused the foreign sponsorship as meddling into the

domestic affairs of the country and was an affront on the territorial 33integrity and sovereignty of the country. There was also concern over the implication of this on the fight against insurgency which the country has been battling with. This informed the subsequent clampdown on some of the organizers of the protest and freezing of the dedicated account for funding of the protest. The government also accused the protesters of being sponsored by some major political opposition to the government.



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