



Democratisation, Political Inclusion, and Systemic Justice: The Effects of Youth Movements on Social and Political Change in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examines the effects of youth movements on social and political change in Nigeria, using the student movement in the 1980s/90s, the #NotTooYoungToRun movement (2016–date), and the #EndSARS movement (2017–2020) as case studies. Eight activists actively involved in these movements were interviewed, and the interview findings were complemented with data from various secondary sources, including the academic literature, social media posts, civil society publications, and media reports. Using a social constructionist lens and leveraging the theories of framing and political opportunity structure, the study found that, despite wider structural issues, youth movements have driven change in relation to democratisation, political inclusion, and systemic justice. In the process of driving these changes, youth consciousness has also increased. The study highlights the collective power of Nigerian youth and emphasises the need for sustained efforts to drive more substantive changes in the country. On a broader level, the study also shows how young people organise to effect change, fighting against state violations and pushing for the realisation of their human rights. These insights are valuable for activists, researchers, policymakers, and all those interested in advancing human rights.

Keywords: youth movements, movement outcomes, social change, political change

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List of Abbreviations

CSO	Civil Society Organisation
FCT	Federal Capital Territory
NANS	National Association of Nigerian Students
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NLC	Nigeria Labour Congress
NUNS	National Union of Nigerian Students
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SARS	Special Anti-Robbery Squad
SWAT	Special Weapons and Tactics

1 Introduction

In its recent past, Nigeria, like many other African countries, has progressed from colonial rule, and later military rule, to democracy. This trajectory has been significantly influenced by social movements, from the nationalist movements that challenged colonial rule in the 1940s/50s to the anti-authoritarian movements in the 1980s/90s that expelled the military leaders. In the current democratic dispensation, which began in 1999, social movements continue to address various issues relating to, among others, democratic consolidation, anti-corruption, poverty alleviation, economic growth, gender equality, transparency and accountability, and political and social inclusion.

Youth, which constitute the largest demographic in Nigeria (National Population Commission, 2020), have played key roles in these social movements throughout Nigeria's history. In the colonial era, youth formed the Nigerian Youth Movement, which later transformed to a political party (Arifalo, 1986). Also in that era, student movements, under the umbrella of the larger West African Student Union, and later the National Union of Nigerian Students (NUNS), challenged the policies of the colonial government and called for independence (Odion-Akhaine, 2009). In the military era, the student movement under NUNS, later rebranded as the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS), also challenged the policies of the military government and, especially in the 1990s, demanded a return to democracy (Adejumobi, 2000; Odion-Akhaine, 2009).

In contemporary times, numerous youth movements have emerged in Nigeria. Examples are the #OccupyNigeria movement, which demanded the reinstatement of fuel subsidies; the #NotTooYoungToRun movement, which demanded a reduction of the age requirements to run for certain elective offices; and the #EndSARS movement, which called for the disbandment of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) unit of the Nigerian police and an end to police brutality. Against the context of these numerous youth movements in various phases of Nigeria's history, it is imperative to explore how, and to what extent, youth movements have driven change in the country. Such an exploration is the focus of this study.

1.1 Scope of the Research

This study analyses three youth movements in Nigeria: the student movement in the 1980s/90s, the #NotTooYoungToRun movement (2016–date), and the #EndSARS movement (2017–2020). The first movement was chosen due to its advocacy against the military. Since the transition from military rule to democratic rule in 1999 was a key milestone in the history of

Nigeria that significantly affected the trajectory of the country, analysing the student movement in the 1980s/90s can provide insights on the effects of youth movements on change in the country.

The second and third movements – #NotTooYoungToRun and #EndSARS – were chosen for their contemporary relevance. These movements are particularly significant because they were organised and led largely by youth (unlike the #OccupyNigeria movement, for example, which was led by not only youth but also other groups – notably the Nigeria Labour Congress [NLC]). Thus, analysing the #NotTooYoungToRun and #EndSARS movements will provide useful insights on youth movements in Nigeria.

Additionally, unlike other youth movements in Nigeria that may be regional or sectional, the three movements outlined above united youth across the country. Thus, they serve as useful case studies to demonstrate the collective power of young Nigerians. Although the student movement operated in a vastly different time period compared to the #NotTooYoungToRun and #EndSARS movements, Nigerian youth in the 1980s/90s and Nigerian youth in contemporary times have faced similar conditions of socio-economic exclusion.¹ Moreover, despite the different political contexts (military rule versus democracy), there is a similar theme of state repression, which is attributable to the long history of military rule in Nigeria and the legacy of authoritarianism that has seeped into democratic rule (Ijomah, 2000; Fasakin, 2015). Thus, these three movements have comparative value. More information about the movements is provided in Section 5.1.

Since movements can drive change in highly diverse ways, the study is specifically focused on social and political change. The selected movements will illustrate how youth have organised to drive social and political change in Nigeria, providing insights into the power and potential of youth movements.

1.2 Relevance of the Research

Research has shown that change does not happen by chance; it is driven by the collective actions of individuals and groups through social movements (Crutchfield, 2018; Nardini et al.,

¹ For example, Amzat and Abdullahi (2016) explain that, from the 1980s, Nigerian youth started to face political and economic marginalisation, in part due to the adverse effects of the Structural Adjustment Programme (see also Akor, 2017, p. 110). As noted in Section 2.1, Nigerian youth today continue to face exclusion.

2021). Yet, the effects of movements on change are rarely studied, even though achieving change is often the primary aim of movements (Giugni, 1999, p. xv). Moreover, the demographic strength of youth, especially in African countries, and their tendency to participate through movements rather than traditional forms of political engagement (see Section 2.1), suggests that youth movements deserve special scholarly attention. Accordingly, this study will provide relevant insights on the effects of youth movements on change.

Exploring how youth movements have driven change in Nigeria offers valuable contributions to the field of human rights. I have refrained from categorising these youth movements as human rights movements because local activists do not exclusively use human rights language in articulating their demands.² However, the very act of participating in a social movement is a human rights issue, as it is a means through which the right to participate in public affairs is realised. Moreover, the issues being advocated for by these movements are all human rights issues, even if they are not necessarily framed as such by the activists.³

Thus, the study of youth movements in Nigeria holds significance for the field of human rights because it shows how young people organise to both protest the violations of their rights and advocate for their rights to be upheld by the state. This is in recognition of the fact that social movements contribute to the advancement of human rights by challenging power structures and implementing bottom-up, localised initiatives to drive change (Stammers, 1999; Tsutsui and Smith, 2019). By analysing how the student, #NotTooYoungToRun, and #EndSARS movements have driven change in Nigeria, the study will provide useful insights that can inform practical interventions aimed at driving further changes to promote human rights. Therefore, this study is significant for researchers, activists, policymakers, and all those interested in creating a society in which human rights are better respected and protected.

² For example, the #EndSARS movement primarily framed police brutality as an issue of injustice (see Section 5.3.2), rather than explicitly as one of human rights abuse, even though police brutality is clearly a violation of human rights.

³ Examples are the rights to participate in public affairs and to vote and be elected (student movement and #NotTooYoungToRun), the rights to education and an adequate standard of living (student movement), and the rights to dignity of the person and freedom from torture (#EndSARS).

1.3 Research Questions and Objectives

This study seeks to answer the following research question: How, and to what extent, have youth movements driven social and political change in Nigeria? To answer this overarching question, the following sub-questions have been formulated:

- SQ 1: What have been the outcomes of youth movements in Nigeria, and how have these outcomes driven social and political change in the country?
- SQ 2: What strategies were used in driving these outcomes?
- SQ 3: What external factors, if any, have influenced these outcomes?

The research objectives are as follows:

- To determine the extent to which youth movements have driven social and political change in Nigeria.
- To identify and evaluate the strategies used by youth movements in driving change.
- To provide insights on how young people can drive further change.

1.4 Structure of the Paper

After this introductory chapter, the rest of the paper is structured as follows: Chapter 2 reviews the existing literature on youth movements, their outcomes, and their strategies, thereby establishing a foundation for the study. Chapter 3 presents conceptual clarifications and outlines the theoretical framework used in this study. This will provide clarity on the concepts relevant to the study and the theoretical lens used to interpret the data. Chapter 4 explains the research approach, data collection methods, data analysis process, and ethical considerations relevant to the study. The chapter shows why the chosen methodology is suitable for answering the research question. Chapter 5 presents and comprehensively discusses the study's findings in light of the theoretical framework and literature reviewed. The final chapter, Chapter 6, summarises the research findings, discusses their human rights implications, outlines the study's limitations, and provides recommendations for future research.

2 Literature Review

This chapter provides an overview of the literature on youth movements, their outcomes, and their strategies. Because of the vast amount of literature in the field, examples will be drawn mostly from Nigeria and Africa. The first section presents a general overview of youth movements, while the second and third sections outline their outcomes and strategies, respectively. Through this exploration, the chapter serves to establish a robust foundation for the study, situating it within the wider academic literature.

2.1 Overview of Youth Movements

Scholars seem to agree that, around the world and in Africa, youth are politically and economically marginalised (Abbink and van Kessel, 2005; Honwana, 2012; 2013; 2019; della Porta, 2019). In Nigeria specifically, the same trends of exclusion can be seen (Amzat and Abdullahi, 2016; Akor, 2017; Igbuzor, 2021). While this exclusion may lead to youths' overrepresentation in violence and conflict, especially in Africa (Abbink and van Kessel, 2005), young people are also actively challenging the power structures that marginalise them, thereby demonstrating agency (Honwana, 2012; 2013; 2019; Earl, Maher and Elliott, 2017; della Porta, 2019). In the Nigerian context, Akor (2017) argues that although youth are affected by the neopatrimonial system, they are not merely "subalterns" to the dominant power groups in the country, but demonstrate real agency and find creative ways to challenge their exclusion. Social media has been identified as one of the tools with which Nigerian youth subvert their exclusion (Akor, 2017; Dambo et al., 2022). These narratives show that youth need to be studied with agency in mind.

Having established that youth have agency, it is imperative to examine the conditions under which youth demonstrate their agency. Generally, young people tend to participate through protests and social movements instead of more institutionalised forms of participation such as joining political parties or voting during elections (Honwana, 2012; 2013; 2019; Earl, Maher and Elliott, 2017; della Porta, 2019). Youth participation also typically expresses itself in the form of student activism (Earl, Maher and Elliott, 2017). In Nigeria, student activism has, at various times in the history of the country, given rise to groups such as the Patriotic Youth Movement of Nigeria, NUNS, NANS, and the Youth Solidarity on Southern Africa in Nigeria (Adejumobi, 2000; Odion-Akhaine, 2009). Research also suggests that young people are increasingly inspired to participate in movements by the actions of their counterparts in other

countries (Honwana, 2012; 2013; 2019). For example, #OccupyNigeria was inspired by Occupy Wall Street in the US and the Arab Spring in the Middle East (Akor, 2017). This context sets the stage for examining the outcomes of youth movements.

2.2 Outcomes of Youth Movements

Before tracing the outcomes of youth movements as reflected in the literature, it is important to discuss conceptual and methodological issues in the study of movement outcomes.

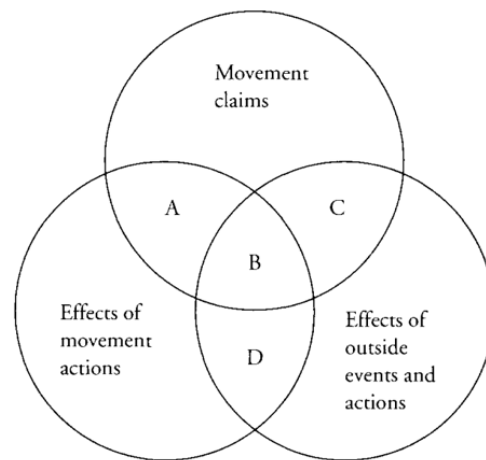
2.2.1 Conceptual and Methodological Issues

An early and influential work in the field is Gamson's (1975) *The Strategy of Social Protest*. Gamson defines success as falling into two main categories: (1) acceptance of the challenging group by antagonists and (2) the securing of new advantages by the challenging group on behalf of its beneficiaries. With these categories, Gamson identifies four possible outcomes: full response, pre-emption, co-optation, and collapse.

However, as Giugni (1998, p. 383) points out, there are dangers in using notions of success and failure to study movement outcomes: Firstly, this perspective assumes that social movements are homogeneous, attributing success or failure to the entire movement despite often conflicting goals among leaders and participants. Secondly, success is subjective, with different perceptions among participants and observers. Thirdly, the notion of success overstates participants' intentions, ignoring that many outcomes are unintended and unrelated to their claims (see also Giugni, 1999; Tilly, 1999). Thus, a more comprehensive approach involves moving away from notions of success and failure to considering the outcomes of movements on various levels.

Movement outcomes can be categorised in many different ways, including direct versus indirect, internal versus external, intended versus unintended, and short term versus long term (Giugni, 1998; 1999; Tilly, 1999). These varying categorisations are also reflected in the different terms used to refer to varying levels of results that can be traced to movements, such as "effects", "outcomes", and "consequences". For example, Giugni (1998, p. 385) posits that "outcomes" of social movements are specific and relate directly to the goals and ends of the movements, while "consequences" are much broader (and could include unintended effects). Adding to this complexity is the problem of multiple causal chains, as external influences, such as actions by authorities, interventions by other parties, and environmental changes, may affect a movement's outcomes (Tilly, 1999, p. 268). Against this background, Tilly (1999) helpfully

illustrates the multiple layers of movement outcomes and how they interact with each other (see Figure 1).



-
- A = Effects of movement actions (but not of outside influences) that bear directly on movement claims
 - B = Joint effects of movement actions and outside influences that bear directly on movement claims
 - C = Effects of outside influences (but not of movement actions) that bear directly on movement claims
 - D = Joint effects of movement actions and outside influences that *don't* bear on movement claims

Figure 1. *The multiple layers of movement outcomes*
(Tilly, 1999, p. 269)

Researchers have also pointed out that movements may drive change in highly diverse ways. For example, they may alter the political system through policy, regime, or other changes (Amenta et al., 2010); affect the life course of the movement participants (Giugni, 2004); drive a change in values, beliefs, and opinions (Earl, 2004); affect institutions such as political parties (Piccio, 2016); influence other movements through agenda spillover (Ring-Ramirez and Earl, 2021); or invite backlash in the form of state repression and/or counter-movements (Zald and Bert, 1987; della Porta, 1995). These varying levels of changes show that a study of movement outcomes must reasonably limit the scope of changes being observed and traced back to the movement in order to generate meaningful findings.

In addition to these issues, there are also methodological problems relating to causal attribution, the evolution of movement goals, interrelated effects, and unintended outcomes (Giugni, 1998). Against this complex background, Giugni (1998) and Tilly (1999) argue that the study of movement outcomes should avoid a search for invariant models but rather involve an analysis of the movements' interactions and dynamics. Such an approach will help researchers

to better identify the various factors, both internal and external to the movements, that played a role in driving the observed changes.

2.2.2 Tracing the Outcomes of Youth Movements

Having outlined the conceptual and methodological issues, I will now attempt to trace the outcomes of youth movements as reflected in the literature. Given the highly diverse ways in which movements can drive change, the discussion in this section is limited to the effects of youth movements on social and political change, which is the focus of this study.

One notable outcome of youth movements is their role in the independence and democratisation struggles. Historically, youth groups, especially students, have been instrumental in popular protests that ultimately contributed to the decolonisation process, and later the demilitarisation process, in many African countries. These youth movements formed coalitions with labour movements, women's movements, professional associations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and other groups under the larger civil society, which collectively drove the colonialists and military leaders out of power (Bratton and van de Walle, 1992; 1997; Gyimah-Boadi, 1996; Makumbe, 1998; Adejumobi, 2000).

Other social and political changes in more recent times abound. For example, Honwana (2012; 2013) notes that young people used protests to reverse price hikes in Mozambique in 2010, oust Tunisia's Ben Ali in 2011, and prevent unconstitutional presidential term extensions in Senegal in 2012. Mpungose and Monyae (2018) also point out several examples of the changes driven by recent youth movements in Africa: South Africa's #FeesMustFall movement in 2016 put pressure on the government to move towards free higher education for previously disadvantaged youth, the #GambiaHasDecided movement advocated for a peaceful transfer of power when the defeated president refused to vacate office after the 2016 elections, and Nigeria's #NotTooYoungToRun movement led to a reduction of the age qualifications for certain elective offices in 2018. These examples demonstrate that youth movements have been pivotal in driving social and political change, addressing critical issues and challenging entrenched power structures.

While the above narrative presents a positive picture, it is important to acknowledge that studies of social movements are often biased in favour of progressive movements, thereby overlooking movements with negative aspects (Daniel and Neubert, 2019). As Braungart and Braungart (2001, p. 16668) note, "youth movements have ... been a force for democracy and

societal reform as well as violence, terrorism, and bloody revolution”. In the Nigerian context, the negative outcomes are most clearly demonstrated by youth movements demanding resource control and self-governance, which primarily use violence, generate conflict, and undermine democracy (Ikelegbe, 2001; Ajala, 2022).

Other movements may not drive negative change but may fail to fully drive meaningful changes. For example, Honwana (2012; 2013; 2019) argues that while youth movements have driven certain cosmetic changes such as policy reversals, they have largely failed to drive wider systemic change, as traditional political forces often revert to politics as usual once the enthusiasm of street protests wanes. Similarly, using a case study of the O’odua People’s Congress in Nigeria, Ajala (2022) argues that social movements in Africa often lack the capacity to transform and specialise after achieving (or coming close to achieving) their goals, due to political patronage and neopatrimonialism, which expose them to corruption and cause them to become partisan or disintegrate.

Overall, the outcomes of youth movements have varied, affecting social and political systems to different degrees. The sustainability of these outcomes is also a concern, as “protest goes in cycles, and what is won during peaks of mobilization may be jeopardized during moments of latency” (della Porta and Diani, 2020, p. 259). For example, while youth movements contributed to democratisation in many countries, there has been a trend of “democratic backsliding” (Akinyetun, 2022) and a resurgence of military coups in Africa (Akinola and Makombe, 2024). This demonstrates that movement outcomes might be reversed, or at least threatened, in the long term.

2.3 Strategies Used by Youth Movements

Having identified the outcomes of youth movements, it is imperative to consider how these outcomes have been achieved. The literature identifies several strategies used by youth movements, such as protests, social media, collective leadership, and alliance building. Protests are a hallmark of social movements (della Porta and Diani, 2020). Most, if not all, of the youth movements discussed above used protests as their primary strategy. In African countries, the demographic strength of youth makes protests particularly effective, as they can cause significant disruption, attract attention, and force powerholders to listen to their demands. Notable examples in Nigeria include #OccupyNigeria and #EndSARS, where millions of youth took to the streets and disrupted activities (Akor, 2017; Aubyn and Frimpong, 2022).

Youth groups also tend to be radical; thus, protests may turn violent. Violence may be in the form of destroying state symbols such as courts and police stations, as seen in the student movement in Nigeria's military era and the #OccupyNigeria movement in 2016 (Shettima, 1993; Akor, 2017). Moreover, youth-led militant groups in Nigeria, such as the Ijaw Youth Council, the O'odua People's Congress, the Independent People of Biafra, and the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta, often use violence to demand resource control and self-governance (Ikelegbe, 2001; Orji, 2011; Ajala, 2022; Nwangwu, 2023). This violence is sometimes a response to state repression, creating an unending cycle of protest and repression (Nnam et al., 2022; Nwangwu, 2023; Hamman-Obels and Otive-Igbuzor, 2024).

Social media is another key strategy favoured by tech-savvy youth. Dambo et al. (2020) explain that tech optimists view the internet and social media as alternative platforms for participation, while tech pessimists argue that online tools encourage lazy activism – or “slacktivism” – and discourage people from actively seeking change. The argument of the tech pessimists is undermined by the fact that social media has been used to mobilise physical protesters, as seen in Zimbabwe's #ThisFlag and Nigeria's #EndSARS movements (Gukurume, 2017; Akerele-Popoola, Azeez and Adeniyi, 2022). Additionally, social media facilitates many movement activities, such as fundraising and disseminating information in the #EndSARS movement (Aubyn and Frimpong, 2022). The utility of social media is that it provides an alternative platform for youth groups to challenge powerholders while making it difficult for these powerholders to suppress the dissenting voices (Akor, 2017; Gukurume, 2017).

Additionally, collective leadership seems to be a feature of youth movements. A collective leadership approach can also be referred to as a “leaderful” approach – a balance between leader-led and leaderless extremes (Crutchfield, 2018; Nardini et al., 2021). Honwana (2019, p. 16) posits that social media has eliminated the need for centralised organisations, leading youth movements to establish informal leadership networks with anti-hierarchical principles that reflect their dissatisfaction with the political system. This argument is supported by Uwalaka (2020), who found that young protesters in #OccupyNigeria detested the idea of official spokespersons in traditional leader-led movements and instead preferred informal leaders who used their skills to mobilise people. According to Crutchfield (2018) and Nardini et al. (2021), collective leadership is one of the factors determining the success of a movement because it helps to build grassroots momentum for the movement and thus widen its reach and impact.

Alliance building is another strategy. Social movements often consist of dense, informal networks between various individuals, groups, and organisations (della Porta and Diani, 2020). Accordingly, youth movements tend to form alliances with other groups. For example, #OccupyNigeria saw alliances between youth, labour groups, and NGOs (Akor, 2017). With increasing globalisation and technological advances, movements also seek to build transnational support, leading to solidarity protests in multiple countries during #OccupyNigeria and #EndSARS (Ojedokun, 2016; Aubyn and Frimpong, 2022). However, as Crutchfield (2018) and Nardini et al. (2021) note, it is important to address intra-field challenges and organisational disputes for movements, which involve a large range of actors, to be successful. For example, Akor (2017) notes that the break in alliance between the NLC on one hand and the NGOs and youth groups on the other led to the decline of the #OccupyNigeria movement.

A final issue to note is that there is no consensus in the literature on whether strategies such as violent and disruptive protests are more effective than moderate strategies, or vice versa (Enos, Kaufman and Sands, 2019; Orazani and Leidner, 2019; Feinberg, Willer and Kovacheff, 2020; Shuman et al., 2021; 2022). Giugni (1998; 1999) suggests that the extent to which disruptive tactics are more or less effective than moderate ones will likely depend on the context in which the movement is operating.

2.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this literature review highlights that despite facing political and economic marginalisation, young people demonstrate agency by actively challenging power structures through participation in social movements. Through protests, social media, collective leadership, and alliance building, youth movements have been instrumental in driving social and political change, from independence struggles to democratisation efforts and advocacy for policy reforms. However, the sustainability of these outcomes remains a concern, with challenges such as political patronage and systemic barriers hindering long-term impact. Ultimately, while subject to conceptual and methodological challenges, a study of movement outcomes is not impossible but requires a comprehensive analysis of the complex internal and external dynamics and operations of the movements.

Certain gaps are also noticeable in the literature. Firstly, much of the existing literature either focuses broadly on youth activism without exploring youth movements specifically, or it

examines social movements in general without specifically considering the role of youth. Secondly, while there is a growing body of research on youth movements, many of these studies are disparate, focusing on a single movement rather than a comparison of different youth movements. Thirdly, in studies on youth movements – and, indeed, social movements in general – the Global North, particularly North America and Europe, is overrepresented. To address these research gaps, this study aims to investigate the dynamics and operations of youth movements in Nigeria, using the student, #NotTooYoungToRun, and #EndSARS movements as case studies. Through this investigation, the study will provide a more comprehensive understanding of youth movements in Nigeria and their effects on social and political change. Having situated this study within the broader academic literature, the next chapter will discuss the concepts and theories relevant to this work.

3 Theoretical Framework

This theoretical framework is grounded in social constructionism and draws from the theories of framing and political opportunity structure. The chapter starts with conceptual clarifications in order to establish a solid understanding of the key terms and concepts relevant to the study. Next, the chapter briefly outlines theoretical approaches to the study of social movements before further exploring the theories that form the foundation for this study. An understanding of this framework will provide clarity on the theoretical lens used to interpret the research findings.

3.1 Conceptual Clarifications

Social movements can be defined as forms of collective action characterised by actors engaged in conflictual relations with powerholders; connected through dense, informal networks; and sharing a collective identity (della Porta and Diani, 2020, p. 21). *Youth movements* are social movements formed largely or exclusively by youth. They constitute “organized, conscious attempts by young people to bring about or resist societal change” (Braungart and Braungart, 2001, p. 16668). *Youth* is a socially constructed category reflecting the transition from childhood to adulthood, and there is no consensus on the age boundaries for youth.⁴ For the purposes of this study, I consider youth to be those aged 18–35.

Another conceptual issue relates to the level of outcome being analysed. As discussed in Section 2.2.1, various terms have been used in the literature to refer to varying levels of movement outcomes. In this study, I use *outcomes* to refer to the actions, policy responses, and behaviour changes that can be traced to movements, whether direct or indirect, intended or unintended, and short term or long term. I use *effects* to link these movement-related outcomes to the resulting social and political change. In tracing the outcomes, I do not find it useful to distinguish between social change and political change, because they are usually interlinked.⁵ Thus, I loosely define *social and political change* as observable changes in society, such as

⁴ For example, Nigeria’s National Youth Policy initially defined youth as those aged 18–35, but revised it to 15–29 in 2019 (Federal Ministry of Youth and Sports Development, 2019). Meanwhile, the African Youth Charter (2006) defines youth as those aged 15–35, while the United Nations (no date) defines it as those aged 15–24.

⁵ For example, regime change, ostensibly a political change, may affect the way society operates (e.g., the transition from military rule to democracy). Similarly, behaviour changes, which reflect social change, can have political implications (e.g., increased youth participation in elections).

policy changes, regime changes, and changes in behaviours and attitudes. Having clarified these concepts, I now turn to theoretical approaches in social movement studies.

3.2 Theoretical Approaches in Social Movement Studies

Social movement studies is a broad field, encompassing diverse perspectives from disciplines such as sociology, political science, law, economics, and psychology. Over the years, the field has expanded significantly, leading to the development of various theories to analyse social movements. Key theories include collective behaviour, resource mobilisation, political opportunity structure, and framing. Although there is a high level of variation within each of these theories, some key features can be identified: Collective behaviour emphasises how symbols and identities shape collective action (Blumer, 1951; Kornhauser, 1959). Resource mobilisation emphasises how movements mobilise through resources such as money, labour, and organisational infrastructure (McCarthy and Zald, 1977; Tarrow, 1998). The political opportunity structure emphasises how the political environment in which movements operate affects their dynamics (Eisinger, 1973; Tarrow, 1989). Framing examines how social movements construct and communicate their messages to shape public perception and mobilise support (Goffman, 1974; Snow and Benford, 1988).

The ideas of social constructionism, a broader theory within the social sciences which posits that reality is socially constructed, are reflected in framing theory. The political opportunity structure theory can also be viewed through a social constructionist lens. Accordingly, this study utilises a social constructionist lens, drawing from the theories of framing and political opportunity structure. Combining these theories will help to mitigate some of the limitations of each individual theory, such as ignoring the wider socio-political context or underestimating the role of social movement actors. This approach will provide a comprehensive understanding of how change occurs, which is essential to answering the research question: How, and to what extent, have youth movements driven social and political change in Nigeria?

3.3 A Social Constructionist Analysis of Social Movements

The basic premise of social constructionism is that reality is not given or objective but socially constructed (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). According to constructionist analysis, social problems are not inherently objective; they become issues only when interpreted as such by human actors, and this is illustrated by the fact that many potentially problematic situations never become issues unless and until they are recognised as such (Hjelmar, 1996, p. 176).

Reality is therefore not objective but based on shared meanings and interpretations by society. The idea that reality is subjective also implies that society's conception of reality can change over time as new meanings are produced and new interpretations are formed. Norms and values are not static but are constantly negotiated and reshaped through interactions between actors.

Framing is a useful concept with which to understand how social movements contest existing norms and introduce new ones. According to Snow and Benford (1988), social movement actors are "signifying agents" who shape existing meanings and actively produce new ones through framing. A frame can be defined as

an interpretative schemata that simplifies and condenses the "world out there" by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of action within one's present or past environment. (Snow and Benford, 1992, p. 137)

There are three core framing tasks: diagnostic, which involves diagnosing an issue as problematic and in need of alteration; prognostic, which entails proposing solutions to the diagnosed problem; and motivational, which involves calling people to take action (Snow and Benford, 1988). Typically, prognostic framing also involves counter-framing, where movements refute opponents while simultaneously providing a rationale for their own solutions (Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 617). Thus, through framing (and counter-framing), social movement actors produce and reproduce meanings, and construct and deconstruct norms over time.

However, change does not happen in a vacuum. Although movement actors may introduce new norms into the public sphere through framing, change is usually effected through institutional adaptation, policy reforms, or shifts in behaviour, reflecting the evolving social consensus. Indeed, social movements typically "address their message simultaneously to two distinct targets: the powerholders and the general public" (Giugni, 2011, p. 380). Thus, apart from calling the public to action, movement actors typically present clearly articulated demands to powerholders, such as the government or the legislature. These powerholders, which embody the existing norms, institutions, and power structures created by society, may resist or accommodate movement demands, thereby affecting the extent to which they are able to drive change. This demonstrates that the larger context in which a movement operates has an

influence on its outcomes (Giugni, 1998, p. 381). In this light, it is necessary to consider the broader socio-political context in which movements operate.

The political opportunity structure helps explain the influence of the political context on social movements. Political opportunity structure refers to “the political and institutional opportunities and constraints that either inhibit or facilitate collective action” (Chesters and Welsh, 2011, p. 136). Although there is a high level of variation within the political opportunity structure theory, Giugni (2011, p. 272) helpfully identifies two main strands: One focuses on dynamic aspects such as changes in the political system and “windows of opportunity” that may encourage collective action, while the other focuses on how the more stable aspects of the political system affect the varying forms and outcomes of social movements.

While traditional political opportunity approaches are typically structuralist and view political opportunity structures as objectively given, a social constructionist analysis of social movements is more subjective, focusing on how movement actors perceive and interpret these opportunities (Hjelmar, 1996, p. 175; Giugni, 2011). A focus on movement actors is important because, as Della Porta and Diani (2020, p. 18) acknowledge, “changes in the political opportunity structure do not have any effect on a social movement unless they are perceived as important by the movement itself”.

Over the years, the political opportunity structure theory has been expanded, leading to the emergence of the “cultural opportunity structure” (Hjelmar, 1996; Benford and Snow, 2000; Giugni, 2011). The cultural opportunity structure refers broadly to the stock of meanings, beliefs, ideologies, practices, values, myths, narratives, and the like in society – all of which facilitate or constrain the ability of social movements to change values and norms (Hjelmar, 1996, p. 178; Benford and Snow, 2000, p. 629). According to Hjelmar (1996, p. 182), movement actors “play a major role in interpreting political and cultural opportunities and designing, on that background, specific organizational identities and strategies”.

Considering how social movement actors interpret and act upon not only political but also cultural opportunities enriches our theory, enabling us to better understand the processes through which social movements drive change. A subjective interpretation of political and cultural opportunities by movement actors may determine, for example, the extent to which they utilise moderate strategies such as engagement with powerholders or disruptive strategies such as protests. Interpretations of political and cultural opportunities may also enable or

constrain framing by influencing how social movement actors decide to frame certain issues. In particular, the cultural opportunity structure of a society provides a resource base from which movement actors create new frames, thereby making movements both consumers and producers of meanings (Tarrow, 1992, p. 189; Benford and Snow, 2000).

Ultimately, utilising a social constructionist lens, and drawing from the theories of framing and political and cultural opportunity structures, we can better understand how social movements drive change, using framing to create new meanings and adopting various strategies based on their recognition and interpretations of political and cultural opportunities. Against this theoretical foundation, the next chapter will discuss the methods utilised in this study.

4 Methodology

This chapter explains the research approach, data collection methods, and data analysis process utilised in this study. An explanation of this methodology will show why it is well suited to answer the research question: How, and to what extent, have youth movements driven social and political change in Nigeria? The chapter ends with a discussion of the ethical considerations relevant to the study.

4.1 Research Approach

Broadly speaking, research approaches can be divided into two strands: quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research explains phenomena using numerical data and statistical analysis to test hypotheses and explore the relationships between different variables (Mohajan, 2020). Quantitative research methods can take several forms, such as surveys, field experiments, simulations, correlational studies, and multivariate analyses (Queirós, Faria and Almeida, 2017). Conversely, qualitative research focuses on aspects of reality that cannot be quantified, aiming to deepen understanding of complex phenomena by providing in-depth, nuanced insights (Queirós, Faria and Almeida, 2017). Qualitative research methods include interviews, ethnography, participant observation, and focus group discussions (Queirós, Faria and Almeida, 2017).

Based on the social constructionist lens utilised in this study, which views reality as socially constructed, it was determined that a qualitative research approach would be best suited to identify how activists frame issues and create new meanings (Spencer, Pryce and Walsh, 2020). Moreover, given the complex dynamics of social movements, a qualitative research approach would be more suitable to provide nuanced and detailed insights into their intricacies.

4.2 Data Collection Methods

In line with the qualitative research approach, data was obtained from primary and secondary sources.

4.2.1 Primary Data

Primary data was obtained through in-depth semi-structured interviews with the activists involved in the movements under investigation. Interviews are a pivotal tool in social movement studies, used to gain insights into specific aspects of a movement, such as mobilisational strategies and internal dynamics (della Porta, 2014). Interviews involve one-on-one conversations between the researcher and the participant and may be structured, semi-

structured, or unstructured. Structured interviews follow a strict interview guide, unstructured interviews do not use a specific interview guide, and semi-structured interviews use a loose interview guide with leeway for the researcher to ask follow-up questions (Brinkmann, 2020). Semi-structured interviews help to reveal activists' nuanced perceptions about social movements (Blee and McDowell, 2022). Accordingly, the use of semi-structured interviews in this study allowed me to gain nuanced insights into movement participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations, while providing room for further questions based on the specific experiences of each participant.

The data collection process began with the development of an interview guide (see Appendix A) informed by an extensive literature review. Purposive and snowball sampling methods were then employed to select study participants. Purposive sampling involves selecting samples with a particular purpose in mind (e.g., movement insiders who can provide information on particular aspects of the movement) and developing criteria for including or excluding the samples (Daniel and Harland, 2017; Blee and McDowell, 2022). Accordingly, I developed two criteria for inclusion:

1. Participated actively in the student movement in the 1980s/90s, the #NotTooYoungToRun movement, or the #EndSARS movement in Nigeria.
2. Within the age range of 18–35 at time of participation in the movement.

The first criterion ensured that I could get relevant and appropriate data about the three movements within the scope of this study, and the second criterion ensured that participants belonged to the youth cohort involved in the examined movements.

I located the first set of participants through personal networks and referrals from contacts. Subsequently, I used snowball sampling to expand the participant pool. Snowball sampling involves asking initial interview participants to suggest others who might be willing or appropriate for the study (Daniel and Harland, 2017; Blee and McDowell, 2022). This led to me locating the second set of participants.

In total, there were eight (five male, three female) participants – three each from the student and #EndSARS movements, and two from the #NotTooYoungToRun movement. All participants were actively involved in the movements and fell within the specified age range (see Table 1). Interviews were conducted online via Google Meet, with an average duration of 45 minutes. All interviews were conducted in English.

Table 1*Profile of Interview Participants*

Identifier	Age Range at Time of Movement	Sex	Name of Movement	Time Period of Movement	Extent of Participation in Movement
Participant 1	18–35	M	Student movement	1980s/90s	Student union president and NANS member
Participant 2	18–35	F	Student movement	1980s/90s	Student union president and NANS member
Participant 3	18–35	M	Student movement	1980s/90s	Student union president and NANS member
Participant 4	18–35	M	#NotTooYoungToRun	2016–date	One of the conveners at the national level
Participant 5	18–35	M	#NotTooYoungToRun	2016–date	One of the conveners at the national level
Participant 6	18–35	F	#EndSARS	2017–2020 ⁶	Active protester/represented movement at a town hall meeting in Plateau State
Participant 7	18–35	F	#EndSARS	2017–2020	Active protester/represented movement at a town hall meeting in Plateau State
Participant 8	18–35	M	#EndSARS	2017–2020	Active protester/presided over congresses at one location in Lagos State

4.2.2 Secondary Data

While the primary data collection method employed in this study offers valuable insights, it is also subject to several limitations. Firstly, the views expressed by the interview participants may not be fully representative of the broader population, given that movements are so broad and the perceptions of movement actors can vary quite significantly. Another limitation is that, as shown in Table 1, quite some time has passed since the movements being explored in this study emerged. Thus, the participants' memories may have faded over time, and they may not be able to accurately recall everything that happened during the respective movements.

⁶ The end date of the #EndSARS movement is contestable, as some protests under the name of #EndSARS still occurred in 2021, and some even believe that the movement has not ended till date. However, in line with the way the movement is reported in the media and in the academic literature, I present the movement as having ended in 2020.

Furthermore, the group of actors interviewed presents another limitation. Only activists directly involved in the movements were interviewed, omitting perspectives from external actors such as government officials, political parties, and participants in counter-movements. Giugni (1999) recommends gathering data not only about a movement but also about the actions of other actors to make a better assessment of a moment's outcomes. Indeed, the exclusive focus on activists may skew the picture, as movement participants are likely to have a positive view of their actions and may thereby subconsciously overstate their outcomes.

In recognition of these limitations, I used secondary data to complement findings from the interviews. Secondary data was obtained from various sources, including civil society publications, media reports, social media posts, and the academic literature. These secondary sources provided diverse perspectives on how the three movements being investigated in this study were perceived and reported by various stakeholders, including civil society organisations (CSOs), journalists, researchers, activists, and observers. Data from social media was particularly instructive in relation to the #NotTooYoungToRun and #EndSARS movement, both of which used Twitter (now X) to a significant extent. These secondary data helped to counter some of the limitations associated with relying solely on findings from interviews with the activists. Ultimately, the combination of primary and secondary data allowed for triangulation – that is, collecting data from different sources in order to better understand a complex phenomenon (Denzin, 1970, chapter 12; Yeasmin and Rahman, 2012).

4.3 Data Analysis Process

As Daniel and Harland (2017, p. 38) note, “qualitative research is interpretive because all the data, regardless of which approach is taken, requires interpretation by the researcher”. Della Porta (2014, p. 251) further adds that although there are no formal interpretive rules, key words or themes are a useful way to organise data generated through interviews. Accordingly, I adopted a thematic analysis approach, which involves identifying patterns in the data, using them to generate themes, and building the research narrative around these themes (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017).

The data analysis process began with recording and transcribing the interviews via Google Meet. Additionally, I took handwritten notes during the interviews to capture key points and observations. After each interview, I reviewed the transcript against the audio recordings and made corrections where necessary. I then read and re-read the transcripts in detail, highlighting key points, making annotations, and comparing them with my interview notes. Through this

process of reading and re-reading the transcripts, and comparing and contrasting them with each other, I was able to identify patterns that I used to generate themes.

Subsequently, I thoroughly reviewed articles, reports, social media posts, and other relevant secondary sources on each movement to identify key points relevant to the study. I then compared and contrasted these findings with the insights gained from the interview data. This comparative approach helped me to better understand the operations of each movement and their varying levels of outcomes, enabling me to assess the extent of change critically. By combining the primary data with the secondary data, I was able to construct a nuanced narrative that incorporates the multifaceted aspects of each movement.

Overall, as discussed in Section 2.2.1, it is impossible to study movement outcomes without studying their dynamics and operations. Through a qualitative analysis of primary data (from key movement actors) and secondary data (from the academic literature, social media, media reports, and civil society publications), I was able to analyse the internal organisational and mobilisational strategies used by the three movements, the interactions between movement actors and other groups, the broader socio-political context in which the movements operated, and the observed changes that can be linked to the movements. This in-depth exploration of the interactions and dynamics will enable me to answer the research question of how, and the extent to which, youth movements in Nigeria have driven social and political change.

4.4 Ethical Considerations

Qualitative interviews, by nature, tend to be invasive with respect to private life, making it important to anonymise data from interviews (della Porta, 2014). Additionally, conducting and recording interviews via digital platforms such as Google Meet raises concerns about data privacy and confidentiality. Moreover, in social movement studies, interviews may present ethical issues relating to participants' legal, emotional, financial, and social vulnerabilities due to their status as activists (Blee and McDowell, 2022).

To address these ethical issues, several measures were implemented to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the data: personally identifying information was continuously processed to be deleted, grouped, or rewritten; access to the data was limited to the researcher, the data controller (UiT The Arctic University of Norway), and the data processor (Google Meet); and pseudonyms were used when reporting interview responses, ensuring no personally identifiable information that could reveal the participants' identities was disclosed.

Participants were informed of who would have access to the interview data, how their data would be stored, and their rights regarding the storage and use of their personal data. Participants were also informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could choose to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences to them. They signed consent forms confirming their understanding of these rights and their willingness to participate in the study (see Appendix B). These measures collectively addressed ethical concerns surrounding the interviews.

Having provided a theoretical and methodological foundation to the study in this and preceding chapters, the next chapter will delve into a comprehensive analysis of the research findings.

5 Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents findings in relation to the three movements explored in this study: the student movement in the 1980s/90s, the #NotTooYoungToRun movement, and the #EndSARS movement. As noted in Chapter 1, the study is guided by the following research question: How, and to what extent, have youth movements driven social and political change in Nigeria? This overarching research question is broken down into the following sub-questions:

- SQ 1: What have been the outcomes of youth movements in Nigeria, and how have these outcomes driven social and political change in the country?
- SQ 2: What strategies were used in driving these outcomes?
- SQ 3: What external factors, if any, have influenced these outcomes?

To contextualise the movements, a brief overview of each movement is presented in the first section of this chapter. In the second and third sections, findings are discussed in relation to the effects of youth movements and the strategies used by these movements, respectively. Findings on effects will provide an answer to SQ 1, while findings on strategies will provide an answer to SQ 2. To answer SQ 3, the fourth section discusses external factors that have influenced these outcomes. The chapter ends with a summary of the key findings.

5.1 Overview of the Movements

The student movement in the 1980s/90s, the #NotTooYoungToRun movement, and the #EndSARS movement all had different goals. The student movement comprised the student unions of the various universities in Nigeria at the time, all under the umbrella of NANS, which was established in 1980. The movement aimed to preserve free education, challenge the suspension and expulsion of student activists from the universities, increase public spending on education, and generally improve the education sector. The movement also sought to challenge the military government's unpopular economic policies, such as petroleum price hikes and the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), which entailed devaluation of the naira, privatisation of national assets, and reduced public spending. By the 1990s, and especially after the annulment of the 1993 elections, the movement evolved to a full-blown campaign for democracy. Although NANS continues to exist in Nigeria, the discussion in this paper is limited to the student movement in the 1980s/90s and its opposition to the military.

The #NotTooYoungToRun movement dates back to 2007, when a CSO, Yiaga Africa, made proposals to amend the constitution and reduce the age qualifications for certain elective offices. Despite initial setbacks in 2007 and 2012, the movement was relaunched in 2016 as what is now known as the #NotTooYoungToRun movement, comprised of Yiaga Africa and hundreds of other youth organisations and young activists across Nigeria (the exact number is uncertain). The primary aim of the movement was initially to reduce the age requirements to run for the State Houses of Assembly and the House of Representatives (from 30 to 25), the Senate and governorship (from 35 to 30), and the presidency (from 40 to 35).⁷ From 2018, the goals of the movement evolved to getting political parties to support young political aspirants and uphold internal party democracy.

The #EndSARS movement was a youth uprising against the notorious human rights abuses perpetrated by the SARS unit of the Nigerian police. Following a series of sporadic protests starting in 2017, the movement gained momentum in October 2020, as a viral video depicting an attack by SARS officers sparked widespread protests that lasted about two weeks. The movement comprised various young activists and youth organisations, although exact numbers are difficult to ascertain. The movement's initial demand was for SARS to be disbanded. Subsequently, protesters articulated five clear demands, known as #5for5: release of all arrested protesters, justice and compensation for victims of police brutality, establishment of an independent panel to investigate police misconduct, psychological evaluation and retraining of all disbanded SARS officers before redeployment, and increase of police salaries. Subsequently, an updated list of demands tagged #7for7, encompassing institutional reforms and governance improvements beyond policing, was presented by some participants. Understanding these goals provides a good foundation on which to explore the varying effects of these movements on social and political change in Nigeria.

5.2 Effects of Youth Movements

To answer SQ 1, “What have been the outcomes of youth movements in Nigeria, and how have these outcomes driven social and political change in the country?”, this section traces the

⁷ The State Houses of Assembly refer to the legislatures in the 36 states of Nigeria. The House of Representatives and the Senate are the two chambers in the national legislature, which is called the National Assembly.

outcomes of the three youth movements explored in this study and their effects on social and political change.

5.2.1 Student Movement in the 1980s/90s

The effects of the student movement can be assessed in relation to the education sector, the SAP, and democratisation. Progress was limited with regard to the education sector. Small gains were made, as some students who had been expelled were readmitted to the universities following protests, although others, including final-year students, had to start their university education afresh in other institutions (Participants 1 and 2). However, in the long run, most of the issues being advocated for (e.g., keeping education free, reintroducing meal and accommodation subsidies for students, and increasing funding for education) did not yield results. Participant 3 explained that

because of the determination of government to force the hands of school authority to charge fees beyond what is being charged, the budgetary allocation to education systematically got reduced to the point whereby outside payment of salaries, other obligation in terms of providing teaching materials and support for research, support for other academic work became almost zero.

This shows that the advocacy to increase education funding was unsuccessful, which had broader effects on the education sector. Indeed, Olukoshi (2000) argues that the military government's decision to cut education funding in the 1980s led to the collapse of the education sector. Thus, despite their advocacy for education reforms, the student movement appears to have driven little to no change in this regard.

In relation to the SAP, small gains were again made, as the government responded with SAP relief measures, in the form of additional jobs, bursaries, and removal of import duties on vehicles, to relieve Nigerians of the difficult socio-economic conditions resulting from the policy (Shettima, 1993; Adejumobi, 2000). However, the SAP, which had been introduced by the Ibrahim Babangida regime, was only dismantled by the Sani Abacha regime, which came into power through a military coup in 1993 (Amuwo, 2001). Thus, the dismantling of the SAP cannot be attributed to the student movement; instead, it was driven by a change in leadership and the differing economic priorities of the new government. In any case, the SAP had lasting adverse effects on the economy (Abah and Naankiel, 2016), thereby showing that the students' advocacy did not drive much change in this area.

The outcomes appear to be more positive in relation to the campaign for democracy. All three participants in the student movement (Participants 1, 2, and 3) agreed that the transition to democracy in 1999 was an outcome of the student movement, in concert with other groups such as the labour movement and NGOs – these various groups formed a coalition of movements pushing for democracy. Initially, students’ opposition manifested as resistance to the unpopular economic policies of the military government, which were seen as inimical to the people; however, by the 1990s, and especially after the annulment of the 1993 elections, the movement evolved to a full-blown campaign to oust the military and return Nigeria to democratic rule (Participants 1, 2, and 3). In this way, the student movement contributed to driving social and political change.

However, in assessing the extent of political change, it is also important to consider the quality of the democracy that arose – an issue that is relevant to sustainability of outcomes (see Section 2.2.2). Democratisation can be defined broadly as the “process through which a political regime becomes democratic” (Kauffman, 2024). Democratisation typically occurs in two phases: (1) the initial transition from an authoritarian system to a democratic one, and (2) the subsequent consolidation of the democracy, where the democratic regime improves the quality of its democracy by increasingly upholding democratic principles (Hamman-Obels and Otiye-Igbuzor, 2024; Kauffman, 2024).

Based on the first phase of democratisation, a link can be drawn between the activities of the student movement and the resulting transition to democracy. However, based on the second phase, such links cannot be drawn as easily. Participants 2 and 3 expressed despondent views, stating that although they were in the driving seat of the return to democracy, the quality of democracy that emerged has been subpar, as basic principles of democracy are not respected. Some indicators of the poor quality of democracy in Nigeria are rampant electoral malpractices, weak political parties, repression from the state against dissidents, and disregard for human rights and the rule of law (Ijomah, 2000; Fasakin, 2015; Isma and Othman, 2016; Amnesty International, no date). According to Participant 3, this situation is attributable to the fact that those involved in driving the transition to democracy largely did not get involved in politics at the time:

The first generation of civilian leaders that emerged in 1999, many of them were not part of the struggle to get military out in the first place, and many of them were not

even prepared for leadership ... And between 1999 and 2003, those people got consolidated.

Thus, while it cannot be denied that the transition to democracy was an important outcome of the coalition of movements, including the student movement, challenging military rule at the time, the extent of political change is limited by the fact that Nigeria has failed to fully realise the second phase of the democratisation process (upholding democratic principles).

Overall, the following are the outcomes of the student movement and their effects on social and political change in Nigeria:

- Education: Got some students readmitted to the universities, but no major gains in improving the education sector.
- SAP: Achieved small gains in terms of SAP relief measures, but no direct causal link to the removal of the SAP.
- Democratisation: In concert with other pro-democracy groups, drove a transition to democracy, although the quality of democracy that arose has been subpar.

5.2.2 #NotTooYoungToRun Movement

The outcomes of the #NotTooYoungToRun movement are noticeable in three areas: age qualifications, youth representation, and political party support for youth aspirants. To start with, the movement directly led to the passage of the #NotTooYoungToRun Act⁸ in 2018, which reduced the age qualifications for the State Houses of Assembly from 30 to 25, the House of Representatives from 30 to 25, and the presidency from 40 to 35 (Participants 4 and 5; Tukur, 2018). However, proposals to reduce the age qualifications for the Senate and governorship were not accepted, with the minimum age of 35 maintained for these positions (Participant 4).

Subsequent to the Act's passage, the 2019 and 2023 general elections witnessed a rise in youth candidacy and representation in the House of Representatives and State Houses of Assembly, compared to 2015 (Participants 4 and 5; Yiaga Africa, 2019; 2023a; 2023c).⁹ Despite a slight

⁸ The official name is the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (Fourth Alteration, No. 27) Act 2017.

⁹ The focus here is on youth candidacy and representation levels in the House of Representatives and the State Houses of Assembly because the #NotTooYoungToRun Act reduced the age requirements to run for those offices. Although the age requirement to run for the presidency was also reduced, figures for youth candidacy and representation in the presidency are not considered, since one has to be at least 35, and this dissertation considers

decline in youth candidacy between 2019 and 2023, the 2023 figure was still 7.6% higher than the baseline in 2015 (Yiaga Africa, 2023a; 2023c). These increases in youth candidacy and representation can be attributed to the #NotTooYoungToRun movement, since the movement increased the salience of youth inclusion.

A more direct link between the movement and the increased levels of youth candidacy and representation can also be drawn, since the movement drove a reduction in the age qualifications for running for office, making it possible for young people aged 25–29 to participate in the process. In 2023, almost half (43.2%) of the young candidates fell within this age bracket, with 17 winning state-level seats and two securing seats at the national level (Yiaga Africa, 2023a; 2023c). As Participant 4 explained, these persons would not have been eligible to contest if the Act had not been passed. Ultimately, despite youth remaining a minority in legislative bodies, the #NotTooYoungToRun movement has increased youth candidacy and representation by inspiring and empowering young political aspirants and enabling those aged 25–29 to contest and win elections for the first time since the start of Nigeria’s Fourth Republic. This is an important way in which the movement has driven social and political change.

Another outcome of the #NotTooYoungToRun movement, which appears to be an unintended outcome, is an increase in youth representation in appointive offices. Participant 4 explained that

the constitution states that the qualifications to be appointed as a minister are the same qualifications to run for House of Representatives. The qualifications to be appointed as a commissioner at the state level are the same qualifications that you must have to run for State House of Assembly. So by implication, we have also reduced the age at which ministers or commissioners can be appointed.

Examples of young commissioners who have been appointed since the passing of the Act are 26-year-old Nafisat Buge, 26-year-old Joana Kolo, 27-year-old Seun Fakorede, 27-year-old Wasilat Adegoke, and 28-year-old Abubakar Buhari (Participant 4; *Nigerian Tribune*, 2019; Oyeleke, 2019; Abdulkadir, 2022; Agboluaje, 2023; Akinyemi, 2023). These people would not

youth to be those aged 18–35. Even though a 35-year-old could run for and win the presidency, at that age they are already at the cusp of leaving the youth cohort, meaning that their participation in the process would indicate little evidence of increased youth participation.

have been eligible for appointment if the Act had not been passed. Additionally, Participant 5 suggested that the movement's emphasis on youth inclusion elevated its significance, such that "state governors started competing against each other on who was appointing young people into cabinet". Thus, the movement has unintentionally been able to increase youth representation in appointive offices.

The movement's engagement with political parties also appears to have yielded outcomes, as Participants 4 and 5 highlighted that some political parties have reduced or completely eliminated the cost of nomination forms for young political aspirants (see Ojoye, 2018; *Premium Times*, 2018; *BBC News*, 2022; Ibeh, 2022). However, despite these concessions from political parties, aspirants are still subjected to paying other high administrative fees before nomination forms are processed (Yiaga Africa, 2023b, p. 40). Additionally, in a report on youth candidacy in the 2023 elections, Yiaga Africa (2023c, p. 7) attributed the decline in youth candidacy between 2019 and 2023 to a range of factors, including "the excessive cost of nomination forms", "highly commercialized party primaries", and "substitution of candidates". This suggests that the extent of change in terms of securing political party support for young political aspirants has been limited, leading some young people to lament, "We're not too young to run, but we are too poor to run" (Participant 4; see also Ajodo-Adebanjoko, 2019).

Moreover, Participant 5 noted that the expectation is to go beyond those defrayed costs to getting parties to put their entire machinery behind young people. This is in recognition of the fact that it takes more than just being able to afford a nomination form to win elections. In order to drive a more substantial increase in the level of youth representation, political parties need to support young people more holistically. Some demands of the movement, such as reserving a certain percentage of candidate nominations for young people, have not been accepted (Participant 4). Overall, while some parties have reduced the cost of nomination forms for youth, the movement still has a long way to go in getting political parties to fully support young political aspirants.

Based on the above discussions, the outcomes of the #NotTooYoungToRun movement and their effects on social and political change in Nigeria are as follows:

- Age qualifications: Reduced age qualifications for certain elective positions (State Houses of Assembly, the House of Representatives, and the presidency) and appointive positions, but did not reduce age qualifications for governorship and the Senate.

- Youth representation: Increased youth candidacy and representation, particularly for young people aged 25–29, although youth remain a small minority in legislative bodies.
- Support from political parties: Led some political parties to reduce or waive nomination fees for young aspirants, but highly monetised primaries and poor internal party democracy continue to exclude youth.

5.2.3 #EndSARS Movement

The outcomes of the #EndSARS movement can be assessed in three broad clusters: policing, protesters and victims, and youth consciousness. In the policing cluster, one immediate government response was the disbandment of SARS and the establishment of a new Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team to replace it (Participant 8; Buhari, 2020; Omonobi, 2020). Other concessions granted were psychological evaluation and retraining of disbanded SARS officials before redeployment and the prohibition of former SARS members from joining the new SWAT (Kabir, 2020; Omonobi, 2020). These measures were in direct response to the protesters' demands.

However, there was a theme of distrust surrounding the government's response due to previous unfulfilled promises to disband SARS and the swift launch of SWAT just two days after the dissolution of SARS (Participants 6 and 8; Kabir, 2020). The protesters' scepticism appeared to be justified, as the movement, which was challenging police brutality, ironically invited even more brutality from the police and security forces (see Section 5.4). Since the movement ended, cases of police brutality have not ceased (Participants 6 and 8; Amnesty International, no date; Jones, 2021; *Punch*, 2021; *PM News*, 2021; Ehigiator, 2023), prompting Aubyn and Frimpong (2022, p. 79) to argue that "the movement was unable to achieve any meaningful security sector or wider government reforms".

Nevertheless, despite the prevailing systemic issues, some minor improvements have been made, which can be attributed to the #EndSARS movement. For example, according to Participant 6,

a lot more officers are more conscious of what they do ... Now, all it takes is for you to be in a right position and flash out your mobile devices, and then they'll be like oh stop recording. Or we've had swift responses of officers caught on cameras being cautioned, unlike before.

Participant 7 corroborated this point, noting “videos and cases of dismissal of police officers who were harassing people”. Participant 8 also mentioned that

the police has taken its feedback mechanism quite seriously, unlike before. So when you make a case on Twitter and tag people, the police, they respond very fast and try to discipline – try to arrest the situation before it escalates.

These viewpoints are in line with Ehigiator’s (2023) assertion that one positive fallout of the #EndSARS movement is a “speedy reaction by the police force” in response to complaints. Ultimately, although the goal of ending police brutality has not yet been achieved due to deep systemic issues, these assertions suggest that the #EndSARS movement has increased police responsiveness.

Another policing outcome is that police salaries were increased by 20% in December 2021 (Ayitogo, 2021). The increase in police salaries was one of the five-point demands of the protesters, and the minister of police affairs is reported to have said that the salary increase was part of the government’s efforts to meet the demands of the #EndSARS protesters (Ayitogo, 2021). Thus, this outcome can be directly linked to the movement.¹⁰

Apart from outcomes in policing, the movement had mixed outcomes in its demands relating to protesters and victims. Despite an order for the release of #EndSARS protesters in October 2020, some protesters eventually spent 2–3 years in jail before being released (*BBC News*, 2020b; Ehigiator, 2023). The latest information suggests that at least 12 #EndSARS protesters are still in prison; many of them have not been tried, and some have been subjected to torture (Amnesty International, 2023; Usen, 2024).

For the victims of police brutality, one initial government response was the establishment of a judicial panel of inquiry at the national level to investigate complaints of police brutality, with a directive for state governors to establish similar panels (Participants 6 and 8; Agbakwuru, 2020; Kabir, 2020). However, a recent analysis of the panels by Ochojila (2024) reveals that seven states did not comply with the federal government’s directive to establish panels, only the national panel in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and the panels in three states paid

¹⁰ By contrast, the government’s increase of police salaries in 2024 cannot be directly attributed to the #EndSARS movement because it was a general increase for all public servants and appeared to have been driven by inflation and the rising cost of living (Nnodim, 2024).

compensation to victims, and none of the states proceeded to prosecute erring officers. These findings indicate that the payment of compensation to victims has been very poor, and the prosecution of erring officers as a result of the panels was non-existent.¹¹ The implication is that many victims are left without justice.

Additionally, the movement also had important outcomes related to youth consciousness,¹² a point with which all three participants in the #EndSARS movement (Participants 6, 7, and 8) agreed (see also Agbashi et al., 2021). Participant 8 opined that although youth movements had historically played significant roles in Nigeria, youth in contemporary times had largely been politically inactive until the #EndSARS movement. Citing former NLC General Secretary Owei Lakemfa, Participant 8 also noted that the movement proved that labour, which is typically known for organising strikes and demonstrations in the country, does not have a monopoly on organising. Participant 7 shared this sentiment, referring to the movement as “a wake-up call for everyone in Nigeria” to know “that the youth had a lot of power and impact”. The movement was so significant that it marked a milestone in the life of the country: “It’s something that anybody that was alive during that phase would not forget” (Participant 6).

It is also possible to draw links between the #EndSARS movement in 2020 and the subsequent general elections in 2023. Participant 8 explained that the movement “built a massive base of young people, who became very politically conscious of their power as a collective, and you could see that during the elections”.¹³ In the pre-election period, youth participated extensively, using social media to influence political debates, voting attitudes, and campaigns (Tayo, 2023; Yiaga Africa, 2023b, p. 8). Many of them also registered to vote in the elections and mobilised their peers to do the same, resulting in 76.6% of newly registered voters being young people (Akinmoju, 2023; Ayeni, 2023). Some analysts have even drawn links between the #EndSARS movement and the Obidient movement – a movement formed around the 2023 Labour Party presidential candidate, Peter Obi (Irede, 2022; Eshokeme and Taylor, 2023; Tayo, 2023). Although the eventual voter turnout in the 2023 elections was quite low, at 26.7% (*Daily Trust*,

¹¹ Although in February 2023, two former members of the disbanded SARS were convicted and sentenced for murder (Naku, 2023), this prosecution was not a result of the panels.

¹² By youth consciousness, I mean an increased awareness among young people of their collective identity, power, and ability to effect change.

¹³ At the peak of the movement, there were even talks of creating a new political party composed only of youth, leading to “Youth Democratic Party” ranking at second place on the list of trending topics on Nigerian Twitter at the time, although these plans never materialised (Joseph, 2020; Obogo, 2020).

2023), these developments suggest that the #EndSARS movement increased political mobilisation and fuelled youth participation both in the pre-election period and during the 2023 elections.

Overall, the following are the outcomes of the #EndSARS movement and their effects on social and political change in Nigeria:

- Policing: Drove disbandment of SARS, increase in police salaries, and increased police responsiveness, although cases of police brutality and wider systemic issues persist.
- Protesters and victims: Achieved initial responses through an order for the release of protesters and establishment of panels of inquiry. However, some #EndSARS protesters remain in prison, only a few states compensated victims, and there were no prosecutions as a result of the panels.
- Youth consciousness: Increased youth consciousness and demonstrated the power of youth organising, thereby fuelling youth participation in the 2023 elections, although overall turnout continues to be low.

5.2.4 Conclusion

To answer SQ 1, the outcomes of youth movements in Nigeria have had significant implications for social and political change in the country. The student movement in the 1980s/90s, despite limited gains in relation to education and the SAP, was instrumental in Nigeria's transition to democracy, although the democratisation process of the country has subsequently waned. The #NotTooYoungToRun movement successfully lowered age qualifications for certain elective and appointive positions, leading to increased youth representation in politics, although youth remain a minority in legislative bodies. Additionally, the movement spurred some political parties to reduce or waive nomination fees for young people, although highly monetised primaries and poor internal party democracy continue to exclude youth. The #EndSARS movement drove the disbandment of SARS and increased police responsiveness, although challenges relating to lingering police brutality, imprisoned protesters, and limited justice for victims prevail. The #EndSARS movement also significantly increased youth consciousness, as evidenced by their increased participation in the 2023 elections, although overall turnout continues to be low. Ultimately, although challenges prevail, youth movements in Nigeria have been instrumental in driving social and political

change relating to democratisation, political inclusion, and systemic justice. In the process of driving these changes, youth consciousness has also increased.

5.3 Strategies Used by Youth Movements

Having established the outcomes of youth movements and their effects on social and political change, I now consider how these movements have achieved their outcomes. This will provide an answer to SQ 2, “What strategies were used in driving these outcomes?” Four main strategies – protests, collective leadership, alliance building, and engagement with powerholders – were common to all three movements, while the use of social media was evident in the #NotTooYoungToRun and #EndSARS movements.

5.3.1 Protests

All three movements utilised protests, encompassing various protest activities such as demonstrations, marches, and rallies. The three participants in the student movement (Participants 1, 2, and 3) stated that protests and demonstrations were the major strategies used by the movement. Examples are the 1988 protests against petroleum price hikes, the 1989 anti-SAP protests, the 1992 protests against poor economic conditions, and the numerous pro-democracy protests organised with other groups (Shettima, 1993; Adejumbi, 2000; Odion-Akhaine, 2009). Through these protests and demonstrations, the students utilised quite disruptive strategies, issuing ultimatums to the government, boycotting lectures, and sometimes even resorting to violence by burning or attacking government property (Participant 3; Mohammed, 1986; Shettima, 1993).

Protests were also used by the students to frame issues. The student movement was generally underpinned by a sense of social justice and fairness, with links to Marxist-Leninist ideologies, seeking to bring about progressive change both within the universities and in Nigeria as a whole (Participants 1, 2, and 3; Odion-Akhaine, 2009). Moreover, NANS was interlinked with the left-wing, student-led organisation Patriotic Youth Movement of Nigeria (Participant 1; Odion-Akhaine, 2009). This ideological grounding led the students to frame their advocacy as issues of “social struggle” and “social justice” (Participant 2). For example, the NANS charter stated,

The crisis of the education sector itself is a reflection of the crisis-ridden, neo-colonial capitalist economy with production geared primarily for *profit* and not the satisfaction of the *needs* of the people. The capitalist ruling class has continued to shift the burden of the crisis onto the back of the working people and the youth—particularly under

Structural Adjustment Programmes, in form of retrenchment, wage freeze, commercialisation of vital social services, and so on. (National Association of Nigerian Students, n.d., cited in Adejumbi, 2000, p. 213, emphasis in original)

By framing issues such as the commercialisation of education and public spending cuts as problematic symptoms of a capitalist and oppressive regime, the students highlighted the broader socio-economic injustices inherent in the system. By the time the movement evolved to a full campaign for democracy, it was deemed that a democratic system would provide the best guarantee of the kind of just society sought by the activists (Participants 2 and 3). This alignment with the ideologies of the time facilitated their framing and advocacy efforts, in line with the cultural opportunity structure theory.

Students disseminated these ideas through street protests, demonstrations, mass rallies, press conferences, statements, and seminars, effectively mobilising public opinion and garnering support for the movement (Participants 1, 2, and 3; Shettima, 1993). The ideas were spread to two groups of people: students in the campuses, to mobilise them to join the protests; and the wider Nigerian society, to sensitise them on the issues (Participants 2 and 3). Participant 3 further suggested that the poor conditions of living in the country, especially after the devaluation of the naira and increase in prices, helped in mobilising students for protests, “because the threat was no longer theoretical; it was practical”. Ultimately, through these various protest activities, students were able to frame and advocate for their issues, drawing on Marxist-Leninist ideologies.

For the #NotTooYoungToRun movement, marches known as the #NotTooYoungToRun National Days of Action, were held at national and state levels (Participants 4 and 5). There were marches to the national and state legislatures to demand the passing of the bill, a march to the presidential villa to demand presidential assent to the bill, and a march to demand political party support for young aspirants (Participants 4 and 5; YMonitor, no date; Yiaga Africa, 2017; 2018j; Unah, 2018; NotTooYoungToRun TV, 2021). Although these marches were not as disruptive as demonstrations in the student movement, the #NotTooYoungToRun movement also explored more confrontational tactics, such as issuing an ultimatum for the president to sign the bill within eight days, ending on Democracy Day; although the president did not meet the ultimatum, he assured the public in his Democracy Day speech that he would sign the bill, which he did two days later (Participant 4; Jimoh, 2018; Tukur, 2018; Yiaga Africa, 2018a). Overall, these various tactics “were driven by deep thinking, deep planning, and a lot of strategy behind the scenes” (Participant 5). Through these tactics, the movement

was able to voice its demands publicly and put pressure on powerholders, such as the legislature, the presidency, and political parties, to meet its demands.

For the #EndSARS movement, a key strategy was protests, with physical demonstrations starting on 7 October in Lagos State (Participant 8). From Lagos State, the demonstrations caught fire in other states across the country, culminating in 26 simultaneous events across at least 25 states on 13 October (Participants 6, 7, and 8; Ayandele, 2021). The protests were quite disruptive, with protesters blocking major highways and causing heavy traffic jams (Participant 8; Adepegba, 2020; *Vanguard*, 2020a). In terms of mobilisational strategies, the movement spread organically through social media and word of mouth, with celebrities such as Blaqboi Victor, Falz, and Runtown spreading awareness and mobilising their fanbases, while others were mobilising their peers (Participants 6, 7, and 8). Indeed, Kazeem (2020) posits that there was no need to provide any extra incentive to mobilise young Nigerians, as “the notoriety of SARS is such that millions of young Nigerians have either had gory personal experiences or know someone who has”. Consequently, the protests and demonstrations in the #EndSARS movement were quite extensive, leading observers to describe it as one of the largest expressions of popular resistance the government has faced in recent years (Maclean, 2021).

Overall, the student, #NotTooYoungToRun, and #EndSARS movements used protests, demonstrations, marches, rallies, boycotts, and ultimatums to achieve their outcomes. However, while the student and #EndSARS movements were quite disruptive in their approach, the #NotTooYoungToRun movement was more moderate. This may explain why it was the only one of the three movements that escaped repression, as disruption typically invites repression from the state (see Section 5.4).

5.3.2 Social Media

Social media was another strategy used strongly in the #NotTooYoungToRun and #EndSARS movements. This is a strategy that was not available to the student movement in the 1980s/90s, because of the time period in which it occurred. The implication is that whereas the student movement used physical protest activities to frame issues, the #NotTooYoungToRun and #EndSARS movements primarily used social media for their framing activities, because the discussions usually started on social media before they manifested in the form of street protests.

In the #NotTooYoungToRun movement, the hashtag #NotTooYoungToRun, which trended multiple times on Twitter, was specifically developed as a way to connect with young people

and ensure that the message of the movement resonated with the youth (Participants 4 and 5). As Participant 5 noted,

the #NotTooYoungToRun hashtag was self-explanatory. It was about young people, who are not too young to run. So it was a pushback against certain narratives that young people are the leaders of tomorrow and young people don't have any space in politics.

This framing provided the rationale for young people to argue for political inclusion. Some young political aspirants put the hashtag #NotTooYoungToRun on their campaign posters while others argued that they should be involved in the political process because they are “not too young to run” (Participants 4 and 5; Krook and Nugent, 2018, p. 64). Participant 4 further noted that these discussions extended even beyond the political sphere:

If for instance you are part of a community association, you would see young people also say, “Young people need to be more involved because we are not too young to run.”

At some point in the movement, counter-framing was also employed. Participant 5 explained that when there were suggestions that the bill was going to serve the interests of the children of the elite, social media was used to counter those narratives. Social media was also used to provide data to show how young people around the world were leading effectively in public office and share information about age reduction laws in other parts of the world (Participant 5). In this way, the movement was refuting opposition while simultaneously providing a rationale for the bill to be passed.

Interestingly, confrontational tactics were also employed through social media to exert pressure on legislators to pass the bill. For instance, movement actors used social media to tag legislators and demand public declarations of support for #NotTooYoungToRun, with the mantra “You vote no to #NotTooYoungToRun, you lose the next elections” (Participant 5). Moreover, certain lawmakers were publicly called out for renegeing on promises to support the bill, prompting them to reconsider their stance (Participant 5). Another confrontational approach involved publicly shaming state legislatures who voted against the #NotTooYoungToRun Bill in the “Hall of Shame” and celebrating those who passed the bill in the “Hall of Fame” (see Figures 2 and 3). This tactic proved effective, as, after being placed in the Hall of Shame, the Taraba State House of Assembly reversed its initial decision to reject the bill (see Figure 4; Unah, 2018; Yiaga Africa, 2018h).

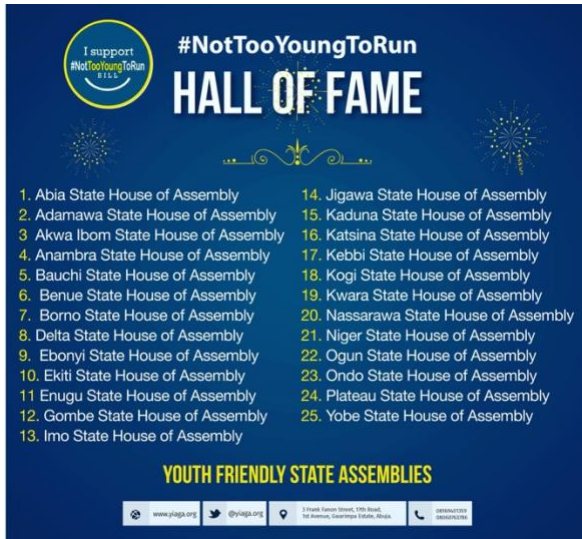


Figure 2. State Houses of Assembly in the #NotTooYoungToRun Hall of Fame (Yiaga Africa, 2018i)



Figure 3. State Houses of Assembly in the #NotTooYoungToRun Hall of Shame (Yiaga Africa, 2018c)

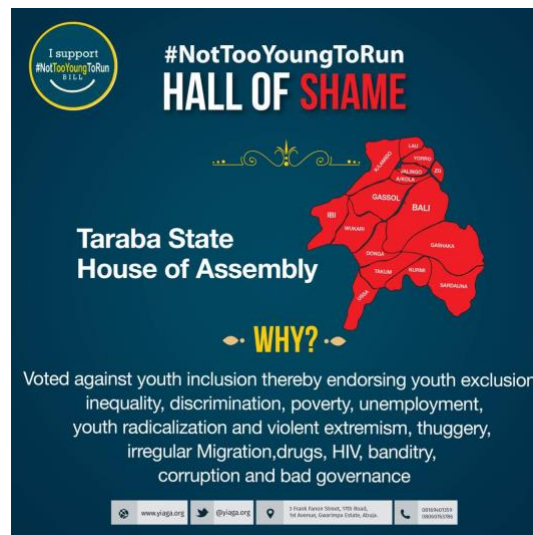


Figure 4. Taraba State House of Assembly in the #NotTooYoungToRun Hall of Shame before making a U-turn (Yiaga Africa, 2018e)

Social media also featured prominently in the #EndSARS movement, which originated on Twitter. Social media was used to mobilise protesters, share information about the movement, raise funds for the protests, and connect with volunteers (Participants 6, 7, and 8; Dark, 2020; Kazeem, 2020; Aubyn and Frimpong, 2022). Some individuals, unable to join the physical demonstrations, became “social media protesters”, amplifying the movement by sharing and reposting related content (Participants 6 and 7). These concerted efforts led to the #EndSARS hashtag trending both nationally and globally, garnering nearly 150 million tweets in the space

of three weeks and earning a customised emoji on Twitter – a raised fist in the Nigerian flag colours (Afriques Connectées, 2020; *BBC News*, 2020a).

The significance of the #EndSARS hashtag was that it succinctly framed the issues, conveying both the problem and the movement’s aims in its name (Omeni, 2022, p. 23). Omeni (2022) and Adeniyi (2022) further posit that the movement used an injustice frame to generate emotive responses and spark anger, as evident in the compelling pictures, videos, and tweets highlighting the injustices of SARS and calling for an end to the unit. As a solution to the problem, the movement formulated demands such as the #5for5 and later the #7for7, which were circulated on social media (see Figures 5 and 6). These demands aimed not only to address immediate concerns regarding SARS but also to invoke the broader idea of systemic justice, with one of the demands specifically calling for “justice” for victims of police brutality (Participants 6, 7, and 8; Ogonnaya, 2020). The rallying cry “sòrò sóké”, meaning “speak up” in Yoruba, also emerged as a powerful mantra in the movement, urging Nigerians to speak up against poor governance and corrupt leadership (Oyero, 2020). In addition to #EndSARS, other hashtags emerged such as #EndPoliceBrutality, #ReformThePolice, #EndInjustice, #EndBadGovernance, #EndCorruption, and #EndImpunity (Participant 8; Bop Daddy, 2020b; Kaizen, 2020; Simi, 2020; Wizkid, 2020). This highlights how the issues in the movement were framed as wider systemic and institutional problems.



Figure 5. #EndSARS five-point demands (Bop Daddy, 2020b)



Figure 6. #EndSARS seven-point demands. (StreetWise, 2020)

Social media also became a tool for counter-framing efforts in the #EndSARS movement. Some opponents of the movement attempted to portray it as a southern agenda aimed at destabilising the government, which was led by a northerner (Iroanusi, 2020; *Vanguard*, 2020b; Ayandele, 2021). Further exacerbating regional tensions, the Arewa Youth Consultative Council (2020) issued a statement, allegedly on behalf of more than 150 million people in 19 northern states, opposing the movement and calling for reform of SARS instead of disbandment. The government, meanwhile, “capitalised on the looting, destruction, and attacks caused by hoodlums and criminal elements to build a counter narrative against the protesters, framing them as a destructive social force and enemies of the state” (Aubyn and Frimpong, 2022, p. 80).

In response to these portrayals, movement participants from the north employed counter-framing by affirming their support for #EndSARS and stating that the Arewa Youth Consultative Council did not represent them (Baba, 2020; Hamma, 2020; mumeentope, 2020; Safiyanu, 2020). Some participants also shared tweets, pictures, and videos to dissociate themselves from the thugs that had infiltrated the movement or to suggest that the thugs were sponsored by state forces (Bop Daddy, 2020a; Egemba, 2020b; FK., 2020; Omojugwa, 2020; Sowore, 2020; Yesufu, 2020). Thus, while calling for an end to police brutality and promoting systemic reforms, the protesters were also simultaneously countering negative portrayals through social media. Overall, it is clear that social media not only helped to boost momentum for the #NotTooYoungToRun and #EndSARS movements but also assisted their framing efforts, which moved from social media to the public sphere.

5.3.3 Collective Leadership

Another strategy adopted by the three movements was collective leadership. For the student movement, the leaders of the student union in each university collectively constituted a network of leaders for the movement. Communication was difficult because there were no cell phones, although there was a landline (Participants 2 and 3). Thus, if there was a planned demonstration, leaders from one university would often go physically to other campuses to convey messages and pass leaflets to leaders there; the leaders in these other universities would then use those leaflets to mobilise students in their university (Participants 1, 2, and 3). This collective leadership approach enabled the student movement to organise activities such as nationwide protests.

The #NotTooYoungToRun movement also utilised collective leadership by building a network of leaders across the country, including a 22-person strategy and leadership team in the FCT, state coordinators in each state, and local government coordinators in some states (Participants 4 and 5). This collective leadership approach made it easier to mobilise young people across the country to reach out to their lawmakers and put pressure on them to pass the #NotTooYoungToRun Bill (Participants 4 and 5). It also facilitated mobilisation for the National Days of Action, as there was a designated lead for the march in each state (Yiaga Africa, 2018b; 2018d; 2018f; 2018g). Having a network of leaders also facilitated the dissemination of personalised letters to each legislator, urging them to pass the bill. Participant 4 explained that the team in the FCT took the letters to all the offices in the National Assembly, while the state coordinators took the letters to the various State Houses of Assembly. Thus, the collective leadership approach helped the movement organise activities across the state and national levels.

For the #EndSARS movement, the situation is a bit more complicated. #EndSARS has been described largely as a leaderless movement (Participants 6 and 7; Matazu and Eboigbe, 2020; Spaces for Change, 2021, p. 62; Aubyn and Frimpong, 2022, p. 80). However, Participant 8 argued that the protest was not leaderless but leaderful, and “the reason people say it is leaderless is because they could not pinpoint one person who is the #EndSARS movement”. The participant further explained,

We have more than 100 barricades in Lagos alone – different roads blocked. How does food still get to all barricades? ... There were leaders at different points; we know ourselves at each barricade ... we know who to call to say look, allow this vehicle to pass.

Thus, the #EndSARS movement, far from being leaderless, utilised collective leadership, although not all the leaders were coordinated or united.¹⁴ As discussed in Section 2.3, there is a spectrum between a leaderless movement and a leader-led one. The #EndSARS movement may have been further away from the leader-led end of the spectrum than the #NotTooYoungToRun movement, but that does not mean that it was at the leaderless end.

¹⁴ Indeed, there was some conflict between the leaders when, on 9 October, one group of leaders tweeted that the movement was over, but another group of leaders held a congress that same day to announce that the protests will continue (Participant 8; Eleanya, 2020; Oduala, 2020b). The latter group accused the former of having colluded with the Lagos State government to end the movement, whereas the former refuted this claim (Oduala, 2020a; 2020c; *Sahara Reporters*, 2020). This shows evidence of the intra-field challenges and organisational disputes common to movements, as noted in Section 2.3.

From the statements made by Participants 6, 7, and 8, some individuals and organisations that held leadership roles in the movement can be identified: Falz, Runtown, Blaqboi Victor, Rinu Oduala, Omoyele Sowore, and the Feminist Coalition.

Indeed, the level of collective leadership adopted in the #EndSARS movement appears to have been a deliberate strategy informed by the Nigerian context, where protests have been ended following arrests of protest leaders or allegations of the government bribing the protest leaders. All participants in the #EndSARS movement (Participants 6, 7, and 8) agreed that the unique thing about the movement was that there was no identifiable leader, which made the movement resilient to co-optation by the state. Given these observations, it makes sense to say that the #EndSARS movement adopted not a leaderless approach but a leaderful one with no clearly identifiable leader. As such, it utilised the collective leadership approach, just like the student and #NotTooYoungToRun movements.

5.3.4 Alliance Building

Alliance building was another strategy used by all three movements. For the student movement, the alliance with the NLC was particularly strong. Both groups advocated for similar causes and organised joint protests and demonstrations, with many student activists joining the NLC post-graduation (Participants 1 and 2). Other alliances were with Academic Staff Union of Universities, which was independent from the NLC; NGOs, such as Women in Nigeria and Campaign for Democracy; and lawyers, such as Gani Fawehinmi and Femi Falana (Participants 2 and 3; Jega, 1995; Adejumobi, 2000; Mustapha, 2001). These alliances were especially pivotal in the campaign for democracy in the 1990s, as these groups worked together in order to “present a formidable force to compel the military” out of power (Participant 3).

With the #NotTooYoungToRun movement, alliances were also built with different stakeholders. For example, the young people involved in the movement built alliances with selected older people who had led struggles in the past; these people provided support behind the scenes and joined the National Days of Action (Participant 5). There were also strong alliances with the international community. For example, the UN Office of the Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, the US Embassy, and the British High Commission endorsed #NotTooYoungToRun and provided messages of solidarity with the movement (Participants 4 and 5). Although, as Participant 4 recognised, it might be difficult to quantify the extent to which these international

actors contributed to the movement's outcomes, these alliances with the international community helped to beam an international spotlight on the movement.

For the #EndSARS movement, it is notable that there was no alliance with the NLC, which, as discussed above, has historically been linked to student and youth groups. The hostility of #EndSARS to the labour movement can be traced to the #OccupyNigeria experience, when the youths' alliance with the NLC dissolved after the NLC unilaterally called off the action, sparking allegations that it had colluded with the government (Akor, 2017; Orjinmo, 2020a). Reflecting on this, Participant 8 noted that the #EndSARS movement had learned from “years of betrayals by organised structures” – a testament to young people's tendency to prefer informal leadership over traditional leader-led movements (see Section 2.3).

Nevertheless, the movement sought to build alliances with the international community, based on the belief that the Nigerian government was uninterested in engaging with key issues until the international media amplified the problem in an embarrassing or inconvenient light (Kazeem, 2020). Thus, the movement sought to utilise the international media to amplify its framing activities, based on an interpretation of the political opportunities in Nigeria as unfavourable. Movement participants began to tag international figures and celebrities such as John Boyega on #EndSARS tweets, urging them to issue statements of solidarity with the movement (Awójídé, 2020; *BBC News*, 2020a; see also Egemba, 2020a). Their efforts were successful, as a little over an hour after Boyega was tagged, he tweeted about #EndSARS, and other international figures and celebrities gradually followed accordingly, causing the movement to gain worldwide attention (*BBC News*, 2020a).¹⁵ There were also solidarity #EndSARS protests in various countries, including Canada, the UK, Germany, and the US, and in the headquarters of multilateral organisations, such as the UN, the European Union, and the African Union (Salaudeen, 2020; Aubyn and Frimpong, 2022). Overall, these various alliances boosted momentum for the three movements, thereby enabling them to increase their scale and impact.

¹⁵ Examples are UN Secretary-General António Guterres, then-US presidential candidate Joe Biden; English footballer Marcus Rashford; German footballer Mesut Özil; American musicians Kanye West, Beyoncé, Puff Daddy, Trey Songz, and Kirk Franklin; Hollywood actress Viola Davis; and Twitter's CEO at the time, Jack Dorsey (*BBC News*, 2020a; Davis, 2020; Franklin, 2020; Jack, 2020; Kazeem, 2020; Özil, 2020; Rashford, 2020; Salaudeen, 2020; TreySongz.eth, 2020; Aubyn and Frimpong, 2022).

5.3.5 Engagement with Powerholders

In addition to alliance building, engagement with powerholders was another strategy used by the three movements.¹⁶ For the student movement, Participant 1 noted that unlike in the NLC, where there were high-level dialogues and meetings with ministers, heads of parastatals, and even the president or head of state at times,

the students were regarded as people who were causing trouble all the time, and the government was always banning them anyway. So the type of interaction and meetings that was happening constantly at the level of organised workers was not happening at that level in the campuses.

However, there were meetings between the student union executives and the university administrations (Participants 1 and 2). Some student activists also sent letters with demands to government officials and made courtesy visits to relevant stakeholders (Participant 2; Shettima, 1993). In any case, the engagements do not appear to have been particularly effective as the military government was repressive, which is why protests and demonstrations were the preferred strategy.

The #NotTooYoungToRun movement, operating under a different context, engaged with powerholders extensively. Early on, the leadership of the movement realised that they “needed champions within those institutions that were going to make change, especially the National Assembly” (Participant 4). Accordingly, the movement engaged with key members of the National Assembly, such as Yakubu Dogara, who was the speaker of the House of Representatives and one of the supporters of the movement; Tony Nwulu, who sponsored the #NotTooYoungToRun Bill in the House of Representatives; and Abdulaziz Nyako, who sponsored the bill in the Senate (Participant 4; Yiaga Africa, 2016). After the bill was passed, the movement also started to engage with political parties on supporting young political aspirants (Participants 4 and 5). These engagements were crucial to the outcomes of the movement, especially with regard to the sponsors of the bill in the legislature, without whom the movement would have lacked an entry point with which to advocate for the age reduction.

¹⁶ It is important to differentiate between both strategies: Alliance building is internal to the movement; it involves getting others to become a part of or support the movement. Engagement with powerholders is external to the movement; it involves engaging with people who have the capacity to meet some or all the goals of the movement (e.g., the government).

The #EndSARS movement also featured engagement with powerholders, albeit to a less extent than the #NotTooYoungToRun movement. For example, following a 72-hour nonstop demonstration in Alausa, protesters were invited to join an emergency plenary session at the Lagos State House of Assembly and present their demands, at the end of which the assembly issued a resolution calling on the federal government to disband SARS (Channels Television, 2020; Oduala, 2020c; Olawoyin, 2020). Furthermore, the inspector-general of police and the National Human Rights Commission convened a multi-stakeholders forum attended by CSOs, development partners, and key actors in the #EndSARS movement (Daka, 2020). It was at this meeting that the government agreed to meet the five-point demands of the movement. Similar engagements were also held in various states, such as Plateau, where a town hall meeting was convened with the governor, other elected and appointed officials in the state, and 20 representatives of the movement (Participants 6 and 7).

Overall, however, the #EndSARS movement, like the student movement, favoured protests over engagement with powerholders. This seems to have been informed by an interpretation of the political opportunities as unfavourable. Indeed, Participant 8, who referred to the current government as a “civilian dictatorship” rather than a democracy, stated, “I didn’t attend any [meeting] quite deliberately, because I knew it was going nowhere”. This theme of distrust explains why protests continued until 20 October despite the government stating that they would meet the protesters’ demands. Overall, the level of engagement with powerholders seems to be hinged on an interpretation of the political opportunities, as discussed further below.

5.3.6 Comparison of Strategies

In response to SQ 2, the above discussions have shown that youth movements have achieved their outcomes by engaging in protest activities, utilising collective leadership, building alliances with various groups, engaging with powerholders, and leveraging social media. Although an assessment of the effectiveness of each strategy has been interwoven into the preceding discussion, there is room to assess the overall effectiveness of the strategies used by each movement. This assessment will also help us determine whether disruptive strategies such as protests tend to be more or less effective than moderate strategies such as engagement with powerholders.

For three participants, it was impossible to choose one strategy as most effective or least effective, as each strategy serves a purpose (Participants 2, 6, and 8). Three others chose

protests as the most effective strategy (Participants 1, 3, and 7), with two of them identifying another strategy on the same level of effectiveness as protests (engagement with powerholders for Participant 1 and using social media for Participant 7). Interestingly, the two participants in the #NotTooYoungToRun movement chose engagement with powerholders as the most effective strategy (Participants 4 and 5). For the least effective strategy, participants again struggled to identify one sole strategy that was the least effective, with only Participant 7 clearly stating that engagement with powerholders was the least effective strategy.

These various viewpoints indicate that the effectiveness of a movement will usually depend on a combination of strategies, but where the balance lies will vary depending on the issue at hand, the goals of the movement, and the context in which the movement is operating. The student movement, operating under a repressive military government and eventually advocating for regime change, naturally used mostly disruptive strategies, although there were pockets of engagement with powerholders in the form of letter writing and courtesy visits.

By contrast, the #NotTooYoungToRun movement, operating under a democratic government, favoured moderate strategies. Since the movement was seeking constitutional change, relying heavily on confrontation would not have achieved much, because they first needed an insider to introduce the bill in the National Assembly and then had the further hurdle of getting the legislatures in at least two-thirds of the states to support the amendment. Although the movement organised marches, issued an ultimatum to the president, and explored confrontational tactics on social media, the balance was clearly more on moderation. This was also in response to the movement actors' interpretation of the political conditions as being favourable to the movement.

However, the #EndSARS movement demonstrates that operating under the context of a democratic government does not automatically mean that the balance will be on moderation. In addition to the political context, the issue being advocated for is also important. Since #EndSARS was advocating for the dismantling of an institution and for wider systemic changes, the movement was by definition anti-institutional. As such, the balance was more on disruptive tactics. As discussed above, the #EndSARS activists also viewed the political climate as being unfavourable to the movement.

Thus, although both the #NotTooYoungToRun and #EndSARS movements were operating under democratic governments (both led by the same president), the different issues being advocated for (promoting youth inclusion versus ending police brutality) accounted for the

different strategies used. Participant 4 explained the situation aptly, noting that while the peaceful, non-threatening approach helped the #NotTooYoungToRun movement to achieve results, it was important that the #EndSARS protesters “came out on the streets with ... a show of force, because it was a totally different issue, totally different dynamics”.

Overall, in line with findings from the literature review, one cannot conclusively say that disruptive strategies are more effective than moderate strategies, or vice versa. To be effective, most movements will likely use a combination of both disruptive and moderate strategies; where the balance lies will depend on the issue being advocated for, the goals of the movement, and the movement actors’ interpretation of the political context.

5.4 External Factors

Having traced the effects of youth movements and the strategies used by these movements, I now consider the broader context within which the movements operated to identify any external factors that may have either influenced the outcomes of the movements directly or affected the movements’ ability to achieve their outcomes. This investigation will provide an answer to SQ 3, “What external factors, if any, have influenced these outcomes?”

Section 5.2 established that the transition to democracy was an important outcome of the student movement. However, attributing this outcome solely to the student movement oversimplifies the complex dynamics at play. As discussed in previous sections, this outcome was a result of the alliance of various pro-democracy groups (e.g., the labour movement, the women’s movement, NGOs, professional associations, and the press), of which the student movement was only one part. In addition to these internal pressures, there were also external pressures driving a shift towards democratisation, such as diplomatic and economic pressures from Western countries, and the larger wave of democratisation across other African countries (Human Rights Watch, 1997; Fasakin, 2015). The sudden death of Abacha in 1998 also marked a turning point, leading to the emergence of Abdulsalami Abubakar, who initiated a new political transition programme that led to transition elections within a year (Fasakin, 2015). This broader context indicates that the student movement played a significant but not exclusive role in driving the country’s democratisation.

Another important external factor that affected the student movement was the government’s response, which was a combination of repression and co-optation. Repressive tactics included frequent bans on student unions; suspensions or expulsions of student activists; arrests,

kidnaps, and killings by state forces; and alleged state sponsorship of divisive groups to undermine the movement and attack student activists (Participants 1, 2, and 3; Shettima, 1993; Adejumobi, 2000; Odion-Akhaine, 2009). In line with the literature on state repression of activists (see Section 2.3), the acts of repression do not appear to have deterred the students but only made them more committed to the cause (Participant 2; Shettima, 1993; Olusanya, 1996, cited in Adejumobi, 2000, p. 225).

Conversely, co-optation strategies appeared more successful. Participants 2 and 3 pointed to increasing corruption in the student movement due to co-optation by the state and the infiltration of pro-establishment forces into the movement (see also Adejumobi, 2000; Odion-Akhaine, 2009). With the compromised state of NANS by the mid to late 1990s, Adejumobi (2000, p. 222) suggests that NGOs (e.g., Campaign for Democracy) and trade unions (e.g. Nigeria Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers) took the lead in the struggle to end military rule; the actions of the student movement were merely complementary. Ultimately, while the student movement undoubtedly played a role in democratisation, this narrative suggests that the government's response reduced the effectiveness of the movement's advocacy, especially by the mid to late 1990s.

For the #NotTooYoungToRun movement, external factors also played a role. One key external factor was the ongoing constitutional amendment process, without which the movement would have lacked a direct entry point to advocate for the age reduction law (Participant 5). Additionally, Participant 4 opined that after the 2015 general elections, "the time was right and the conditions were ready for young people to participate and for the rebirth of the movement". This was demonstrated by the fact that many young people were involved in the political campaigns and a few relatively young people were appointed into political positions (Participant 4). Thus, the decision to relaunch the #NotTooYoungToRun movement was hinged on the actors' recognition of the political opportunities presented by the constitutional amendment process and the post-2015 election climate.

Outside Nigeria, events across the globe, such as the emergence of Emmanuel Macron of France and Sebastian Kurz of Austria, showed an increasing recognition of the capacity of young people in politics, which the #NotTooYoungTo movement could then leverage:

These were developments happening across different parts of the world, and that really helped because they became a reference point for us as a movement to show lawmakers

and the Nigerian people that there are young people leading in other parts of the world, so Nigeria shouldn't be an exception. (Participant 5)

These external developments facilitated the framing activities of the movement actors, enabling them to support their proposals by referring to international developments.

For the #EndSARS movement, numerous internal and external factors also affected the movement. The resurfacing of the movement in 2020 is attributable to a combination of factors: frustration with the COVID-19-induced lockdown, which brought economic hardship and had already sparked community rebellion; similar protests against police brutality under the #BlackLivesMatter movement in the US just five months earlier; and widespread anger due to economic and systemic issues in Nigeria, which had already culminated in protests just six days before the #EndSARS physical demonstrations began (Participants 6 and 8; Ojewale, 2020; Gaskia, 2022, p. 12). Collectively, these factors created a fertile ground for the movement, culminating in widespread protests when a video shared on 3 October sparked mass outrage and amplified the already existing negative emotions. Without these external conditions, the movement might have struggled to gain traction, remaining sporadic like previous #EndSARS protests since 2017.

The government's response was another factor that significantly affected the #EndSARS movement. Repressive tactics were used, with protesters tear gassed, shot at, and chased, while alleged government-sponsored thugs infiltrated protests, resulting in widespread looting, attacks on property, and violence against demonstrators (Participants, 6, 7, and 8; Aubyn and Frimpong, 2022). The climax was the Lekki toll gate incident on 20 October 2020, where soldiers shot protesters under circumstances suggesting premeditation, despite denials from the army and government (*BBC News*, 2020c; Busari et al., 2020; Ibekwe, 2020; Mbah, 2020; Orjinmo, 2020b; Oyeleke, 2021). Like the student movement, the #EndSARS movement was initially resilient in response to state repression. However, the state's heavy-handed actions at Lekki ultimately led to the protests dying down, thereby affecting the extent to which the movement was able to achieve its outcomes.¹⁷

¹⁷ Although there have been occasional protests under #EndSARS, including ongoing protests during the panels of inquiry established as a result of the movement, protests in November 2020, and memorial protests a year later (Participant 8; Socialist Workers League, 2020; Ayandele, 2021; Ebolosue, 2021; *PM News*, 2021), the movement has effectively lost traction.

Overall, in response to SQ 3, external factors, ranging from government responses to global and Nigeria-specific trends, significantly influenced the outcomes of youth movements in Nigeria. While some external factors directly impacted the outcomes (notably democratisation), others affected the ability of the movements to achieve their outcomes, whether positively or negatively. These findings highlight the complex interplay of internal and external dynamics shaping the socio-political landscape in which the movements operated.

5.5 Summary of Findings

Table 2 presents a summary of the key findings of this chapter.

Table 2

Summary of Findings

Name of Movement	Issue	Change	Continuity	Strategies Utilised	External Factors
Student movement (1980s/90s)	Education	- Some suspended or expelled students readmitted to universities	- Some students had to restart education in other institutions - Public spending on education not increased - Tuition fees not removed - Meal and accommodation subsidies not reintroduced	- Protests - Collective leadership - Alliances with labour, academia, lawyers, NGOs, etc. - Engagement with university authorities and government officials	- Government repression and co-optation
	SAP	- SAP relief measures established	- SAP not dismantled throughout Babangida's regime		
	Democratisation	- Transition from military rule to democracy in 1999	- Democratic principles not respected		- Government repression and co-optation - Other pro-democracy groups - Diplomatic and economic pressures from the West - Larger wave of democratisation across other Africa - Emergence of Abdulsalami Abubakar
#NotTooYoungToRun movement (2016–date)	Age qualifications	- #NotTooYoungToRun Act passed, reducing age qualifications for State Houses of Assembly,	- Age qualifications for the Senate and governorship not reduced	- Protests - Social media - Collective leadership	- Ongoing constitutional amendment process - Favourable political climate in Nigeria

Name of Movement	Issue	Change	Continuity	Strategies Utilised	External Factors
		House of Representatives, and the presidency - #NotTooYoungToRun Act indirectly reduced age qualifications for ministers and commissioners		- Alliances with the older generation and the international community - Engagement with legislators and political parties	- Increased recognition of youth capacity around the world
	Youth representation	- Increased youth candidacy and representation in the legislature - Increased youth representation in appointive offices	- Youth remain a small minority in legislative bodies		
	Political party support	- Reduction or elimination of nomination fees for young political aspirants in some political parties	- Political process remains highly monetised, excluding youth - Poor internal democracy within political parties continues to exclude youth		
#EndSARS movement (2017–2020)	Policing	- Disbandment of SARS - 20% increase in police salaries - Increased responsiveness by the police to complaints	- Police brutality and wider systemic issues prevail	- Protests - Social media - Collective leadership - Alliances with the international community - Engagement with government officials	- COVID-19 and lockdown - #BlackLivesMatter - Widespread anger due to economic and systemic issues - Government repression
	Protesters and victims	- Release of some #EndSARS protesters - Panels of inquiry established - Payment of compensation to victims in the FCT and three states	- At least 12 #EndSARS protesters still in prison - No establishment of panel in seven states - No payment of compensation to victims in 33 states		

Name of Movement	Issue	Change	Continuity	Strategies Utilised	External Factors
			- No prosecution of erring officers as a result of the panels		
	Youth consciousness	- Increased youth consciousness, fuelling youth participation prior to and during the 2023 elections	- Overall voter turnout remains low		

6 Conclusion

This study sought to answer the question: How, and to what extent, have youth movements driven social and political change in Nigeria? The study found that through protests, social media, collective leadership, alliance building, and engagement with powerholders, youth movements have driven change with regard to democratisation, political inclusion, and systemic justice. Despite facing government repression and co-optation, the student movement in the 1980s/90s played a significant role in Nigeria's transition to democracy, alongside contributions from other pro-democracy groups and external pressures. However, the movement failed to drive significant change in educational and economic policies, and the country's democratisation process has subsequently waned. The #NotTooYoungToRun movement promoted youth political inclusion, tapping into the favourable political climate in Nigeria and around the world, although youth still remain a minority in legislative bodies and progress has been slow in securing political party support. The #EndSARS movement, inspired by global movements such as #BlackLivesMatter and exacerbated by discontent from COVID-19 and economic hardship in Nigeria, drove the disbandment of SARS, increased police responsiveness, and secured compensation for some victims. However, government repression hampered the movement, with police brutality still prevalent and many victims yet to get justice. As a fallout of their participation in the #EndSARS movement, youth consciousness has also increased, as evidenced by their involvement in the 2023 elections. These findings have significant human rights implications.

6.1 Human Rights Implications of Findings

At first glance, the study's findings suggest that, consistent with existing literature on youth movements, youth movements in Nigeria have driven mostly cosmetic rather than systemic change, since wider structural issues continue to prevent the full realisation of human rights. For example, while the student movement played a significant role in the country's transition to democracy, the democratisation process has since waned. The poor quality of democracy in the country not only directly affects the right to vote and be elected but also indirectly spurs a range of other human rights abuses due to lack of state accountability. Similarly, although the #NotTooYoungToRun movement has increased youth political representation to some extent, systemic issues such as poor internal party democracy continue to exclude youth, thereby impeding their right to participate in public affairs. For the #EndSARS movement, SARS was disbanded and the police appear to be more responsive to complaints, yet human rights abuses

by the police and security forces remain prevalent due to wider systemic issues in the security sector.

However, in the words of Participant 5, the struggle for change is “a process and not an event”. Change is cumulative and often takes considerable time to manifest fully. The picture presented in this study indicates that, although systemic issues remain, Nigerian youth have made noticeable gains, thereby demonstrating their potential to drive further change. Accordingly, young activists should sustain the momentum and harness their collective power to drive more substantive changes that better protect and uphold their human rights.

In terms of strategies for driving these changes, the study’s findings suggest that a combination of disruptive and moderate strategies is typically most effective. The balance between these strategies depends on the specific issue being addressed, the movement’s goals, and the political context. However, one key all-encompassing strategy available to contemporary youth is social media. While today’s youth face similar acts of state repression and socio-economic exclusion as their counterparts in the 1980s/90s, they have the key advantage of social media. This tool should be leveraged to frame issues, mobilise protesters, build movement momentum, and facilitate movement activities such as fundraising.

Ultimately, the demographic strength of Nigerian youth makes them a powerful force for change. The student, #NotTooYoungToRun, and #EndSARS movements demonstrate the collective power of young Nigerians. By harnessing this power and utilising the political and cultural opportunities available to them, youth can drive significant change, creating a society in which human rights are better respected and protected.

6.2 Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research

Despite the valuable insights offered by this study, it faced certain limitations that future research should address. One limitation is that only activists who participated in the movements were interviewed. I sought to address this limitation by corroborating interview findings with data from secondary sources and also being critical about the extent of change. Future researchers could provide further insights by interviewing other actors, such as government officials, counter-movement participants, and observers.

Additionally, the discussions in this study were limited to the effects of youth movements on social and political change. Since movements typically drive change in diverse ways, future research could investigate other dimensions, such as how movements spur backlash in the form

of counter-movements and/or government repression, how movements affect the personal lives of the participants, or how movements affect other movements through agenda spillover. This broader approach would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the diverse effects of youth movements in Nigeria, as well as their human rights implications.

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Appendix A. Interview Guide

1. Please describe your involvement in [name of youth movement]. In which year(s) did you participate in this movement and how old were you at the time?
2. What do you perceive as the impact of this movement?
 - a. Probe: Think specifically about impact on social and political change.
 - b. Do you think there were any unintended effects?
 - c. Did your notion of success change over the course of the movement?
3. What strategies/tactics did you use in this movement? Did these strategies evolve over the course of the movement?
 - a. Internal strategies (organisation/mobilisation/alliance building)
 - b. External strategies (public opinion/political actors)
 - c. Do you think there were other factors that contributed to this result or made it easier for your movement to achieve this result?
4. Of these strategies, which do you consider the most effective and least effective? Why?
5. How do you think the strategies used in this movement compare with those used by other youth movements/groups at the time?
6. Do you have any other comments or questions?

Appendix B. Information Letter

Purpose of the Research Project

You are invited to participate in a research project, the main purpose of which is to explore the extent to which youth activism has driven social and political change in Nigeria. The researcher, Rukevwe Otive-Igbuzor, seeks to gather data through semi-structured interviews to explore experiences and perspectives on youth activism and change in Nigeria. The collected personal data will be used to inform the researcher's master's dissertation, with a working title "From Authoritarianism to Democracy: Exploring the Impact of Youth Activism on Social and Political Change in Nigeria", for the Erasmus Mundus Human Rights Policy and Practice Programme.

Institution Responsible for the Research Project

UiT The Arctic University of Norway is primarily responsible for the project (data controller).

Why You Are Being Asked to Participate

You are being asked to participate in this project because of your experiences with youth activism and your expertise on the subject matter. Participants in the project were sourced through the researcher's personal networks and through referrals. The criteria for inclusion in the project is personal involvement with a previous or current youth movement in Nigeria.

What Participation Involves for You

Your participation in this project will involve you engaging in a virtual semi-structured interview with the researcher to discuss your involvement with a youth movement in Nigeria and your impression of the extent to which that movement drove change. The interview will take approximately 1 hour.

Participation is Voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you choose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your Personal Privacy – How We Will Store and Use Your Personal Data

We will only use your personal data for the purposes specified here, and we will process your personal data in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation, also known as the GDPR). The interviews will be recorded solely for transcription purposes and securely stored. The following measures will be taken to secure the personal data:

- Continuous anonymisation: The data will be continuously processed to delete, group, or rewrite personally identifying information.
- Restricted access: The interviews will be accessible only by the researcher, the data controller, and the data processor (Google Meet for recording and transcription).
- Use of pseudonyms: To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms will be used when reporting participants' responses in the dissertation. No personally identifiable information about any participant will be released.

What Will Happen to Your Personal Data at the End of the Research Project

The planned end date of the project is June 2024. At the end of the project, the personal data, including any digital recordings, will be deleted.

Your Rights

As long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What Gives Us the Right to Process Your Personal Data

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with UiT The Arctic University of Norway, the Data Protection Services of Sikt – Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research has

assessed that the processing of personal data in this project meets requirements in data protection legislation.

Questions

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- The data controller, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, via Jennifer Hays;
- The project supervisor, Hannah Miller; or
- The researcher, Rukevwe Otive-Igbuzor.

If you have questions about how data protection has been assessed in this project, contact Sikt (personverntjenester@sikt.no/+47 73 98 40 40).

Yours faithfully,

Rukevwe Otive-Igbuzor

(Researcher)

Consent Form

I have received and understood information about the project and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent to participate in an interview and for my personal data to be processed until the end of the project.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____