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**An analysis of social media as an instrument of social change: a case of the EndSARS protest**

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my grandparents whose notable sacrifices paved the way for my success today.

To Alhaja Anobigbemi Shukurah Animashaun, Alhaji Abdul-Ghaniyy Lawal, Alhaji Ibrahim Iwalesin Sulaimon, and Alhaja Bilkis Ademarayola Ibrahim Iwalesin

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## **ABSTRACT**

The EndSARS protest movement took place in Nigeria from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> of October 2020. The protest movement had clear objectives and goals, and utilized digital media, technology, and networks to coordinate and organize. Its extensive use of digital tools was not witnessed before in the history of social movements in Nigeria. Recognizing this, I conducted a media analysis of the protest to explore the distinctive features presented.

Through discussing subthemes of organizations in social movement, the distinction between the public and the media public, the relationship between social movements and the political institutions, and the relationship between media and social movements, I explored the contemporary literature on the existing features of digital protests today.

Using the social media tool, Twitter, I chose samples based on certain criteria, collected, collated, and analyzed data using discourse analysis, and used the conceptual framework of ‘clicktivism’ and “connective action” to explore the textual data collected for the discursive features through analysis of language, narratives, and frames.

The discursive features were observed and discussed extensively with the relevant empirical literature. The patterns observed are classified into categories highlighting the discursive features of organization, nature of relationship, collectivity, remembrance, inclusion, and exclusion.

This analysis provided much-needed information and knowledge into the distinctive features of the EndSARS movement and filled the gap in contemporary literature on the case.

**Keywords:** Social movement, political institutions, digital protest, media, EndSARS protest, NGOs, social media, collective action.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

SARS – Special Anti-Robbery Squad

NGOs- Non-Governmental Institutions

SMOs- Social Movement Organizations

UNFPA- United Nations Populations Fund

IGP- Inspector General of Police

VPN- Virtual Private Networks

ISP- Internet Service Providers

BLM- Black Lives Matter

## **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

*Media* refers to a medium of communication. This term refers to all types of media.

*Broadcast/Mainstream media*- This is a classification or type of media that includes a broad range of media apparatus that is particularly involved in broadcasting. This term refers to apparatus such as Television, Radio, Magazines, and Newspapers.

*Online media*- This is a classification that refers to online media apparatus. It encompasses all types of media published online. This classification includes social media, blog posts, websites, and more.

*Social media*- This is an interactive form of online media with inbuilt technology facilitating different forms of communication and expression. Examples include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, WhatsApp, and more.

*Digital protests*- This is a term that refers to social media-induced protests, or in other words, a protest that occurred because of activism online.

*NGOs*- Non-Governmental organizations are institutions independent of the government with specific missions and objectives and working towards achieving them.

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

Social movements are an essential feature of our social environment. These movements involve mass mobilizations of people wishing to voice their opinions to the public. Social movements could take the form of protests and other forms of activism. So far, protests have been a crucial tool to express different opinions. A dynamic mechanism as powerful as protest has changed over the years and will continue to change as society evolves.

A social movement is a form of collective action that requires mass mobilization. Since this is an action made up of large numbers, it is important to coordinate actions. This requires reasoning and communication (Trottier & Fuchs, 2015). Media are a useful tool to communicate and coordinate mobilizations. The type of media used is subject to many considerations, but in many protests today, social media is the most notable type of media used.

Social media has empowered communication and cooperation within many social movements permeating geographical boundaries on a large scale. Its use in social movements has been attributed to trust and equitable information exchange (Shen et al, 2020 p. 2). We have seen the tremendous impact of social media on protests like the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, the Arab Spring, the Yellow Vests movement, and indigenous protests like OccupyNigeria (aka Nigeria's Harmattan Storm) and the Nigerian EndSARS movement.

The use of social media for activism and social justice by various social movements is seen as an innovative practice that has successfully supported the organizational and communication functions of social movements (Poell and Van Dijck, 2018). Therefore, active presence and media production using social media will continue to create further awareness and achieve important results for the movement. In this research, I examined a case of social movement and analyzed its social media components to determine its distinctive features as observed through the selected case. The choice of the Nigerian EndSARS movement presented below is based on its social media component, which responds to current research needs. This choice is rooted in the history of the protest, the goals and objectives, and the availability of data that would answer the research questions.

This chapter discusses the history, goals, objectives, and features of the EndSARS movement in Nigeria. This discussion provides an understanding of the social movement and its relevance to the existing literature on social movements around the world.

### **1.1.1 EndSARS: history, goals and objectives, and distinctive features**

The EndSARS movement in Nigeria had a primary goal to end the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) unit. This special Anti-Robbery Squad was formed by the government in 1992 to combat armed robbery and other serious crimes due to the rising rate of armed robbery during this period. The unit was tasked with surveillance and monitoring communications to facilitate the arrest of known criminals. Their success in arresting said criminals led to the spread of this unit across the country (Malumfashi, 2020). The power and excesses accorded to this unit potentially caused serious human rights violations. The unit was not properly regulated, but the political institution did not see the problem since it was producing results (Malumfashi, 2020).

The development of a social media campaign with the hashtag #ENDSARS in 2017, provided an avenue for victims to share their experiences and grievances about police brutality (Malumfashi, 2020). This pathway allowed social media to witness the evolution, experiences, and perceptions of police brutality, particularly from the SARS unit. The use of social media to communicate grievances through shared protest messages and arts, and further use to disclose other political opinions and grievances, made it a viable medium to study the movement.

The EndSARS social media campaign from 2017 majorly performed the function of hashtag activism (Oloyede & Elegu, 2019). This was accompanied by marginal and decentralized mass mobilization (Soladoye & Ojo, 2020) to call on governing institutions to curb the excesses of the SARS unit.

There have long been efforts to reform and abolish the unit. There were investigations and recommendations from commissions formed for this reason between 2018 and 2019, but prosecution requirements were not met, resulting in futile efforts (Abimbade et al., 2022). Another cited effort concerns the lack of will on the part of the political institution to address the problem. This consistent disappointment contributes to the lack of trust between the citizens and the political institutions (Abimbade et al., 2022).

In 2020 a new wave of protests began clamoring for the abolition of the unit. This protest was sparked online by a video post showing an alleged victim of police brutality and members of the police force fleeing the scene (Dambo et al 2021). This led to the reignition of hashtag activism on social media with references from past campaigns against the SARS unit.

As Ekwunife et al (2021, p. 3) report, the objectives of the protest were stated and listed as:

- Justice for all deceased victims of police brutality and reparation for their families
- The immediate release of all arrested protesters in Nigeria
- The establishment of an independent investigative committee within 10 days that would oversee the investigation and prosecution of all reports of police misconduct in Nigeria
- Per the Police Act, psychological evaluation and retraining of all disbanded SARS officers before reassigning them to other units
- Adequately increasing police officer's wages

Not long after, massive protests broke out in Nigeria with the support of international organizations, popular figures, and Nigerians in the diaspora (Ekwunife et al., 2021). This blissful feeling did not last long as violence erupted in the later stages of the protest. Things then took an even worse turn when the military cracked down on a protest site on October 20 causing mass casualties (Dambo et al, 2021, p. 1).

A judicial panel was formed in Lagos state to investigate and validate the claims of police brutality and make its recommendations (Dambo et al, 2021). On November 15, 2021, the panel presented its results to the Lagos state government. As summarized by Adediran (2021), the panel's major findings are:

- The committee referred to the event at Lekki Tollgate as a "massacre"
- The protest was peaceful and orderly, and the soldiers invaded the protests at the Lekki tollgate incident
- The report agrees that there were cover-ups by the state-actors

The protest lasted about two weeks, but noteworthy events happened afterward, and I have attached a timeline of events in **APPENDIX A** to show this progress. The reports recommended actions to the state government, some recommendations were accepted, others were rejected, and further recommendations were forwarded to higher-level bodies (Abiodun, 2021).

Although the protests ended after the Lekki massacre on the 20<sup>th</sup> of October, events surrounding the movement did not end there. Protesters and other stakeholders continued to actively express concerns about SARS/SWAT and bad governance using social media.

## **1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Police brutality is a social problem in developed and developing nations. This issue exists in developed societies such as the United States<sup>1</sup>, and Canada<sup>2</sup>, and less developed societies such as Nigeria. Since my case for this research is a social movement that happened in Nigeria, I will be exploring a social movement in the country.

Nigerian security forces have been accused by various platforms (local and international) for consistently using torture as an interrogation technique and conducting other human rights abuses in the performance of their security duties (Amnesty International, 2016). The use of preliminary profiling, custodial misconduct, and extortion are examples of wrongful conduct attributed to the Nigerian police. The use of force against suspects and defendants has been institutionalized as a key and effective mechanism for performing their policing duties (Soladoye & Ojo, 2020). Also, profiling based on appearances to criminalize and extort victims is one of the most popular allegations leveled against Nigerian police, particularly the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS).

The use of Force Order 237<sup>3</sup> of Nigeria's police regulations to justify the shooting of victims "whether or not the detainee poses a threat to life" (Amnesty International, 2016, p. 9) has also contributed to this excess of power wielded by the special anti-robbery squad (SARS). The detention centers of this unit are so depraved that they are nicknamed slaughterhouses. Reports have also documented the various forms of torture used on "suspects" (Amnesty International, 2016) detained with prejudice rather than evidence.

Over the years, the government has taken steps to curb these excesses. From the Presidential Committee's Recommendation in 2006 and 2008, The National Committee against Torture in 2009, The Police Reform Budget in 2010, the Nigeria Police Force broad reforms in 2016, and

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<sup>1</sup> (De Choudhury et al, 2016)

<sup>2</sup> (Hodgson, 2001)

<sup>3</sup> Force Order 237: Rules for guidance in the use of firearms by the police, is a directive that justifies that a police officer may use his firearms provided that "a person who takes to flights to avoid arrest, provided the offense is such that the accused may be punished with death or imprisonment for seven years or more". (Amnesty International, 2016).

The Anti-Torture Act of 2017, these actions initially taken to curb the excesses of the SARS unit and fulfill the international obligation on the prohibition on the use of torture and other ill-treatment (Amnesty International, 2016; Amnesty International, 2020; Malumfashi, 2020) have not been very productive. All these measures have yielded no concrete results in curbing police brutality in Nigeria. Over the years, the excesses of this entity have been a problem for the nation, hence the development of social movements to pressure political institutions to curb these excesses and enact long-lasting reform.

Social movements and protests existed long before the development of the EndSARS movement, many of which took place outside of the social media space. Movements like the Aba women's riots and the June 12 protest predated the development of social media and they successfully communicated their goals and spoke to power. With the development of social media, protests like OCCUPYNigeria, Bringbackourgirls, and EndSARS were all born on social media and evolved into protests while consistently maintaining media engagement. A holistic examination of the EndSARS movements, therefore, requires proper media analysis, as this space offers more information and perspective on the protests.

The use of social media in protests has attracted remarkable interest in the research community today, however, little empirical research has addressed how social media posts can describe and disseminate historical discriminatory police actions (De Choudhury et al., 2016). The use of social media in movements has indeed become an important space for the development of social movement goals.

Before the advent of digital media, other forms of broadcast media, particularly newspapers and television, were the forms of media used (Neuman, 2010). This form of media was the mechanism commonly available and used by all. This mainstream/broadcast media has long been the medium responsible for disseminating grievances and opinions to the political institution. (Egbunike & Olorunnisola, 2015). However, it has been characterized as a medium with unequal representation, reliance on a political institution, and the generation of violent frames to capture public interest (Phipps, & Szagala, 2007). Social media has thus become a favorite tool for activists and social movement organizers.

Social media and its success in today's social movements can also be linked to its ability to reach a larger crowd with less interference (Trottier & Fuchs, 2015), making it an advantageous mechanism for social movements over mainstream media, which can be influenced by state

actors. These qualities do not necessarily mean that mainstream media has failed in its duty of objectivity, or that digital media is non-repressive; It just goes to show that the perceived threat that mainstream media poses to social movements enabled the shift and preference of social media in social movements.

The social media stream has become a space of expression that supports social movements and affirms the message of the movement. While this does not necessarily eliminate the problem of unverified reports and repressive strategies that could undermine the reach of the message and the legitimacy of social movements, the use of social media has been both beneficial for activists and has posed certain risks when used in social movements.

The EndSARS movement mobilized, gathered resources, and disseminated information through its extensive use of social media. Social media also provided a space for relationships with stakeholders and for exposure and inclusion in protest mobilization messages. As one would expect with movements against state actors, it has faced various problems such as repressions and outbreaks of violence.

The triumph and problems faced by the protests are the distinctive features I am interested in and have formulated research questions to demonstrate this and streamline my aims and objectives. Doing this through media analysis would provide a fundamental understanding of the protests and the protests as portrayed on social media.

### **1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS**

The problem of police brutality is widespread in Nigeria. The development of this social media-induced movement is unique and crucial to my interest in the movement. I researched this protest through its social media messages to gain an understanding and to observe all the distinctive features of this protest.

I analyzed the EndSARS protest through its media component. This analysis was conducted to uncover the patterns and characteristics of the protest. Based on the collected data, literature review, and use of relevant methods, the distinctive characteristics of the movement on social media were observed successfully and reported in subsequent chapters. By analyzing textual data associated with the movement displayed on social media, I was able to explore the features of social media-induced protests or digital protests.

With the objective of exploration and understanding, I was able to observe the distinctive features through the guidance of the following research question:

*1. How did the EndSARS movement play out on social media?*

- a) *What are the distinctive features of the EndSARS protests on social media?*
- b) *What is the existing relationship between the protest actors and the established political institution?*

#### **1.4 NOTABLE LITERATURE IN THIS FIELD**

Digital media in social movements is a topical issue with numerous existing literatures discussing various aspects and perspectives of this phenomenon. Trottier & Fuchs (2015) theorized digital protests with several case studies with works by other authors such as Poell (with his work on political censorship of activism), Gerbaudo, and many others. Their discussion of the phenomena provided concise background and opened opportunity for my research to explore the discursive features of the EndSARS movement.

Further discussions about existing patterns in digital protests became visible in the work of Gerbaudo (2012) titled “Tweets and the Streets” with his discussion about digital movements, collective actions, and attributions of leadership. The existing literature by Dambo et al. (2020), Dambo et al. (2021), and Abimbade et al. (2022) conducted empirical analysis on the EndSARS protests and communicated certain existing issues with digital protests in Nigeria. Dambo et al. (2021) reiterate the features and typology of networks that have formed in social media and how they are visible during the movement. The discussion of networks and connectivity through social media was further explored using the literature by Castells (2010). These literatures enabled the thematic discussion of the distinction between the public sphere and the media public sphere.

Discussion of social media and its usefulness to the social movement consisted of literature discussing its value for activists and protest organizers, with much literature pointing to the importance of NGOs in these organizational practices. The work from Boulding (2004) examines organizational involvement in protests in comparison to regime types, Keating & Thrandardottir (2017) examine NGO transparency in organizational capacity, and more localized literature on NGO functions, performance, and criticism from Shivji (2006), Smith (2010) and Manji & O’Coill (2002) are all important literatures engaged with to explore the



thematic discussion of NGOs presence in social movements. These literatures showed the importance of NGOs for social movements and the motivation and risks of their engagement.

The collectivity displayed on social media and its differentiation from collective values has been a fundamental discussion in many literatures such as Poell & Van Dijck (2018), Halupka (2014), and Glenn (2015), hence my exploration of the concepts of clicktivism/slacktivism in the subsequent chapters. This distinction and the inherent risks of social movements using social media have been key to literatures such as Dadas (2017), and Mozorov (2011, in Dennis, 2019), examining these risks and providing literatures with a fundamental summary that clicktivist movements are popular on social media and does not generate the same traction on the street. However, the work of Halupka (2014) and Christensen (2011) with prevalent political perspectives as they are each political scientist, examines this concept and does away with the slacktivism tags of digital protests, which claim that clicktivist movements are just a form of online activism, rather than a process and a political act towards collective action.

The work by Abimbade et al, (2021) discussed the risks of decentralized movements such as the difficulty of enabling negotiations and its lack of longevity. Although clicktivism challenges this claim, the unequal representation and access to digital technology limited the reach of the protest, and decentralization allowed for various forms of repression. This feeling was also shared by Dambo et al. (2020) in their study of the social media protests from 2017 to February 2020 before the October 2020 protests. Another similar discussion of these two literatures was the importance of political institutions in social movement. Both comment on the need for trust between the political institution and the governed and the need to understand the structure, strategy, and relationship between political institutions and actors in the social movement. This research also shares the importance of examining the relationship between the political/state actors and other stakeholders in the protest, hence its inclusion in subsequent discussions.

Discussions about political institutions were indeed vital to this research. As well as being a research question, several literatures relate to various aspects of political institutions and their involvement in social movements. Understanding the use of social media in political culture was covered by Duncombe (2019) who provided insights into the behavior of political institutions on social media, other aspects of the literature addressed the discussion of repression and repressive strategies. Literature discussing this other aspect included Earl et al.

(2022), Aytac et al. (2017), Carey (2006), Pierskalla (2010), and Whitten-Woodring & James (2012).

This chapter provides a brief thematic discussion of various literatures, many of which have different perspectives on the area covered. As this section briefly presents the literature discussed and its relevance to my research goals, subsequent chapters would incorporate this literature and provide context for this research.

## **1.5 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH**

My chosen social media platform is Twitter. This choice over other social media platforms is influenced by certain reasons specific to this research. The first and most important reason concerns the case in question. The EndSARS protest was highly visible and present on Twitter, therefore a social media analysis of the case can be effectively and efficiently conducted on Twitter over other media platforms. Other reasons for this choice include its popularity among activists as a coordinating tool for collective action (Gerbaudo, 2012), the accessibility of Twitter APIs, its hashtag culture, and its general popularity (Ahmed et al., 2017)

The research analysis was conducted over a defined period, namely from October 1st to October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020. However, this period does not mark the entirety of this social movement. As I have said in previous sections, a timeline of events up to 2022 has been provided in **APPENDIX A** to show that although the protest has ended, the movement's objectives are still ongoing. The chosen period only captures the action, messages, patterns, and reactions on social media during the first four weeks. These four weeks studied chart the social media messages during hashtag activism and simultaneous on-the-ground protests as present on social media.

The EndSARS movement has been present on social media since 2017. Choosing this period would limit the investigation and just provide data on the EndSARS on-the-ground protest and simultaneous hashtag activism on social media during the chosen period. Although the data provided insight into existing dimensions, I was unable to make comparisons to historical context and complexities. However, a reasonable understanding of the historical characteristics would be derived from existing works of literature curbing this limitation.

This research does not aim to replace research on on-ground protests, this research, as clearly stated in the research objectives, has examined EndSARS and its existing social media

dimension. All aspects of the exploration and analysis of this thesis, therefore, are in line with the research objectives and are about social movements on social media.

## **1.6 MOTIVATION AND RELEVANCE OF THIS STUDY TO PEACE AND CONFLICT DISCOURSE**

For as long as anyone can remember, protest has proven to be a useful tool to achieve structural change. I have chosen to discuss and use two discourses that are not very prominent in peace and conflict discourse. First is the use of social media analysis. As I have shown in subsequent chapters, previous research has not performed adequate social media analysis to understand protest perceptions and protest behavior in the new age of social media. This means that previous research has examined perceptions and understandings of protest without properly researching social media tools. This is an apparent research gap that I aim to fill by exploring and reporting the distinctive features of the EndSARS protest as displayed on social media.

The other reason is that the EndSARS movement is a new and ongoing protest in Nigeria. Existing literature on this protest consists mainly of news reports, blog post analysis, and other regional and international organizations reporting on the events. This research would therefore provide academic insights with an appropriate data collection analysis consistent with the research objectives.

This research is truly relevant to peace and conflict studies as it explores the areas with little academic research and would provide important insight and evaluation of modern protest behavior evident in society today.

Another notable point is the motivation of the researcher. I am a citizen of Nigeria, the country where this case is native. The motivation for this case was curiosity about the changes occurring in social movements in contemporary societies and the impact that digital culture and technology are having on them. My prior knowledge of the protest and my specialized knowledge of media and digital technologies influenced and motivated my choice of this topic.

## **1.7 OVERVIEW OF THESIS**

In this section, I would like to give a brief overview of my thesis and the goals of each chapter.

**Chapter 1:** I introduced this thesis, and presented the problems, research goals, and questions. The chapter also discussed the scope and limitations of my thesis and described its relevance to peace studies.

**Chapter 2:** will provide an account of the historical and contemporary context of the case by reviewing several works of literature.

**Chapter 3:** explore the key terms and the conceptual framework of the research.

**Chapter 4:** will provide an account of the methods used and the methodological framework as well as necessary information on the chosen case, justification of the chosen case, and ethical considerations.

**Chapter 5:** will present the patterns observed in the data collected and provide examples evident in the data to support the observation.

**Chapter 6:** will answer my research questions based on the collected data, discuss, and connect my findings to the literature, and conceptual framework, and conclude the whole thesis.

## **2.0 ENDSARS, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND SOCIAL PROTESTS - ENGAGING THE EXISTING LITERATURE**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The EndSARS protest like many others before was an event that had specific objectives with a clear goal in sight. This protest, however, possessed certain characteristics that differentiate it from other protests in the country. One of the prominent characteristics is the staggering progression and popularity of the protest in 2020. This chapter would discuss in detail with relevant literatures the distinctive features of social movements that utilize social media, the benefit of social media to social movements, the EndSARS protest, and its relationship with social media.

Social media has hitherto had a long-standing relationship with social movements and has performed several functions such as serving as a source of information, providing a space for expression, and recruiting members for social movements (Valenzuela, 2013). Social media's evolution, characteristics, and use in social movements have been intriguing objects of discussion across academia. Social movements such as BLM have expressed the efficacy of social media towards the objective of the movement (De Choudhury et al, 2016) as it aided the distribution of information, provided spaces for the expression of those reached, and motivated physical mobilization for the protests.

This chapter provides a background of the protest in the existing literature. Here I divided my discussions of existing literature into sections to provide an in-depth overview of these distinctive features for better understanding. This chapter presents a review of the literature, the EndSARS protest, and the distinct features of social media-induced protests.

#### **2.1.1 The EndSARS protest in Nigeria**

The EndSARS campaign has been circulating the social media sphere since 2017 and has since then been a movement with a distinctive aim of ending police brutality in the SARS unit (Dambo et al, 2020; Abimbade et al, 2022). The hashtag on Twitter represents the campaign by activists and the public for the reform of the SARS police unit (Ekwunife et al, 2021). The SARS police unit is not the only unit within the police force, or the only unit known for police brutality, however, the peculiarity of the accusations and the targeting of young individuals (Dambo et al, 2020) set the stage for the EndSARS movement.

Any discussion on this protest that excludes social media, should be considered incomplete. This assertion is evident in the evolution of the hashtag and then the movement that followed originating from Twitter. Subsequently, actions, reports, and pieces of information all passed through social media platforms. From its origination, there has been a clear-cut definition of certain actors/stakeholders in the movement. An obvious actor is the Nigerian Police Force (NPF), a part of the Nigerian socio-political structure, and the other actor can be generally referred to as the public, citizens, and/or victims. The relationship between these actors over the years has continuously evolved with literature such as Abimbade et al (2022) asserting that the lack of trust between these actors is not making the situation any easier.

The EndSARS movement directly conflicts with the existence of the SARS police unit within the Nigerian police force (NPF) and has become a model example to examine the relationship between actors of the movements. The outbreak of protests regarding human rights abuse by the Police force is an example of social movements expressing grievance and opinions on a larger societal discourse.

To present a concrete understanding of the distinctive feature of the problem in this research, I will divide my discussion into subcategories with rigorous examinations of works of literature that would not only shed light on the problem statement but also guide the data analytical process. These subcategories are:

1. The public vs media public
2. Non-governmental institutions (NGOs) in social movements
3. Political institutions in social movements
4. Media, social movements, and their relationship with all stakeholders

## **2.2 THE PUBLIC VS MEDIA PUBLIC**

When we discuss the consumption of media content and messages, the audience is usually the first point of discussion. Many works of literature have asserted through diverse topics how social media connects people and transfers information. The idea that social media allows for flexible relationships that could motivate collective actions (Gerbaudo, 2012) is an example of sentiments presented in several kinds of literature on social media and collective actions.

Social movements rely on individuals gathering on a shared grievance (Trottier and Fuchs, 2015) and social media has aided the communication and organization of various movements by providing a space for information sharing and transfer. Although social media bridges the gap between the types of publics, it is important to display the understanding that the media public can sometimes be different from the public.

No literature could indicate the actual number of protesters, but the consensus was the record turnout across the country (Ekwunife et al., 2021; Ojedekun et al., 2021; Abimbade et al. 2022; Olaigbe, 2021; Soladoye & Ojo, 2020), especially in big cities like Lagos and Abuja. This is to be expected since digital communication systems are the “nervous system” of metropolitan areas (Castells, 2010, pp. 2738) and therefore have a higher mass range in these cities. Protester turnout in these cities would be high.

The need for large turnouts is influenced by the recognition that they are more likely to send a stronger signal of dissent to political institutions (Butcher & Pinckney 2022). Although research has not been able to establish a concrete parallel relationship between high turnout and concessions by political institutions, high turnout successfully conveys that many people are concerned with the issue.

Social media has been found to create a level playing field for all activists and state actors alike. However, critics of hashtag activism through examples of clicktivism and slacktivism have consistently put forward the discursive theme of social media-induced protest as disconnected from action (Halupka, 2014; Glenn, 2015).

This assertion becomes an important aspect of my research, posing the question of how the distinctive demographics and physical mass mobilization features were represented in the EndSARS protest. An inquiry on the statistical database Statista on the demographics of social media users in Nigeria estimates a total of 39.2 million active users ([see the graph here](#)) (Sasu, 2022). In comparison to the total population reported by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)<sup>4</sup> and the World Bank<sup>5</sup> of over two hundred million people, the reach of social media in Nigeria is just around 17% of the population, a figure which is not representational.

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<sup>4</sup> UNFPA (n.d) at <https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population/NG>

<sup>5</sup> World Bank (n.d) at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=NG>

As illustrated in the work of Valenzuela (2013, p. 936), social media creates the opportunity for mass mobilization but carries the inherent risk of promoting digital inequality. Countries with large gaps in digital access run the risk of not having representative opinions that could be a crucial source of information. Countries like Nigeria also fall into this category, with a huge disparity in digital access and use, and an inherent risk of under-representation and exclusion. Since the precursors to protest are youth or millennial-driven, as Abimbade et al. (2022) point out, the risk of insufficient representation increases.

Social media in metropolitan areas has a greater reach and thus makes it incomparable to rural areas. This breeds inequality that extends to the access and use of digital communications for many purposes, including social movement. This inequality and unequal proportion as well as the decentralization of protests (Dambo, 2020), are some of the factors that open the discussion about the difference between the public and the media public. The lack of representative opinion and unequal access poses a risk of inclusion and exclusion in the EndSARS protest. This inclusion/exclusion relationship also encompasses the progenitors of the protest, a youthful population seen as tech-savvy, and thus poses the question if the EndSARS movement possessed inclusive and exclusive features.

Participants in social movements usually share a common goal, however individualistic their version of that goal may be (Poell & Van Dijck, 2018), the common goals, belonging, language, and togetherness created within the movement involve potentially inclusive and exclusionary terms. As Kliuchnikova (2013, p. 40) puts it, “we” and “they code” are frequently-used words in socio-political contexts as well as in social movements.

This literature directs my research to the existence of this pattern in social media-triggered protests. Just as inclusive and exclusive terms are used in offline protest, are they also present on social media for media-induced protest? Indeed, as illustrated in existing literatures from other parts of the world that have witnessed social media-triggered protests such as the BLM protests of 2020, the Yellow Vests movement, the Arab Spring movement, and many more, there is a gap in the literature on the emerging characteristics of social media-triggered protests in this digital age, particularly in Nigeria.

### **2.3 NON-GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS (NGOS) IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS**

Social Movement Organizations (SMO) are typically those organizations directly associated with social movements and central to the protest's goals of sparking social change (Walker &



Martin 2019, in Snow et al, 2019), e.g., Black Lives Matter (BLM)<sup>6</sup> and much more. Social Movement Organizations (SMOs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), advocacy groups, or civic organizations are terms used to refer to organizations that provide services for society. For clarification, I adopted the term Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), as this term is already defined in the Glossary of Terms, I use this term here for organizations that participate in social movements without being specifically established for that movement.

NGOs are usually concerned with offering public service to all without being particularly tied to one event such as a social movement as they offer public service with large welfare goals in mind. This may be the reason why there has been a gap in the literature on the involvement of NGOs in social movements (Clarke, 1998). Their mission in the international context has hitherto been portrayed as simply aiding the provision of democratic stability despite their ability to mobilize social movements and their involvement in them (Boulding, 2004). They are known to encourage political participation, create awareness, and provide resources. The more resources that are gathered, the more powerful the protest can become since resources enable the evolution of protests (Inata, 2021).

NGOs are a global phenomenon, and all have a similar way of working. The goals of these organizations make them an important aspect of society in all parts of the world. As an important part of civic life, there are many NGOs around the world and growing every day. NGOs can be international or local depending on their goals and the applicability of their goals to their geographic locations (Demirovic, 1998).

The literature in this area generally agrees that NGOs promote peaceful activism. They create opportunities for interactions that enable social movement mobilizers to thrive and recruit new participants (Boulding, 2004). Providing opportunities and platforms open to all, motivating social movements, and help build trust are functions that makes them pivotal for protests.

The importance of NGOs is widely recognized, hence the proliferation of these organizations in developing countries (Mercer, 2002). NGOs are widely known for their usefulness, but critical examination reveals a different understanding on the mode of operations of NGOs in Africa. A collective understanding in the literature is the role of a common good that NGOs

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<sup>6</sup> <https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>

naturally stand for, however, the practical applicability of NGOs in Nigeria, as explored by Smith (2010), can be unfortunate.

NGOs are typically targeted for their civic functions and are known as organizations that serve as a buffer to mediate between the civic and political structures. For this reason, they are sought after for international funding (Boulding, 2004). This funding opportunity has been attributed as one of the leading causes of the corrupt practices of NGOs (Smith, 2010).

With a widely known and expressed skepticism towards NGO goals and allegations of corruption, especially in Nigeria, the function of NGOs is not weakened by this. Critical works of Shivji (2006) and Shivji's subsequent work on the subject, Smith (2010), and many others have consistently examined much of the incompetence of NGOs in Africa. Literature of this type has motivated discussion about trust and transparency in NGOs in today's world.

The demand for transparency, accountability, and evaluation of the functions performed by NGOs has been the subject of debate for years (Schmitz et al., 2012). Transparency is especially important for these organizations (Inata, 2021), as it depends on the public/stakeholder and the funder's trust. Trust is indeed crucial to NGOs as they depend on the public for funds and labor (Keating & Thrandardottir, 2017).

In trying to build trust, NGOs go through several dilemmas as illustrated by Keating & Thrandardottir (2017). The cost of transparency could be high for these organizations as they need to bureaucratize their affairs to achieve financial transparency. The fear of reporting actual problems because they do not want to lose funding, prioritization of short-term goals over long-term, and how these practices potentially benefit high-stakes donors rather than vulnerable stakeholders for which the organization was formed are examples of dilemmas discussed.

Another critical reflection in this section is the dilemma of NGOs' political affiliations, particularly during social movements. Some are explicitly known, while others choose to remain politically neutral for reasons known to them (Boulding, 2004). In an example given by Manji & O'Coill (2002), NGOs during apartheid South Africa had to choose between either supporting the anti-apartheid movement and risk upsetting the political institution, which could have dire consequences for them, or keeping silent and continuing their charitable activities and become complicit in the crimes of the apartheid regime.

Non-governmental organizations are also known for their cooperative actions with other organizations to achieve their intended goals. These partnerships could be with state actors, commercial companies, or international/local NGOs (Miller-Grandvaux et al. 2002; Ahmad, 2006). This practice is not limited to any specific type of NGO, it is widely practiced and encouraged to enable the achievement of goals.

The goals of NGOs involve people and communities. With these goals, they will inevitably be involved in protests and movements around the world. As can be seen from the literature, they have successfully performed several functions to achieve their goals of human well-being. Although their goals and other aspects of their operations have been criticized, they are still present and important in today's societies.

#### **2.4 POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS**

Political institutions are representatives of the government and other state institutions and organizations. Therefore, I use this term in this text to refer to all. As discussed in previous sections, protests are a mechanism used to express grievances, and these grievances are usually directed against political institutions.

The functions and operation of political institutions depend on the typology or form of government of national practice. Democratic, autocratic, theocratic, monarchical, oligarchic, and many others all have different approaches to protest. In democratic systems, channels for the expression of grievances and political interests should exist. However, when democratic systems do not provide adequate channels for these expressions, citizens find refuge in social movements as a mechanism for voicing their grievances to the political institution (İlgü Özler, 2013).

The political typology in Nigeria is known to be democratic and in line with İlgü Özler's (2013) assertion that democratic systems should have democratic structures that allow citizens to voice their concerns. These structures do exist in the system, but they have failed to make changes, hence the protest. In this section, I want to discuss in detail the involvement of political institutions in movements, their relationship with other stakeholders, and their distinctive features during social movements.

Political institution's response to protest has been an interesting topic in several literatures with examples such as Pierskalla's (2010, p. 117) work on the "strategic calculus of government

repression”, Carey’s (2006) on repressive responses in Latin America and African nations, Whitten-Woodring & James (2012) and Earl et al (2022) on the means of state repression with social media-induced movements, and Aytac et al (2017) on repression in democratic systems.

Suppression of social movements is a common response in many countries. Nations are faced with two basic options, either give in to the protesting group's demands or suppress and disperse protests (Pierskalla, 2010). There are differing theories as to the factors dictating the government's response. Even within democratic systems, there are distinctive features in the response chosen to deal with social movements.

Indeed, there are two basic responses to protest, concede or forceful dispersion. Democratic nations (depending on their variant<sup>7</sup>) usually make one of these choices or evolve from one strategy to another. The choice of response strategy also depends on the issue being protested. The scale of the reaction depends on what the ruling power or majority supports. When there is no collective majority-oriented support, the strategy of concession becomes less probable, tipping the scale towards the choice of repressive strategies, leading directly to the disregard of protesters' rights (Aytac et al, 2017).

Choosing repression does not necessarily mean the end of the protest, as Pierskalla (2010) points out, choosing repression could lead to violent protests across the country. Although the Pierskalla analysis posits that the factor determining the choice of strategy is either a strong or a weak state, what matters in this discussion is the decision made by the Nigerian political institution in response to the protest.

Aytac et al, (2017) and Pierskalla (2010) may come to different conclusions based on their research and case studies on the factors, but Careys' (2006) research may prove to be a more adaptable outcome for the case in this research. Carey (2006) posits that protest and repression influence each other. All actors in a social movement reflect the actions of others based on observable behavior due to incomplete information about agenda and resources, limited capacity, and understanding (Carey, 2006). Additionally, Carey's research shows that political institutions are typically inconsistent over time with being tolerable and accommodating. They can be tolerable in the initial stages of protest and then evolve into a much less tolerable strategy.

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<sup>7</sup> Some democracies could be a mix or be an anocracy or semi-democracy

There is a perception that digital media are not subject to state censorship. But NGOs that monitor media freedom prove otherwise (Kim et al, 2015). Like other factors, the degree of media freedom might also depend on regime type (Whitten-Woodring, 2009 as cited in Whitten-Woodring & James, 2012). The position of the media is also crucial to the strategy for responding to protests. As Whitten-Woodring & James (2012) argues, the independence of the media, the level of political involvement of interest groups, and political competition determine the choice of strategy, concessions, or repression.

Although digital media is more difficult to control than broadcast media, political institutions still have the power to censor and block access to digital platforms (Kim et al, 2015). This act is called “digital repression” (Earl et al, 2022, p. 1), proving that repressive strategies do exist when political institutions are dealing with digital platforms. It is important to note here that the relationship between media and political institutions is not always antagonistic during social movements, as Duncombe (2019) notes, social media accounts are tools used by leaders and political institutions to deal with the international and domestic public. This is visible through the presence of social media accounts of many political institutions.

Since I would discuss in more detail the relationship that both civil organizations and political institutions have with the media during social movements in social media-triggered protests, this section only deals with the specific characteristics that political institutions exhibit with social movements. Political institutions are crucial in social movements because the movement’s goal usually includes them, making them stakeholders, however big or small.

## **2.5 MEDIA, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH ALL STAKEHOLDERS**

Social media are part of everyday life. It is a digital tool that performs essential functions for all parties involved. Its use by NGOs, political institutions, and citizens proves the extent of its influence in daily life. Twitter is one of the most popular social media platforms, a medium especially used in social movements.

Twitter performs several unique functions towards political institutions, one of which involves “digital diplomacy” (Duncombe, 2019, p. 409). Political institutions use social media accounts to spread their message, engage with the public, and connect with other political institutions.

Twitter has become a central part of politics, hence, the reason it is the leading social media tool studied in several empirical literatures today.

Twitter has been cited as the tool that enables both the representation of emotion through language and the evocation of emotion. As Twitter enables users to connect with a large population and not just the elite, the framing of language for the social media accounts of political institutions becomes important. As theorized by Duncombe (2019), Twitter is an information hub with the ability to elicit powerful emotional responses online and offline. Twitter has proven its ability to shift and direct messages from online to offline actions. Its ability to evoke emotion is one of the reasons why social media is so popular with movement these days.

The relationship between media and public institutions cannot be compared with its relationship with civil society organizations and citizens. It is well known that public institutions use different strategies to get their message across. Sometimes political institutions stick to diplomatic strategies (Duncombe, 2019) and use language that does not evoke strong emotions and question their relationship with others, other times they formulate messages that influence others and evoke strong feelings and emotions (Duncombe, 2019).

Given the unique role that social media plays for political institutions, the institutional oppression of the media becomes a permanent aspect of the relationship. The existence of an unequal relationship between the two brings this further to light. The payment of royalties, taxes, and ethical reporting regulations is dependent on the political institution, placing control in the hands of political institutions and widening the unequal relationship (Whiten-Woodring & James, 2012). Also, the commercial nature of broadcast media and the need to produce political content based on state actors can affect their ability to convey information using language that checks political institutions.

The existing relationship between social movements, media, and political institutions has long been complicated. State actors like the police and many more have tried to control social movements through various repressive strategies. These strategies do not exclude digital media such as Twitter. Repressive strategies such as censorship, the use of state media domination, cooperation or coercion of private media producers, or a combination of strategies have been applied to broadcast media (Earl et al., 2022). These strategies have also been extended to digital media through the restriction of access to information with examples such as

banning/making illegal the operation of a social media service within the country or shutting down the internet, and the content removal or shadow banning of media content (carried out by private media outlets based on coercion from political institutions) (Earl et al., 2022).

Another repressive strategy worth discussing is the use of information channeling (Earl et al, 2022 p. 7). This strategy is widely used because of its outstanding ability. Banning a media platform outright can evoke aggressive emotions in media users as it is an obvious repressive strategy. However, information channeling is salient. It is the intentional use and framing of messages and information in language that misdirects and changes the conversation to drown out critics or other messages that do not benefit the political institutions (Earl et al., 2022). This action is called the straw man argument. This strategy can be used to change the subject or popularize a particular point of view, or simply flood the media platform with unnecessary messages to reduce the risk and opportunity for collective action. As reported by Earl et al. (2022), this method has been used by countries such as China, Saudi Arabia, Kazakhstan, and Russia. This method is done with minimal resistance, thanks to the availability of bots, trolls, click farms, and influencers whose services are easily monetized. The choice of strategy depends on several conditions, conditions that determine the type of repressive strategy to be implemented or the combinations to be adopted.

The proliferation of digital technologies in this globalized world has provided means to circumvent some digital oppression strategies, forcing political institutions to adopt more overt oppressive strategies (Earl et al., 2022). However, this has not deterred the use of social media by protesting parties. Many social media platforms are not strictly regulated in the countries in which they exist, and technology constantly changing has found a way to bypass certain repressive strategies with examples such as Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) and Satellite internet connections rather than broadband and Internet Service Providers (ISPs).

This has made social media an important source of information for all stakeholders, and a preferred tool for NGOs or SMOs during social movements. Over the years, social media has proved to be more useful than dangerous to activists, hence its preference by protesting parties. Social media does not produce a new form of social movement; however, it has allowed social movements to evolve, making several stakeholders benefit from it.

NGOs are a crucial part of our social media discussions about social movements. They could take the role of SMOs or NGOs supporting social movements using social media tools. Social

media is a preferred tool for these groups for several reasons. As Valenzuela (2013) explains, the reason varies from the availability of social media contacts, and its ability to facilitate the construction of personal and group identities, to the opportunities for feedback, acceptance, and reinforcement of group norms. The creation of togetherness rather than shared values that can be expressed on social media about social movements (Castells, 2012 in Poell and Van Dijck, 2018) has also expanded the use of social media in movements today. Social media platforms offer zero-touch and fundraising capabilities, transforming the costs and benefits of social movement (Poell and Van Dijck, 2018).

Poell and Van Dijck (2018) also explain the patterns of collectivity and leadership social media-induced protests possess. Activists and protest organizers through the resources provided by NGOs or SMOs have been able to organize due to the services provided by social media (Poell and Van Dijck, 2018), all of which encourage collectivity. These social media protest organizers perform unifying functions by linking online and offline actions. This function has been labeled as “digital vanguards” by Abimbade et al (2022, p. 2) “soft leadership” by Gerbaudo (2012, p. 5), and “connective leaders” by Poell and Van Dijck (2018, p. 3). They are known to perform organizational and communicative tasks without calling themselves, movement leaders. Although they are usually targeted by political institutions because of their function (Poell and Van Dijck, 2018, p. 4), they reject the label of leaders (Gerbaudo, 2012). These connective leaders nonetheless play a key role in motivating and generating narratives for the movement.

Social media also performs acceleration, personalization, and virality functions for social movements. The ability to communicate and broadcast events in real-time, and draw attention to these issues by making them viral, as well as allowing stakeholders to personalize protest objectives to fit personal settings are all features of contemporary social media-induced protests that were made possible with the services provided by social media and digital technologies (Poell and Van Dijck, 2018).

Memory is a social agent that informs the social, political, and philosophical understanding of the present (Paxson, 2005). Studies of social memory reveal the interconnected relationship memory has with various social structures, including digital media. Memories are not predetermined; individuals and social environments are the producers and keepers of



memories. The introduction of social media to promote communication between individuals and groups would therefore involve memory functions.

Social media, therefore, fulfills collective memory functions. As studies have shown over the years, digital media is shaping real-time events and the way people process information and archive that information (Liu, 2018), making it a crucial technology that houses and supports collective memory and remembrance. Memory itself is social and requires interaction within a social relationship (Halbwachs, 1992), memory is to be formed, shared, collected, and remembered. Social media consistently contributes to the process of collective memory through its ability to provide historical context while still relating to current issues (Birkner & Donk, 2020). Given the consistent exploration of contemporary interdisciplinary academic endeavors, memory functions in digital media are crucial in studies of social movements.

Social media is a multi-functional tool that can support social movements through the important work of NGOs and connective leaders. Its characteristic features are responsible for the development of contemporary social movements. These reviewed literatures have extensively discussed the various distinctive features of social media-triggered protests and have provided the necessary guidance when exploring these distinctive features in the EndSARS protest in Nigeria.

## **2.6 SUMMARY**

This chapter provided a brief discussion of the EndSARS protests and provided a review of literature on the characteristics of social movements, social media, and the evolution of digital technologies in social movements today. Through thematic discussions of four major categories, I provided details on the existing protest behavior across the academic discourse and the actors who are usually involved in these movements. I also discussed the existing relationships between the parties involved and the existing mechanisms used by each other to respond to shouts of protest.

In the next chapter, I discuss my methodology and outline key criteria, research methodology, methods, data collection, and ethical considerations to provide information on how research has collected and analyzed data.

### **3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Activists have relied on Twitter over time to deliver messages and framing to its numerous users, particularly during political and social movements (Zimmer & Proferes, 2014). An analysis of one of the key mechanisms of social movements would therefore be a fascinating area of research. As Kapoor et al. (2018) note, academics and practitioners have explored this field of research and intend to continue it in the future. Being a relatively new field of study, certain problematic trends arise from the lack of adequate articulation of the chosen methodology, methods, design, and analytical approaches (Snelson, 2016). A comprehensive explanation of the techniques chosen would be provided to prevent such a problematic trend from occurring in my research.

Research into protest through social media analysis was identified as the core of this research. I chose the EndSARS Nigeria protest because of its history, the actors involved in the protests, its ability to provide adequate data to achieve the research goal, and how new this protest was when this research began. To this end, it is appropriate to openly present my proposed epistemological and ontological research perspective.

Social ontology is important to social research, the nature of reality studied in my research is a determinant of the choice of social ontology. The reality that I explored is constructed by constant interaction on social media, the constant generation of meanings, and the constant revisions of political opinion, which would be best captured with a constructivist perspective.

As I have established in previous chapters, the #EndSARS hashtag has been in circulation since 2017, the study derived meanings and interpretations of the protest on social media during the physical protest mobilization, rather than as a mere measure of hashtag activism. The exploration of distinctive features of physical protest mobilization on social media would invoke an interpretivist epistemology.

An interpretivist epistemology in my research prioritized understanding the concepts and patterns discovered during data collection. Prioritizing discoveries and recurring patterns justifies an inductive approach (Bryman, 2012), where the researcher concentrates on adequately exploring patterns and concepts, and rigorously studies data to explore underlying meanings and interpretations.

The inductive approach in my research paid attention to certain tenets as identified by Thomas (2006, p. 238). First is the compression of large data into a summary. In this research, the compression of data was achieved through the categorization of data into discursive patterns. Next, was the emphasis on the ability to establish links to research objectives and to develop a model that best represents the data analyzed. These tenets are adequately recognized by discovering patterns through the guidance of my research questions and objectives. An analysis of this constructivist ontology, an interpretive epistemology, and an inductive approach influenced my choice of a qualitative methodology.

### **3.2 A QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY**

To answer the research questions, we need a methodology that is suitable to guide the research and achieve its objectives. This study attempts to understand the action, reaction, and ever-changing relationship with all recognized actors (population) in this protest. This research deals with social media, a form of online media, and an analysis of collective mobilization and action. The understanding of social media as a constructivist reality, through which an interpretive perspective is conducted feeds the need for a qualitative methodology.

The use of the qualitative methodology in online research and media analysis is popular in media research, digital culture, and informatics research. Since a qualitative methodology in any research should contain textual and interpretative data (Hennink et al., 2011), the subject of research in these fields usually includes data in the form of texts and needs interpretation, exploration, and understanding. Research such as Gerbaudo (2012), Ahmed et al (2019), and Jenzen et al (2021), all analyzed social media concerning their respective objectives and utilized the qualitative methodology. They successfully used textual and interpretative data from Twitter, and utilized qualitative methodology to provide interpretation, categories, and models that best represent their analysis.

I collected data from social media, answered my research questions, and achieved my research goals using a qualitative methodology. This methodology is suitable for my research for the many reasons explained above. Further on, I discussed other aspects of my research methodology which includes population, sample, and sampling technique to reflect the careful consideration of my research on the methodology and methods used.

### 3.3 THE CASE STUDIED

The case in my research is the discursive patterns on social media concerning the EndSARS protest. An analysis of discursive patterns supported by the rigorous engagement of other empirical and theoretical analyses provided an understanding and guided my research toward answering the research questions.

The use of a case here would deliver an adequate exploratory analysis, a direct analysis of contemporary events, and a clear distinction between the phenomenon studied (Yin, 2003). It would be incomplete to analyze collective mobilization and the emerging concepts and discursive patterns without properly expressing the case to which they are applicable. This, therefore, makes the research qualify as a representative or typical case (Yin, 2009 in Bryman, 2012), where exploration is performed on a phenomenon that is representative of a larger context. The EndSARS protest studied in this research is not a new hashtag on Twitter, or the first protest in Nigeria, however, it represents the fusion of physical protest mobilization and hashtag activism in a time of global health emergency (Covid-19), a case that represents an event that has occurred and is likely to occur in the future.

### STUDY POPULATION

Twitter is a social media platform launched in 2006 with 192 million monetizable daily usage as of 2020 (Twitter, 2020) and has over 290 million users as of 2019 (Dixon, 2022). This platform allows its user to perform various microblogging functions that can be summarized as information sharing for several purposes. As I would discuss the public vs private distinctions of tweets further in the ethics section, the basic features of Twitter are presented in this section as described by Twitter (n.d)<sup>8</sup> Ahmed et al (2017), and Mollett et al (2011).

- *Tweets* are short messages with less than 280 characters<sup>9</sup> that could contain hyperlinks and audio-visual materials.
- *Hashtag* is a tool used to categorize tweets according to the stated topic. The character of a hashtag is #. For example, an individual can post tweets that relate to a certain topic and wish to reach a certain audience, the hashtag aids the categorization, distribution,

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<sup>8</sup>Twitter (n.d) at <https://developer.twitter.com/en/docs/developer-portal/overview> and <https://help.twitter.com/en/using-twitter/mentions-and-replies#:~:text=Mention%20overview,Tweet%20in%20their%20Notifications%20tab>.

<sup>9</sup> Twitter (n.d) at <https://developer.twitter.com/en/docs/counting-characters>

and dissemination of the message. Examples of hashtags are #EndSARS, #Brexit, and #22Juli.

- *Reply* is a feature on Twitter that enables users to communicate with the creators of posted tweets. A feature used to facilitate communication and response on tweets shared.
- A *mention* is a Tweet that contains another person's username in the body of the Tweet. It usually begins with the symbol @, examples are @amalaFC, @LegendofCats
- *Retweet* is a feature that allows users to forward tweets from a particular user to their followers. In this manner, a user is sharing another user's tweets while properly recognizing the authorship of the tweet. A retweet can be done either by pressing an icon on the tweets or just using the mention function, where a user uses the @ icon and mentions the user they intend to recognize.
- *Direct messages (DM)* refer to private messages that users send to each other that are not made public.
- *Trend* refers to a topic, discussion, hashtag, or keyword currently trending among Twitter users at a specific time.
- *Twitter Developer* is a tool designed that grants access to users who wish to harvest data using the APIs (Application Programming Interface) for academic, commercial, personal, and other purposes.

Twitter APIs are important in any Twitter research and various platforms utilize this technology and aid researchers with data collection. Examples of such applications include DiscoverText, TrackMyHashtag, Postman, NodeXL, Netlytic, and many more.

### **3.4 METHOD**

Several Twitter research has utilized different methods; their choice of method however is influenced by the research objectives and questions. To investigate this understanding, opinion, and progression of the physical protest mobilization on social media, an effective method that would properly explore the features of the EndSARS mobilization on social media has to be considered carefully.

The unit of analysis is the tweets from the sampled account during the specified timeline. As I would discuss the selection procedure in the subsequent section, a method that would accurately capture the words used, actors, subjects, interpretation, and the classification of

subjects/opinions discovered (Kumar, 2011; Bryman, 2012) is a priority of this research. Therefore, a suitable method should facilitate the gathering of descriptive data and properly classify such data.

With this requirement, this research utilized discourse analysis to explore the data from its sample. Discourse analysis is a method that considers the meaning given to texts, and explores the context of the language, the actions associated with the context, and the society/culture in which the studied phenomena exist (Gee & Handford, 2012).

Language is usually structured in patterns or discursive patterns. The text and language are not just isolated, they are maintained within a context. The structure of the language used represents a pattern or a repetitive discourse that is constantly changing through context and action (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). Texts are not created in isolation; they are produced within a social world and contain important attributes of social identities and relationships. These texts are consistent and represent the meaning attached to everyday experience, thus making it a social phenomenon with built-in information about society and culture (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). Using social media discourse analysis dictates an intensive observation of both the texts and the context of the users to properly observe the discursive patterns (Lemke, 2012).

In discourse analysis, language is a crucial discourse that has the power to transform the world and contextualize relationships (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). These discursive patterns are understood as the specific types of language, contexts, and relationships set within the social world as understood by the user (Jørgensen and Phillips, 2002). Discourse analysis is a method that also embraces the incorporation of empirical literature and conceptual frameworks to provide a deeper understanding of the phenomena studied.

In the previous chapters, I have noted the complexity of the actions, the history, the time frame over which the texts evolved into actions, and the culture and society of the case on which this research is based. Using discourse analysis in this research allowed me to examine the text, the language, and the feelings conveyed by the text and context. All these prerequisites enabled the observation of discursive patterns surrounding the data.

The meaning of words was crucial to achieving our research goal as the action that took place due to the context of the texts shared on social media is the case in this research. The ability of

my chosen method to dictate my sampling technique, time frame, and the relationship between the subjects greatly benefited the research. While being aware of certain criteria listed below (adapted from Flick 2009), I was able to ascertain crucial points of discourse and patterns presented by the data.

- Identification of web of meanings to ascertain cultural networks
- Clearly define the roles, rights, and responsibilities of the actors as specified in the text
- Properly identify and articulate the patterns as observed in the text

As I explore the patterns of discourse in the subsequent section, I would like to define certain points of discourse associated with the texts.

**ACTION** – EndSARS protest

**ACTORS** – The socio-political structure, the public, organizations, and other stakeholders

**SOCIETY** – Nigeria

**CONTEXT** – The existing and future relationship between the actors

**CULTURE** – The existing mechanism designed and utilized to respond to the action

**HISTORY** – The history between the actors before the action

### **3.5 APPLYING DISCOURSE ANALYSIS TO THE RESEARCH**

Discourse analysis provides this research with various points of discourse and emphasis on important parts of the subjects. At this point, I will define the patterns that I explored in the data to arrive at my conclusions.

#### **3.5.1 Discursive patterns**

*Pattern 1: What is the pattern of organization?*

This research examined the data for dominant organizational patterns to track physical mass mobilization, funding, and the problem of organization as observed by the subjects. This pattern, guided by the empirical literature, provided data on situating the movement in clicktivist heuristics and explored the distinction between the public sphere and the media

public sphere by examining the distribution of protest. This pattern also provided insights into the security measures taken by stakeholders within the movement.

*Pattern 2: What is the pattern existing in the relationship between the actors?*

The pattern of relationship between the actors provided more information on the existing and past relationships between the actors. Exploring the context and language from the sampled texts, data about the existing relationship in respect to the EndSARS protests provided information on the nature of their relationship and gave insights to the pattern on how these relationships are manifested between the actors.

*Pattern 3: The patterns of collectivity and remembrance*

The incorporation of history and remembrance in the language used in the analyzed texts indicated the process and habit of collective remembrance in social movements. The research explored the language and context used by the subject when referencing history, and how these references influence the relationship between the actors.

*Pattern 4: Pattern of exclusion and inclusion*

The texts' language, narratives, and frames were explored to determine the pattern of inclusion and exclusion. How were the words constructed to foster emotions/feelings of inclusion and exclusion?

These patterns were determined not only by the research objectives and questions but also by several works of literature discussed in the previous chapters. These empirical materials form the core of this analysis as they support the study of patterns and provide standards for the analysis of the data collected.

### **3.6 SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE**

The area of investigation of this research is social movements/protests. Media involvement in social movements has been recognized by several studies. This area has a lot of academic research and analysis as it examines a section on the evolution of conflict in society.

The participants were selected using non-probability sampling. To manage the sample size and data processed, the selected informants and sources are verified Twitter accounts, pre-selected by the researcher using appropriate criteria. The reason for this choice is due to the ethical guidelines required for online research. The selection of the participants via the hashtag would



generate many results that cannot be analyzed due to time pressure and the chosen methodology. Sampling individual tweets on social media also require stringent ethical consideration, for this reason, I decided to sample public organizations within the chosen time frame. My sample included original tweets, replies, and retweets from other accounts.

For this research, therefore, I used purposive sampling, a sampling technique that selects units based on the criteria they possessed and needed for the research. The reasons for this choice are compelled by the research goals, the research questions, and the researcher's inability to sample the entirety of tweets that used the EndSARS hashtag. Abimbade et al. (2021) reported that the total number of tweets related to the hashtag from September 11 to October 11, 2020, was 57 million tweets, up from around 400,000 in 2017 (Oloyede & Elegba, 2019). This demonstrates the need for the researcher to develop sample selection criteria based on their ability to achieve the research objectives and provide an efficient analysis. The samples were selected based on the criteria listed below.

1. The samples provided information on mobilization, organization, and/or financing.
2. The samples are actors or represent an actor in the conflict
3. For privacy concerns and ethical considerations, the accounts had to be public and open to public viewing.
4. The accounts were active during the time frame chosen to be analyzed by the research.
5. The samples were mentioned in a selected account that is widely associated with the case study of this research and matched with the other criteria.

The selected Twitter accounts are specific public profiles and not random public profiles. This was done to meet ethical standards and provide useful information related to research. Using this sampling technique resulted in the selection of the following accounts, as seen below.

***Table 1- Sample Twitter Accounts***

Popular Advocate Accounts of which tweets and response tweets would be analyzed
<b>@OrganizationA</b>
<b>@PoliticalInstitution</b>
<b>@OrganizationB</b>

### **3.6.1 Time frame**

The time frame chosen for the analysis of the samples is from October 1, 2020, to October 31, 2020. This time frame provided insight into the events before and after the widespread EndSARS mobilization. These three samples are of unique importance as they allowed this research to gain insights into the structure, funding, mobilization, response, and monitoring of the protest. In the next section, I would provide a brief sample profile to explain how they fit the criteria given and how an analysis of these samples would provide the necessary data for this research.

### **3.6.2 Sample profile**

This section presents the chosen samples and their respective profiles with reasons why they are suitable for this research and therefore chosen.

#### *@OrganizationA*

Total Followers on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020 – over 100,000

OrganizationA is a verified public account that was active during the protests. It is widely known as one of the online forums that provided information about the funding of protests across the country, providing information about other accounts and/or forums that served other functions (legal assistance, medical assistance, and many more) during the protests and informed about the progress of the protests. This sample would provide verified information in parts of the state where protests were taking place and funds were being allocated. The total number of tweets from this sample was six hundred and ninety-eight (698), with all tweets and retweets pertaining to EndSARS.

#### *@PoliticalInstitution*

Total Followers on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020 – Over 2,000,000

PoliticalInstitution is a verified public account that was active during the protests. It became a Twitter user in 2012 and informs the public about regulations and official statements of the institution. PoliticalInstitution is an important actor/stakeholder in this protest as the protests revolve around allegations affecting them, making this sample useful for understanding the social media behavioral patterns of socio-political institutions as actors within a conflict (or in this social movement). The total number of tweets from this sample was one hundred seventy-

six (176), with a total of one hundred twenty-eight (128) tweets and retweets related to EndSARS.

*@OrganizationB*

Total Followers on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020 – over 200,000

OrganizationB is also a publicly verified account that has been active since 2015. It is a non-profit organization specializing in human rights activism in many regions of the world. She has an office in Nigeria and has been openly active and critical of the Nigerian government on human rights and justice issues. It was actively involved in the initial report that led to the development of the hashtag in 2017. It vigorously discusses allegations of human rights violations by the political institution and has been continuously involved in the movement from the start. The total number of tweets from this sample was four hundred and twenty (420), with a total of three hundred and forty-eight (348) tweets and retweets related to EndSARS.

**Table 2- Samples chosen and the criteria they meet**

Chosen Sample	The sample provided information on mobilization, organization, or financing	The sample represents an actor in the conflict	The accounts are public and open to public viewing	The account was active during the chosen time frame	The samples were mentioned in a selected account
<b>@OrganizationA</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	
<b>@OrganizationB</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>@PoliticalInstitution</b>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

**3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The use of social media platforms like Twitter in research triggers a continuous discussion about data protection requirements. This research is interested in information, political opinions, mobilizations, and arguments shown on social media about selected samples to

understand their perception and processes. In line with ethical standards, the research meets the requirement for public accounts for public viewing that requires no informed consent (Fuchs, 2018; Zimmer 2010). The accounts selected were all verified public accounts that have chosen to be public and display public information.

The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH) and the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) have provided several ethical prerequisites that should be utilized in research. In 2019<sup>10</sup>, the NESH issued important ethical etiquettes important for online social research which I have followed to preserve the quality of my research (see the detailed table in **APPENDIX B**):

1. I have chosen verified public accounts to prevent this research from using confidential information without consent.
2. The samples used here are public pages with public information intended for the public.
3. Public organizations were the selected sample for this study. Therefore, there is no significant concern for children and vulnerable groups.
4. The information provided by the sample is non-confidential and is made publicly available.
5. As the data is important for scientific or historical research purposes of a past historical event, obtaining consent can prove fatal to the reliability of the research as records can be tampered with through the samples. As noted in the guidelines of Pace and Livingston (2005, p. 38), consent may be waived in the study of public affairs if certain conditions are met, namely: The material is publicly archived and readily available for access, the material does not require a password, the material is not inherently sensitive, and no stated site policy prohibits the use of the material, all of which are duly complied with in this study.
6. This research guarantees the confidentiality, integrity, anonymity, and quality of the analysis by strictly adhering to the following:
  - a. Paraphrasing and anonymizing samples and citations from samples.
  - b. Clustering samples and information into general terms to provide privacy and protect samples.

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<sup>10</sup> NESH (2019) at [A Guide to Internet Research Ethics | Forskningsetikk](#)

- c. Storage of data and analysis in a secure location although the data is publicly available.
  - d. Withholding, clustering, or paraphrasing sensitive information, and online identifiers to protect vulnerable groups.
7. The researcher is aware of the ethical concerns and difficulties associated with data transparency and then took the necessary precautions without affecting the quality and integrity of the study.

The results of this research are transparent, and analysis of the data presented would not harm the samples, since sensitive information was withheld through anonymization and paraphrasing, and the samples did not represent a specific persecuted group. This research would not serve as a prerequisite for new information as the result comes from the data collected. To preserve the integrity and quality of this research and the fact that consent is not required for this type of research, notification of the samples was waived. When strictly necessary for fact-checking purposes, original versions of the Tweets displayed here may be requested after the proper ethical process has been followed.

Because this research is a sample of a few publicly verified accounts and not random personal accounts, this research complies with the ethical standards of online research and legal basis as a public interest task. This research met ethical concerns to protect the samples and provided transparency to ensure the quality of the research.

### **3.8 DATA COLLECTION AND CHALLENGES**

Collecting media data in compliance with ethical standards can be difficult for researchers without proper technical knowledge. I spent a reasonable amount of time trying different collection apps before settling on TrackMyHashtag. There are various uses for Twitter data and a developer account makes the collection of data easier, specifically the collection of real-time data and archived data not longer than seven days. However, it is difficult to obtain historical/archived data without expert knowledge, and since I only have beginner skills, it became difficult to collect needed data. I decided to use paid third-party software that would collect the required tweets. Although several apps offering the service are expensive to purchase, TrackMyHashtag was affordable and delivered results quickly.

Before selecting the final samples and proceeding to use TrackMyHashtag, I used Ncapture to capture pilot tweets to understand the data and to examine the sample against the required

criteria. Thereafter, several initial subjects were disqualified for failing to meet certain criteria, and the final selected samples represent the best fit for the research objective.

Once the required tweets were sourced, the next step was to analyze them using the patterns discussed. Certain patterns required simple coding and categorization that could not be done by one software. I used Microsoft Excel and MaxQda together to analyze my data. Excel was used to filter and categorize different tweets and create maps and charts to determine the geographical distribution of the protests to better understand the context of the discursive patterns, and MaxQda was used to encode data to explore the discursive patterns.

It is worth noting that textual data from the subjects were the only data sets examined, images were only included when more context was given to the text. Audiovisual media were excluded from the analysis. Although they could add more context and layers to the textual data, they turned out to be representations of the texts rather than providing new information. To ensure efficient analysis, the research stuck to examining textual data from the subjects.

### **3.9 REFLEXIVITY AND RESEARCH LIMITATIONS**

As expected with the use of qualitative methods, its generalization ability is diminished. Specifically, the use of discourse analysis, however useful in this research, possesses certain limitations that are worthy of note. One of these limitations becomes clear in Flick's (2009) assessment of the method, the discourse analysis is dependent on literature and does not have a precise and central procedure to use the method across research. To curb this limitation, I systematically laid out how the discourse would examine my research and carefully discussed the literature that guided my method.

Social media data lacks context and the information available is text only (Pousti et al. 2020). While the decision to use discourse analysis to uncover these contexts alleviates this limitation, it does not eliminate the problem of social media data not communicating contexts. This research mitigates this limitation by using empirical literature to develop discourse patterns while analyzing the data. This research also carefully considered the criteria for practical reflexivity developed by Pousti et al. (2020, pp. 368-372) to ensure a high-quality research process to achieve ethical and standardized results.

- a) Consider the issue of generalization and abstraction in your social media research.
- b) Consider the boundaries of your social media context.

- c) Consider the ethical dimensions of your social media research.
- d) Consider how your social media data sources influence contextualization.

Another point worthy of note is the positionality of the researcher. I am a citizen of Nigeria, the country where this case is Indigenous. The motivation for this case was a curiosity about the changes occurring in mass mobilization in societies of today and the effect digital culture and technology have on them. My prior knowledge of this protest enabled me to make educated choices on the sample chosen.

This research has no direct relation to the selected samples since they are organizations representing actors and the socio-political structure. This relieves the researcher of familiarity risks and ensures the quality of the analysis.

### **3.10 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, I have examined the nature of this research, the methodology and methods chosen, and how I intended to achieve my research goal. I also justified my method and criteria for the process. This research provided explanations on how I met ethical standard to achieve my research objective. Since my research is exploratory, choosing the appropriate technique was very crucial, thus I outlined the process and reasons for all the choices made. Having outlined the patterns and processes by which my data was analyzed, I move on to the next chapter to show the information I relied upon in the analysis through my use of two key conceptual frameworks and how they explain the patterns in the collected data.

## **4.0 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

With the background, methodology, and the presented literature review, the importance of media in social movements and of affiliated organizations and political institutions in the development of social media-induced protests has become crucial. In this chapter, I would delve into the concepts that are crucial to my reflections on the research questions and literature review. These concepts are central to the data collected as they provide a relevant understanding of the core discourse of this research.

I begin with a detailed definition and discussion of terms used consistently in this research. The terms hashtag/media activism and frames are used in this research, although these terms are in part self-explanatory, it is vital to provide a definition and operationalize them to show what they mean when used in this research. Next, I move on to discuss extensively the two major conceptual frameworks chosen for this research.

The terms used herein refer to specific technical terms, words, or phrases that have a specific meaning commonly used in the subject. While concepts are empirical words that explain the data and help draw relevant conclusions. For this reason, I identify two key terms and concepts. The terms I would define are hashtag activism and framing, and the concepts discussed are connective action and clicktivism.

These concepts were chosen for their unique ability to explain the discursive features discovered in the data and direct the method to the repetitive features in the collected data. These concepts explain digital protests and how they use digital technology, beginning their argument with a strong belief in the usefulness of social media in today's social movements.

### **4.2 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS**

#### **4.2.1 Hashtag activism**

The term hashtag refers to the use of the hash “#” symbol that is usually used to group texts across social media platforms. Contrary to public belief, the term hashtag has been circulating online platforms from around the late 1990s (Oloyede & Elega, 2019). This feature from around 2009 became a part of the Twitter culture. It became a feature widely used by many members to promote social movements and provide real-time information about issues (Jenzen et al., 2021, Oloyede & Elega, 2019).



The use of hashtags over the years can not only be seen on Twitter, they are also used in blogs and other online media platforms due to their unique grouping abilities. These hashtags not only mark a topic on social media but also extend beyond digital platforms by the printing of hashtags on street graffiti, t-shirts, and more (Jenzen et al., 2021). To that end, hashtag activism has been referred to as:

*“...hashtag activism can be seen as an effort that concurrently induces awareness to a movement and ambiguous important phases of the movement such as historical background or socio-political context (Dadas, 2017 in Oloyede & Elegba, 2019 p. 88).”*

With the ability to reduce discourse to information in the form of hashtags, hashtag activism using hashtags and online tools can explore political opinions, historical contexts, complexities, and economic contexts that bind people (Dadas, 2017) with an end goal in mind, to create social change. Hashtag activism has been used synonymously in literatures as clicktivism, or media activism (Dambo et al., 2020; Walker and Martin, in Snow et al., 2019; Gerbaudo, 2012). Although the term clicktivism in Halupka (2014) refers to online activism that takes a step further towards collective action, in other literatures clicktivism is used interchangeably with hashtag activism.

With its unique properties, there are several critical literatures on hashtag activism as a concept with no direct relation to physical participation in social movements. Much critical literature of this type does not necessarily devalue hashtag activism, but merely expands on the impact of hashtag activism. These literatures ask fundamental questions about what happens during hashtag activism, what happens after hashtag activism, how hashtag activism is useful for social movements and social change, and more. Well, in the following sections I will discuss certain concepts in detail to facilitate an understanding of digital protests and to paint a clearer picture of the critical literature on hashtag activism today.

#### **4.2.2 Frame/Framing**

Before I move on to discussing concepts, it is important to define the term frame/framing. This term appears frequently in this research and represents important points of understanding. Language is important for communication because communication is an integral part of social movements. In practice, there are specific contexts and complexities in which language exists and functions. These contexts and complexities are important during social movement's

communication thus the need to express these contexts and complexities during communication, hence the term frame/framing.

Framing refers to the process of organizing words to express emotion about a particular reality in which the writer wishes to communicate. This is prevalent in social media-induced communication during social movements, as messages and texts are vital to the movement's goals. The framing of the message contains the problem statement of a specific objective (De Vreese, 2012). The two types of frames identified by De Vreese (2012, pp. 367-368) are the journalistic and advocacy frame. Advocacy frame is the type of framing applicable to my research as it communicates to the intended audience, the dissent, the grievance, the issue, and emotions.

These frames are also important in connective actions. As I will discuss in subsequent sections, messages about a social movement travel the web and can be personalized to represent the individual who has related to the political issue/object of the message. During this interaction, individuals typically create personal action frames (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012). These frames relate to the personal reason why other participants resonate with the political issue creating a personal action frame in the process. Examples can be when the participants express their shared grievance through their personal experience or personal call to action, further strengthening their connection to the movement goal and enabling connective action.

At this point, after a brief discussion of the important terms necessary to follow the discussion, it is imperative to discuss the conceptual framework guiding this research. I have explored two major concepts in the next two sections, the concepts of clicktivism and connective action. These concepts explore digital protests, discuss their features, and direct the examination of the collected data to determine its discursive features.

## **4.3 DISCUSSION OF CONCEPTS**

### **4.3.1 Clicktivism/slacktivism**

Hashtag activism, or clicktivism, is just an online activism measure that has faced significant criticism. Today, as we have lauded hashtag activism and the use of social media in protests, it is fair to say that in many situations, hashtag participants have no tangible knowledge of the hashtag issue. In its efforts to draw attention to critical issues, hashtags abstruse important historical backgrounds and socio-political contexts (Dadas, 2017).

The intent to use hashtags to inform the public and create awareness of issues is so important that activists use narratives and frames that are usually temporal (Yang, 2016). The ability of participants to personalize these hashtags has contributed to the inability to convert hashtag activism into collective action. In Yang's expression, it is a routine that starts in crisis/conflict mode and then just ends

With this problematic relationship, hashtag activism has a problem connecting hashtags to collective action. Hence the term slacktivism, a notable topic of discussion in socio-political contexts. The term slacktivism is used when discussing the disconnect between hashtag activism or media awareness and action (Glenn, 2015). Literatures addressing this phenomenon have criticized hashtag activism as a subpar substitute for the tried and tested method of physical mobilization, trading significant impact for personalized collectives in social movements (Morozov 2011 as cited in Dennis, 2019). Hashtag activism's generalizability has robbed it of its effectiveness in directing change, instead only attracting attention and collectivity.

The organizational capability it offers to stakeholders and the provision of reach metrics are all bogus achievements that hashtag activists chase without paying clear attention to the goal of creating depth and impact through collective action (Dennis, 2019). Slacktivism repeats the collective action problem, or free-rider problem, as presented in the general literature, with people seeking gratification or some sort of benefit from participation while doing nothing or doing the bare minimum.

Hashtag activism according to slacktivism theorist also argue that the inherent failure of hashtag activism is rooted in its lack of leadership and hierarchical structure. Although this feature is revered amongst social media users as a feature that fosters transparency and absolves many political risks and repression strategies, these theorists posit that this situation consistently undermines collective action and is unsuitable to enable social change (Dennis, 2019). As Dennis (2019, p. 28) puts it,

*“While weak ties can be useful for activists seeking to mobilize large groups ... strong relationships based on mutual trust are required for high-risk activism.”*

In many ways, the concept of slacktivism fails to consider that collective action is not created equal (Christensen, 2011), the impact and goal of these actions may differ, hence the need to distinguish between movements that succeed through hashtag activism and movements that

could not. Halupka's (2014) work goes further to reinforce this argument and to challenge the use of slacktivism as a concept that ridicules hashtag activism for its inefficiencies.

Before addressing Halupka's argument, Christensen (2011) argues in favor of hashtag activism and cites some difficulties it faces. Some topics of hashtag activism could be disconnected from political institutions. If the issue is wide-ranging, for example affecting the entire political institution, the activism may not be successful because it does not have direct grievances with any part or section of the political institution. Another difficulty it faces is the algorithms of social media not working in favor of some movements, therefore, preventing them from becoming a discourse in formal decision-making in society. Finally, the slacktivism argument for labeling hashtag activism as a frivolous phenomenon makes the public and the political institutions take it with levity.

Although Dadas (2017) also agrees that hashtag activists typically lack the knowledge, understanding, and context of the issue they are protesting, Christensen (2011) suggests that the evidence for the critical claims of slacktivism against hashtag activism in much of the empirical literature is not concrete, citing the need for consistent studies to observe changes over time<sup>11</sup>. Despite slacktivism's claims, there is no evidence to suggest a negative link between hashtag activism and collective action. The common consensus with critics, however, is the organizational ability of hashtag activism and its propensity to create togetherness.

Halupka's (2014) arguments on how clicktivism/hashtag activism has evolved over the years is a crucial discussion toward criticizing the concept of slacktivism. As Dennis (2019) notes, the argument for slacktivism has actively ignored several aspects of hashtag activism and presents a narrow argument from an intentionally narrow view of hashtag activism. My first point of entry into this argument is that one cannot compare hashtag activism to the traditional/physical act of social movements. This comparison limits hashtag activism to a deterministic argument therefore totally ignoring the idea that hashtag activism is a process toward collective action (Dennis, 2019)

Dennis (2019) and Halupka (2014) both argue that clicktivism should be seen as a process of collective action that entails awareness, organization, and then collective action. They see

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<sup>11</sup> The need for research into this connection is also supported by Rotman et al., (2011)

hashtag activism as a prerequisite for physical mobilization in any digital movement process. According to Dennis (2019, p. 33)

*“...Communication plays a critical role in either motivating participation or making it possible. Therefore, political conversations, either face-to-face or online, shape the conditions for participation...”*

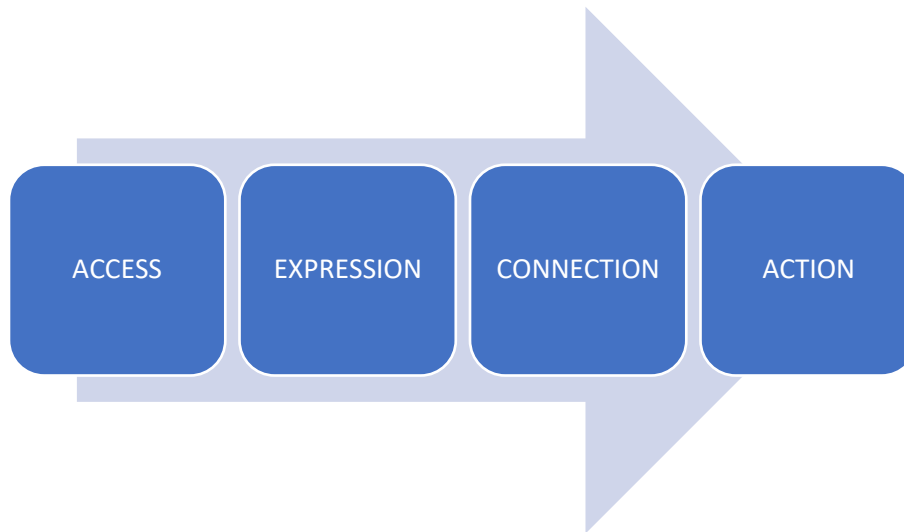
The criticism that hashtag activism is separated from collective action because it allows message individualization can be answered with the argument of Dennis (2019). He posits that message personalization is important for the consumption of content and the problem that is being protested. This is also a direct response to the criticism of Dadas (2017), which urges hashtag activists and consumers to become more aware of both historical and contemporary contexts to further their ability to enable social change.

Correspondingly, Halupka (2014) refers to this process of hashtag activism as clicktivism. As a concept related to the process where online participation or hashtag activism transforms into collective action. Rather than using the concept interchangeably with slacktivism, online activism, media activism, or hashtag activism, the concept is used to refer to activism throughout the digital sphere with a political cause and the object created from that cause. Hence its qualification as a political act rather than a mere online participation scheme.

Clicktivism is a reaction or response to a political cause and object, a spontaneous response in the form of political participation (Halupka, 2014). Clicktivism, as a general form of support for the object, begins with a political cause to which the person responds, with a minimum requirement that highlights commitment to the issue, connects people with organizations, and creates a list of supporters that are likely to participate in mobilizations such as protests.

Clicktivist critics consistently maintain that the tried-and-tested method of offline activism is a more viable option, simply forgetting that many offline collective actions also used online platforms to spread their movement's message (Dennis, 2019). Clicktivism provides access, enables communication, and then full participation. Indeed, clicktivism is more of a process than an outcome, hashtag activism is encouraged to not only end up on social media but morph into collective action. In this sense, Dennis (2019, p. 35) posits the progression of clicktivism in the figure below:

**Figure 1 - The progression of Clicktivism**



This concept is indeed relevant to my research objective. For this purpose, I adopted the heuristics proposed by Halupka (2014, pp. 124-125) on the features of the clicktivist movement listed below to explore my data.

- *Situated online:* Clicktivism is a political act situated in a digital environment.
- *An impulsive gesture:* A clicktivist action is an impromptu response to an existing political object. While the act may occur after a time of contemplation, it is characteristically spontaneous.
- *Noncommittal:* A clicktivist act is disposable, requiring no further commitment to the campaign following the initial action.
- *Does not draw upon specialized knowledge:* Clicktivism is an extension of the minimum skill set required to engage in a digital environment. This includes the navigation of, and interaction within, online environments.
- *Easily replicated:* A clicktivist action must be simple enough to be reproduced by the general population.
- *Engages a political object:* Clicktivism, as a responsive act, must engage an established political object. This differentiates it from those acts that draw upon the cause as a point of engagement
- *An action performed:* Clicktivism is the act perpetrated by the individual. In this way, it is independent of the campaigns that it supports, and of broader political ideology.

These seven heuristics not only establish clicktivism as a process and a political act but also serve as a model that can be used to study cases to determine and measure whether the case in question is an example of clicktivism as a political act and as a process of transformation to collective action.

Empirical literatures on slacktivism have consistently judged clicktivism for its inability to bring about social change, but the deterministic nature of their argument has cost them the realization that clicktivism is a process toward political action and a political act. By providing these above heuristics, I can examine data to determine its status, explore clicktivism in today's digital landscape and challenge the dominant discourse on acknowledging clicktivism as a political act.

### **4.3.2 Connective action**

The logic of connective action should not be confused with collective action, since the latter is a product of clicktivism, and the former refers to the interconnectedness of individuals through digital technologies. Connective action is a concept that explains what happens after clicktivism before the goal of collective action. Personalizing messages and recognizing common goals all form the basis for connective action. In this way, leadership, organizational and resource functions traditionally performed by SMOs have been relegated to support functions, with social media taking center stage (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012; Walker & Martin in Snow et al., 2019).

Connective action is based on the network of individuals during social movement, as it performs mobilizing functions as messages are passed from one individual to another. As Bennett & Segerberg (2012) put it, individuals are recruited to protest through their relationship and experience with the political object, making the protest organized but decentralized. This network is more inclusive and encourages large-scale personalization of messages through the recognition of collective goals or shared experiences.

The messages according to Bennett & Segerberg (2012) are designed to be easy to understand and coherent so that others can immediately relate to the problem being protested. This process is made quite easy by the presence of digital technologies developed for these functions and more. Platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube are built with an algorithm that can share this personalization with interested parties and group them using hashtags and similar technologies.

Connective action does not invalidate the functions of NGOs/SMOs or traditional collective action procedures. Even within this process, connective actions could still take place as these organizations are now using digital technologies to publicize their grievances, however, they may hit barriers “ *...at the intersections of social networks defined by established political organizations, ideologies, interests, class, gender, race, or ethnicity. These barriers often require resources beyond social technologies to overcome*” (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 747). Because of the existence of hierarchical relationships, different collective goals and values that can demotivate participants, or participants being unable to personalize the message or have similar experiences, connective actions with very formalized frameworks may not have enough large-scale connections to evoke action.

Furthermore, Bennett & Segerberg (2012, p. 756) conceptualized three elements of connective and collective action. They reported the characteristics of all three elements based on the networks they enable, and the functions organizations perform within those networks. The elements are listed below:

#### TYPOLGY 1

##### CONNECTIVE ACTION – SELF ORGANISING NETWORKS

1. Little or no organizational coordination of action
2. Large-scale personal access to multi-layered social technologies
3. Communication content centers on emergent inclusive personal action frames
4. Personal expression shared over social networks
5. Collectivities often shun the involvement of existing formal organizations

#### TYPOLGY 2

##### CONNECTIVE ACTION –ORGANISATIONALLY ENABLED NETWORKS

1. Lose organizational coordination of action
2. Organizations provide social technology outlays both custom and commercial
3. Communication content centers on organizationally generated inclusive person action frames
4. Some organizational moderation of personal expression through social networks
5. Organizations in the background in loosely linked networks



## TYOLOGY 3

### COLLECTIVE ACTION –ORGANISATIONALLY BROKERED NETWORKS

1. Strong organizational coordination of action
2. Social technologies used by organizations to manage participation and coordinates goals
3. Communication content centers on collective action frames
4. Organizational management of social networks- more emphasis on interpersonal networks to build relationships for collective action
5. Organizations in the foreground as coalitions with differences bridged through high resources organization brokerage

The concept of connective action explores features and messages of the social movement and the networks created. Are the messages circulating about a political object fostered by organizational influence or they are simply self-organizing? This is a question this concept would help answer in this research.

#### **4.4 APPLYING THE CONCEPT TO THE MOVEMENT AND PATTERNS OF DISCOURSE**

Clicktivism and connective action are intriguing concepts used in the examination of the data collected. As explored in our research questions and objectives, the use of digital technologies, especially social media, is vital to this research. Certain distinguishing features have been shown on social media and I intend to uncover those features with these concepts.

Clicktivism leveraged the data by examining its discursive characteristics and observing how it achieved wide reach. By examining the communication patterns of access, expression, and connection, Clicktivism explored the data on its mechanism of personalized frames, its relationship with the political object, and how it was displayed on the social media platform. Connective action, on the other hand, examined the data for network patterns, as well as the organizational patterns executed by digital technology and the placement of organizations in the protest.

These concepts provided integral insights into the discursive patterns and distinctive features of the EndSARS protest in Nigeria as presented on Twitter.

#### **4.5 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, I have engaged in a discussion of the conceptual frameworks; clicktivism and connective action, and the relevant terms framing and hashtag activism, which are used throughout this research to provide a much-needed understanding of the specifics of digital protests and an explanation to be supplied with the collected data. These concepts and terms were crucial for the analysis of the collected data as they provided the necessary information and background about the nature of the movement and paved the way for the proper classification of tweets into patterns using discourse analysis.

In the next chapter, I present my main findings and analysis showing the process by which they were derived, with examples.

## 5.0 KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I start by discussing in detail the patterns of discourse and how this research has explored and sought them. This research needs to derive information as described by the pattern to allow specificity and limit the analysis to what is necessary to answer the research question.

The text data collected totaled 1294 texts, of which 1174 were specific to EndSARS, with each distribution of tweets from each sample presented in the methodology chapter and summarized in the table below. The analyzed tweets only included images that were critical to the analysis and excluded audiovisual material because the tweets and images provided the required information. In addition, the patterns in the sections below describe the steps taken to analyze the tweets for patterns and the results derived from them.

*Table 3- Tweet distribution by samples*

	@OrganizationA	@OrganizationB	@PoliticalInstitution
Number of tweets	698	128	348

### 5.2 PATTERNS OF DISCOURSE

#### 5.2.1 Searching for the discursive patterns

Before I report my key findings from the collected data, I will start by discussing the general process of classifying tweets into patterns using discourse analysis. As I explained in the previous chapters, the patterns are discursive classifications of the tweets containing language, narrative, frames, and context regarding the topic. Each pattern is a set of distinct characteristics common to the tweets examined.

When analyzing and categorizing tweets into patterns, each specific tweet is read to determine the language and narrative used. The content of each tweet then determines the pattern to which it is assigned. These tweets are not mutually exclusive, so a tweet can contain characteristics that can be grouped into numerous patterns. Using MaxQda allowed this research to do this without mixing the discursive patterns. For certain tweets, I needed to determine whether they were retweets, replies, or original tweets to contextualize the tweet's content and properly place the tweet within its pattern. A snapshot of this classification is provided in **APPENDIX F**.

### **5.3 PATTERN 1: WHAT IS THE PATTERN OF ORGANIZATION?**

The organizational pattern looks for organizational features of the protest. To determine this organizational pattern, I analyzed the data for physical mobilization, organizational and financial features, and organizational problem patterns. I coded text using these four sub-categories,

- a) Protest distribution
- b) Pattern of security and organization
- c) Pattern of finance
- d) Pattern showing the problem of organization.

To probe for physical mobilization and protest distribution, I coded for the pattern in each sample in the following steps enumerated below:

@OrganizationA – I started by following information about the distribution of funds to organize protests in different geographic locations. This gave me information about the distribution of the protests across the nation. It answers the question Where did the protest take place? Was the protest nationwide or just a manifestation on social media? Next, samples were explored for tweets and retweets that indicated the locations of the protests. These locations were converted into the country's thirty-six states to provide the necessary information about the locations of the protests.

@OrganizationB and @PoliticalInstitution – This research examined tweets and retweets that cited and referenced protests at specific locations in the past or in real-time and provided the required information that was converted to the 36 states in the country to show the protest distribution.

To examine the data for financial flow, aid distribution, security patterns, organizational patterns, and the problem of organization, I explore and monitor the tweet contents for information on these patterns in all samples. The probing for patterns was guided by relevant pieces of empirical literature and method.

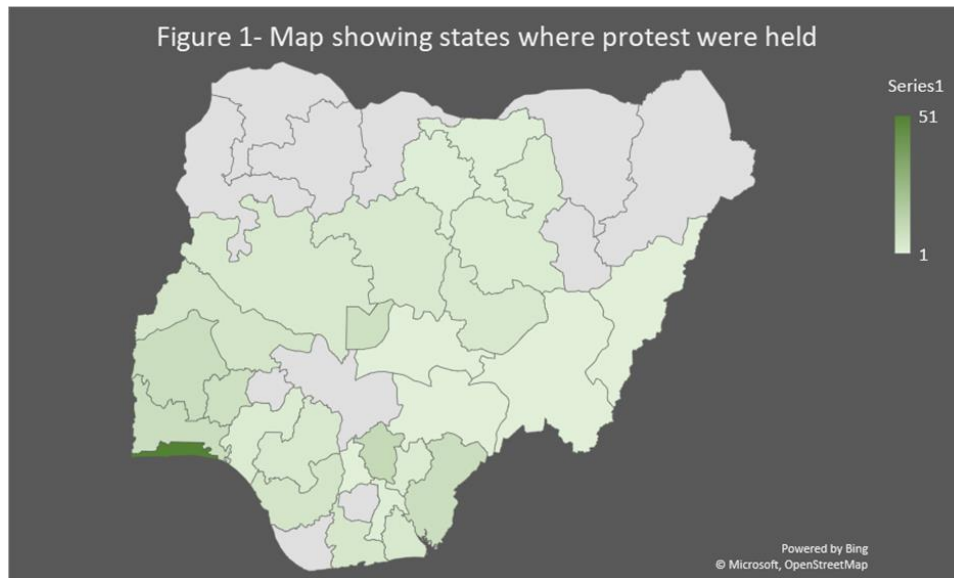
#### **5.3.1 RESULT**

##### **5.3.1.1 Protest distribution**

The data analyzed showed that the protests had a significant impact on the nation. Protests were organized in twenty-eight (28) out of thirty-six (36) states at some point during the study

period. This number represents about 78% of the nation where protests were organized. As shown in the map below, the green-shaded states had organized protests and there was no evidence from the data collected that protests took place in the gray parts of the map.

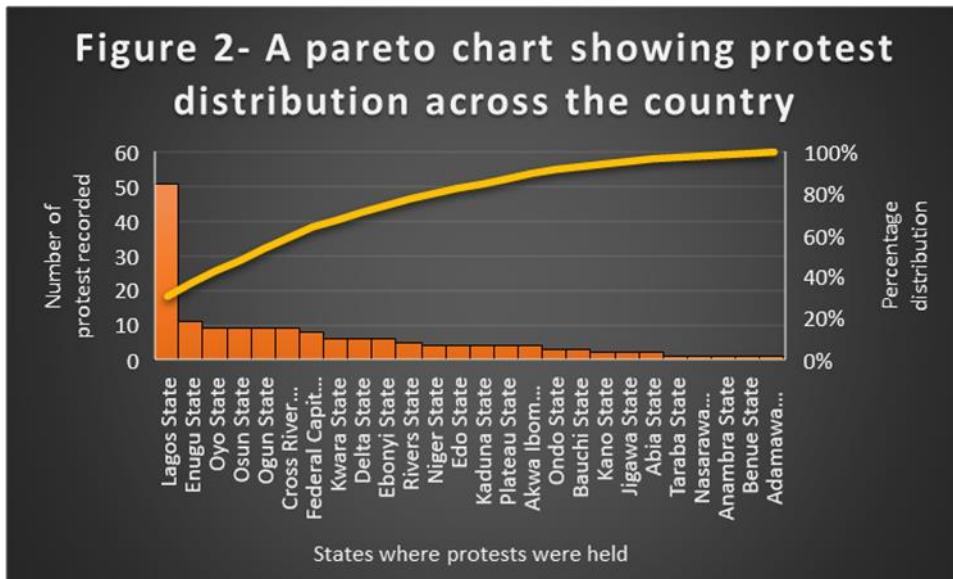
**Figure 2- Map showing states where protests were held**



Although @OrganizationA provided a map, the information provided on their map only covered the moment before October 15<sup>th</sup>. This map as generated from data from the sample takes into consideration information collected from them to create this map to efficiently represent the locations of the protest.

The popularity and the number of group gatherings however differ. In certain states, the number of protests held was lower than in others. As seen in **Figure 3** below, a chart derived from one of the samples, the highest distribution of protests was concentrated in Lagos and other states in the Southern part of Nigeria.

Figure 3- A Pareto chart showing protest distribution across the country



### 5.3.1.2 Pattern of Finance

*“We are raising funds to support #Relevanthashtag protests across Nigeria - to provide resources for our frontline workers. Please donate using the following link:*

*https\*\*\*\*\* Donations accepted in NGN, USD, EUR, GBP, CAD, GHS, and KES”*

Finances are a crucial feature of mass mobilization, as in the case of the EndSARS protest. Funds were sought by organizations, specifically @OrganizationA. There are certain crucial features observed with tweets classified in this category. I will start with the mode of sharing and transmitting the information. The sample provided a standard format that displays the required information and was consistent with that format when presenting funding information. With buzzwords like “donations” “alert” “total raised” and “total disbursed, financial responsibility was expected and delivered. These reports had a consistent structure, with certain parts changing as more donations were made. The statements were intentionally structured to show consistency and organizational features so that the audience became aware of what each message represented. As seen below, notifications of donations to and from the organization were consistent and standard. To ensure transparency, I have included sample snapshots in **APPENDIX G** and have clustered and withheld sensitive information.

*Peaceful Protest Donation Alert!*

*N\*\*\*\*\* has been donated for the #protesthashtag protest held in \*\*\*\*\* tomorrow ON  
(Date and Time) via (Twitter handle of the protest organizer)*

*Please tag us in your pictures on Twitter (\*\*\*\*Twitter handle of funder)*

*\*\*(Relevant hashtags of the protest)\*\**

*On (\*\*date\*\*) we donated N\*\*\*\*\* to (number of protests funded) protests, increased security at \*\* protests, and made donations to (Twitter handle of those donated to) to be used for food, water, ambulances, and other support.*

*Total raised: N\*\*\*\*\**

*Total disbursed: N\*\*\*\*\**

*All Balances NGN \*\*\*\*\* USD \*\*\*\*\* CAD \*\*\*\*\* GBP \*\*\*\*\* EUR \*\*\*\*\* GHS  
\*\*\*\*\* KES \*\*\*\*\* BTC \*\*\*\*\**

*\*\*(Relevant hashtags to the message)\*\**

@OrganizationA reported a receipt of N147,855,788.28, paid N60,403,235.00, and shared the remaining N87,452,553.28 with other organizations with the protest mandate. The usefulness of digital tools was also evident in the data collected as the funds raised were not solely limited to local currencies, but cryptocurrency and foreign currencies were also used to donate funds to the movement. Finance messages from @OrganizationA accounted for approximately thirty-two percent (32%) of the account's total messages. Donations to the protest were not limited to online transactions but included bank transfers and other digital methods.

*We have transitioned to only accepting Bitcoin donations with BTC Pay. BTC Pay is a free, secure, decentralized, and censorship-resistant platform, making it our top pick  
#Relevanthashtag Please donate here: (link provided here)*

*The online payment links are not working right now. In the meantime, please use these account details while we take care of this: 123456789 Lala Bank, Sasha Account Funding Thank you!*

The funding pattern was particularly applicable to @OrganizationA as it was the only sample to perform funding tasks, making it a dominant organization during the protest.

### 5.3.1.3 The pattern of security and organization

As I would discuss in the subsequent section titled “the pattern of relationship,” I examine the relationship between actors, but in this section, it is worth noting that non-state actors/organizations were linked and worked together to provide security, organization, medical care, and legal services for all protesters. Information sharing and transmission were most important in the samples with the use of mentions (@) and the public calls for legal, medical, and other services. Information on these services, as well as the progress and status reports, were consistently published by the samples. As expected, finance and information were key to these protests, as evidenced by the tweets below.

*@anotherorganizationprovidingsupport & @anotherorganizationprovidingsupport are coordinating long-term mental health support for victims of police brutality and their families, and victims of violence related to the #Relevantprotesthashtag protests across the country via @\*\*\*\*\*. Please contact us here [https:\\*\\*\\*\\*\\*](https:*****)*

*Attention photographers on the front lines of the # Relevantprotesthashtag protests! @anotherorganizationprovidingsupport would like to support your crucial work and provide resources to help document this groundbreaking movement. DM @anotherorganizationprovidingsupport for more information*

*@ anotherorganizationprovidingsupport has developed a saline solution to reduce the effects of tear gas. They give it out for free! Contact them if you are attending a peaceful protest*

*We have \*\*\* volunteer lawyers across Nigeria. If you know someone who has been arrested or harassed at one of the peaceful # Relevantprotesthashtag protests across the country, please let us know and we will put you in touch with an attorney in your area!*

Tweets regarding organization for the better quality of service and improved coordination of mass physical mobilization were also present. With various tweets designed to provide detailed information and instructions on gatherings across the country.

*If you are part of a protest/organizing a protest and need help, please fill out the protest support form. This is the SPEEDIEST way to get help*

*@relevantmention: Calabar shows up tomorrow. Support for our protest was received from @OrganizationA #relevanthashtag. we march so that our voices may be heard by the world.  
\*\* am at \*\*\*\*\**

*Thank you @OrganizationA for the donations @protestorganizer has received. We got a truck to be active and strong as expected. #Relevanthashtag*

Information about safety precautions and reports of places where violent protests have taken place were prevalent in my examination of the samples. Information on how protesters should



protect themselves, information on recruitment, information on how to fund the protest, formatted messages about the aim and objectives of the protests, information on promoting collectivity and inclusion, and progress reports were available to the media public on Twitter. These messages are represented by all samples. Examples of such tweets are

*Please stay home or go home quickly if things escalate. We should avoid violence and loss of life. Let's develop a new strategy. There are thugs and reports of military action. Stay home, and stay safe now. #Relevanthahtag*

*When organizing, the authorities must not coerce you, attempt to use force against you, or intimidate you with criminal prosecution or imprisonment. You have the right to organize without fear.*

*We are concerned for the safety of peaceful protesters marching across the country under the #Relevanthashtags banner following the announcement that the military intends to start an exercise this week.*

*Going to a demonstration? Water, water, water, and more water. This will keep you hydrated, and a squirt top bottle allows you to wash off your skin or eyes if needed.*

Information from @PoliticalInstitution were official statements from the organization that includes affirmations towards preserving and maintaining security, making sure justice prevails, and reassuring the public.

*... The Leader has also warned that the Sub-head responsible for the erring unit, the Heads of the unit responsible for State Commands, and their supervising Assistants will from this point forward be held responsible for any wrongdoing within their area of responsibility. The leader tasked them with ensuring effective supervision and direction of personnel under their responsibility*

*The following numbers and social media addresses are now available for members of the public to report complaints (as well as commendations) against members of the erring unit and other units...*

*Regional leaders in the thirty-six (36) states of the Federation must identify and isolate lawbreakers from peaceful protesters; immediately arrest violent criminals in their respective locations, and conscientiously prosecute them...*

#### **5.3.1.4 Problem of organization**

Another important feature discovered in the search for this pattern was the problem of organization. There were some issues reported by the samples while analyzing that could be categorized as problems of the organization. The dominant ones in this protest were the outbreak of violence, the attack on protesters by state and non-state actors, complaints about

issues of financial management and communication with the public, attacks by state actors on protest organizations, the resilience, and adaptation of protest actors, the inability in resolving certain issues that arose during the protest that lead to some drastic consequences, dealing with complaints and fake accounts, and flagging allegations against the state actors. Examples of these tweets are displayed below.

*We received reports of thugs trying to disrupt peaceful protests. We'll get security out asap.  
Nigerian youth please STAY SAFE! #Protesthashtag*

*We thank everyone for their support and donations so far! For all money transfers: Do not use the protest suffix in any narrative. Rather use random narratives like mom, dad, bills, etc.  
#Protesthashtag*

*Due to our inability to have representation at every protest or to help as many people as needed, we have created "panic cards" that can either help you cope with an impending panic attack or help you help someone else. #Protesthashtag*

*Please stop filling up our inbox with data/money/transport requests. It is unreasonable that people who need help are unable to reach us because of this. We disburse funds to support protests and medical and legal needs.*

*We lost about \*\*number of protesters\*\* these past days, and many more were injured. We have no guns. No ammunition, Nothing. Placards only. Yet they are gone. These are the people we want to change for. #RrELEVANTHASHTAG*

*#Protesthashtag has been shadow banned, let us use the new hashtag #Newprotesthashtag  
Retweet!!*

*Unfortunately, the last \*a number of people\* people will be brought to justice tomorrow...*

This pattern also revealed the violent outburst of protest that destroyed life and property (public and private). Both state and non-state actors express their dissatisfaction and use language that victimizes their experiences and exclude the experiences of other actors. The violence that erupted because of the protest was indeed problematic for the movement.

*Reports indicate that \*\*a number of public officers\*\* were killed extrajudicially by some rioting protesters and dozens were injured during the protests. Many of the injured employees are in life-threatening conditions in the hospitals...*

*The IGP notes that \*\*a number of suspects\*\* have been arrested in connection with the attacks and arson at police stations in \*a geographical location\*. \*\*a number of ammunitions\*\* previously stolen from destroyed police stations were also recovered...*

*Social media control will only inflict incredibly harsh consequences on Nigerians if they simply criticize the government*

*@Politicalleader You cannot prohibit protests*

*The use of tear gas by \*state actor\* yesterday; during the COVID-19 pandemic is particularly ruthless. As protesters took to the streets, wearing masks and attempting to socially distance themselves due to the virus, \*state actor\* fired tear gas, escalating the risk of respiratory problems. #Relevanthashtag*

#### **5.4 PATTERN 2: WHAT IS THE PATTERN EXISTING IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ACTORS?**

The relationship pattern between the actors provided more information about the existing and future relationships between the actors. I started by exploring the frequency of mentions in tweets and monitoring the language used to gain insight into the nature of their relationship (see **APPENDIX C** and **APPENDIX E** for a detailed table).

The frequency of mentions as displayed by OrganizationA was tracked to expose the level of interaction with the political institution and other organizations. The list shows organizations and individual accounts with their percentage of frequency, showing the level of reliance civil organizations and protest participants had on each other and the level of information flow. The percentage of mentions towards any state actor by OrganizationA showed a frequency of two (2) and a percentage average of 0.29%. Other organizations with the highest frequency range from @fkabudu, @mentallyawareng, and @standtoendrape. This sample also referred to other samples chosen but with a low percentage.

The state actor sampled displayed distinctive features. The first was its use of the medium to disseminate information about other issues excluding EndSARS. Its total tweet was 176, with 128 relating to EndSARS, unlike OrganizationA whose total tweets of 698 were related to the movement. Its pattern of relationship did not utilize mentions, rather it released statements and mentioned OrganizationB directly. The tweets on this page were in reported format, directly quoting the official statements, and were not engaging with other organizations as expected.

The pattern of the relationship between OrganizationB and PoliticalInstitution seems antagonistic with bold mentions of each other with language that denotes inclusion and exclusion. Unlike OrganizationA whose major relationship was with organizations that were providing support to the protests and limiting their mentions of the state actor. As seen in the tweets below, the first being from @OrganizationB, the next three from @PoliticalInstitution, and the final two from @OrganizationA

*State Actor @PoliticalInstitution fires live ammunition at peaceful #Protesthashtag protesters*

*...The force condemns the discriminatory tendencies exhibited by OrganizationB. One wonders whether, according to OrganizationB, public officials are not also people with equal rights to the protection of their basic rights to life...*

*In line with our objectives, the state actor works with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and other development partners for public official training...*

*Calls on OrganizationB to ensure that they subject their reports to appropriate examination and fact-checking before publishing the reports.*

*@fkabudu @Deenike @MentallyAwareNG has reached out to us and we are putting them in touch.*

*@Protestorganizers please DM. We have funds for everyone.*

These displayed examples are just a few examples of the existing relationship and sentiments these samples had with each other. As evident in this pattern, each sample performed certain responsibilities and was consistent throughout the period of my research. OrganizationA predominantly worked with protesters and civil organizations while carefully curating content to reiterate the protest objectives and sentiments shared by the public without tagging or directly mentioning @Politicalinstitution, hence its low-frequency score. As a civil organization, its tweets were also illuminative of the inclusive protest objectives as seen below. It provided support for the protest but also tried to maintain a civil relationship with the state actor.

*Our demands are clear. We are not thugs, we want action, not words, #Relevanthashtag, and public officials should be retrained, given a psychiatric exam, and better paid and the ones who commit crimes should be punished. Share on WhatsApp for the elderly.*

OrganizationB on the other hand mentioned and tagged @PoliticalInstitution consistently demanding a response to the allegations leveled against it, challenging the institutions to respond and rectify its actions, and pointing out points of friction in its action. The pattern of relationship between samples provided ample information on variations of protest behavior on social media.

## **5.5 PATTERN 3: THE PATTERNS OF COLLECTIVITY AND REMEMBRANCE**

Searching for this pattern in the data collected inquires keen observation of language that signifies collectivity (togetherness) and remembrance. In my analysis of this pattern, language

and context played a vital role. Tweets coded in this category included discussion of the protests bringing together people from different geographical locations, texts garnering support from various organizations and people of influence all around the world, messages to reinforce the protest objectives and collectivity, and stories from victims of police brutality to motivate the protesters.

*We continue to fight against police brutality in Nigeria. We stand with the Nigerian youth.*

*Today! Washington DC, Maryland, Baltimore, VA, #relevanthashtag #relevanthashtag  
Having dreadlocks is not a crime, having tattoos is not a crime, having a smartphone is not a crime, driving a flashy car is not a crime, having a laptop is not a crime, being tech savvy is not a crime, being young is not a crime.*

*\*\*Name of victim\*\* was arrested by police in \*\*a geographical location\*\*. During his detention, his family was extorted. @PoliticalInstitution falsely framed him to extort his family even more. He was tortured more and died; #Protesthashtag*

*Help if you can guys. We are all in this together #Relevanthashtag*

*WHY THE PROTESTS? The ongoing protests are all about: The so-called scrapping of SARS is falling short of Nigerians' demands. SARS activists who injured Nigerians must be brought to justice. Public officers must end torture, extortion, and ill-treatment of Nigerians.*

*#Relevanthashtag*

Regarding remembrance, tweets coded in this category contain texts and pieces of information about deceased victims of police brutality and protest suppression, arrested protesters, and posts to remind the public about the history of the protest and the need for the demanded reforms. Tweets within this category include:

*At least \*\*number of victims\*\* people were killed at \*\*a geographical location\*\* Many were seriously injured, and the security camera was disabled to cover the murder*

*2015: SARS is reformed; 2017: SARS is reformed; 2018: FSARS will be dissolved; 2019: SARS will be restructured; 2020: SARS banned from patrols; #Relevanthahstags*

*THREAD, Our calls for an end to these atrocities were ignored by the authorities: On September 18, 2014, we published a report on torture by Politicalinstitution; On September 21, 2016, we published another report, describing the heartless operation of a unit of the PoliticalInstitution and how to end impunity and protect Nigerians; On June 26, 2020, we published another report on the increasing impunity of this unit and its mockery of the Anti-Torture Act (2017)*

*The candlelight procession in London happening now*

### *Say their names*

*I opened my eyes this morning \*\*victim's name\*\* and others will never be able to do that again. And for that, we must #Relevanthashtag*

The pattern of collectivity observed with @PoliticalInstitution was lacking precision. The language used employed collectivity as a tool for inclusion and exclusion. Tweets from this sample generally used the language of remembrance to qualify all persons and properties lost by all actors (with emphasis on state actors). Unlike the other two samples, @PoliticalInstitution did not possess numerous tweets with specific language toward remembrance. The language used for remembrance was adequately diplomatic with no context referring to victims, as seen in the texts below:

*... In addition, the force is assembling an investigative team, said to include civil society organizations and human rights organizations, to work with the police to investigate allegations of human rights abuses.*

*The IGP notes that the erring unit and other units remain a critical component of the force in combating existing and emerging violent crime in the country. However, he condemns any act of unprofessionalism, human rights violations, and self-importance...*

Its specific language on remembrance was attached to injured police officers with language omitting other victims of police brutality.

*The incident that led to the unfortunate death of a police officer, \*name of police officer\* \*of \*\* State, who was attacked and brutally murdered by the protesters also left another, \*name of police officer\* seriously injured by gunfire from demonstrators. The protesters also carted away ammunition that was with the deceased at the time of the incident...*

*Available reports indicate that \*\*a number of public officials\*\* were killed extrajudicially by some rioting protesters and dozens were injured during the protests. Many of the injured employees are in life-threatening conditions in the hospitals...*

Collectivity and remembrance of victims were lopsided with differential narratives from all samples. The relationship between the samples and their targeted audience was consistent throughout the period. @PoliticalInstitution was diplomatic in its language regarding collectivity and remembrance, and @OrganizationB well as @OrganizationA were consistent in their language and narrative depicting shared goals to express collectivity and remembrance.

## **5.6 PATTERN 4: PATTERN OF EXCLUSION AND INCLUSION**

This pattern as observed in the sample consists of texts with specific language used to “other” and “classify” individuals or groups representing something external to each party’s agenda.

This pattern was present across all three samples giving more information about the existing and future relationships between the actors.

During our analysis, I examined the tweets to uncover the use of certain words and the context the wordings indicate. While doing this, some features were prevalent. The use of words such as “we,” “thugs,” “our brothers,” “our police officers” and “they” and their use in tweets provided meaning to the context and points towards the use of language to include and/or exclude a group from the various actor’s objectives. These listed examples show some of those notable words used by the sample in their tweets.

***Our siblings** are dead for daring to demand their human and constitutional rights  
#Protesthashtag*

*My grandfather came out! He said in his years as a Nigerian he had never seen a generation move like ours; It's amazing, for the first time he has no fears about the future of his children to his great-grandchildren. #Protesthahstag*

*Our mothers are marching today. Please support and encourage them. If your mother is afraid to overdo it, show her the stories of the victims. Tell her to wear her anointing oil and prayer beads. Let her cry out for justice on behalf of other mothers waiting for their children to come home*

*So many people want to help; Amplify the message, share it widely, use your voice, WhatsApp broadcasts to **the elderly**, and educate everyone around you! Everyone has the power to do something, so many people have taken the initiative without direction, and so can you!  
#Protesthahstag*

*We have enough. We are fed up with being extorted and terrorized for having tech devices or no reason at all. We are fed up with young lives being cut short by the people who are supposed to protect us. We are fed up with how expendable a Nigerian life is. You are not?  
#Protesthashtag*

*Stop **thugs** from attacking protesters*

*What happened at the Lekki Toll Gate echoes the Nigerian authorities' pattern of cover-up when **their** defense and security forces committed unlawful killings. #Relevanthashtag*

This pattern as seen in the displayed examples also recorded the generational undertone of protest participants, a language that differentiates actors and protest participants by generations. Some tweets from @PoliticalInstitution set an example for this observation.

*Meanwhile, the IGP has advised **parents/guardians to steer their children/wards** away from acts of violence and crime as the force will henceforth wield the full powers of the law to prevent further attacks on citizens' life and property impede*

*He also called for regular citizen meetings at various state commands, involving police spokespersons, civil society organizations (CSOs), and other key stakeholders, to increase synergy between the police and citizens, especially **youth**.*

Another observation from the @PoliticalInstitution worthy of note was its differentiation between offenders and protesters in some of its tweets at the initial stage. The language then changed in subsequent tweets as seen in the examples below, the differentiation became blurred. Therefore, protesters and offenders were considered in this context, the same.

*...to wanton violence, killings, looting and destruction of public and private property, and the retaking of public space by criminal elements **masquerading as protesters** in some parts of the country.*

*Available reports indicate that twenty-two (22) police officers were killed extrajudicially by some **rampaging protesters** and dozens were injured during the protests. Many of the injured are in life-threatening conditions in the hospitals.*

Furthermore, this sample also used language that could both be exclusive and inclusive depending on the position of the reader. It achieved this through its use of the word “citizen” and crafting the message to differentiate the offenders (protesters/thugs) from the public, in a manner that others the protesters from the “citizens.”

*He further calls for the understanding and cooperation of **citizens** to ensure that the action is designed to ensure public order, safety, and security **in our communities**.*

*The IGP urges **law-abiding citizens** not to panic, but to join forces with the police and other members of the law enforcement community to protect **their communities** from **criminal elements***

*The IGP recognizes and commends all citizens, especially those who genuinely express their concerns for better police direction in an organized, patriotic, and civic manner*

This pattern was key and instrumental in the understanding of protest messages and the mechanisms of othering through social media messages. This pattern uncovered the use of words to denote generational differences, differences between the protest actors and their objectives, and a difference in the language used by the actors to present their accounts of events in a way that best presents them in a softer and more sympathetic light to the public.

## **5.7 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, I have presented a detailed discussion of the discourse through my analysis of patterns observed and examined in the data collected. The examination of these patterns, as guided by the literature and conceptual framework, enabled a proper examination of the data. Information about security and organizations are important functions in protests of today.



Security in terms of securing finances, protection of protesters, and the interrelationship between organizations to fulfill stated protest goals were all discussed in this chapter.

These patterns also examined the various problems that existed and faced actors during these protests. An understanding of the pattern enabled our knowledge of protest organizations and probed onward to explore the pattern of relationship between actors as I have done in this chapter. The pattern of the relationship brought to light the complicated and/or nuanced relationship between them.

The third pattern which examined the means of remembrance and collectivity across all samples and their various context provided insight into the process of motivating collectivity and collective remembrance through messages shared and posted by the samples.

The final pattern titled the pattern of inclusion and exclusion delved into the language used and the context communicated that could other/exclude and include members of the public depending on their position on the protest. In the next chapter, I would proceed to discuss these patterns more elaborately with appropriate works of literature and their implication as well as their addition to the discourse of protest behavior.

## **6.0 DISCUSSIONS OF PATTERNS**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The distinctive features of these protests are an intriguing topic of discussion as the data collected provided useful information on these features as prevalent in the EndSARS protest. This collected and analyzed data has a place within the existing empirical understanding of social media and movements. As I have conducted a review of the existing empirical analysis, the collected results are discussed in detail in this section, giving their practical implications, relevance, and place in the contemporary literature.

I will begin my discussion by situating the EndSARS protest within the existing heuristics of clicktivism and connective action as presented by Halupka (2014) and Bennett & Sergerberg (2012) in their respective articles, to enable a proper understanding of the protest, the digital possibilities of social media, and the development of digital protests. I would then move on to discussing the distinctive features by discussing the results in the four patterns identified. These patterns are:

- a) Pattern of Organization
- b) Pattern of Relationship
- c) Pattern of Collectivity and Remembrance
- d) Pattern of Inclusion and Exclusion

### **6.2 SITUATING THE ENDSARS PROTEST IN THE CLICKTIVIST AND CONNECTIVE ACTION HEURISTICS**

The conceptual framework is crucial for my research on the EndSARS protest. They provide explanations of the origins and processes of protest. In the previous chapters, I laid out my plans to fit the protests into the existing heuristics of Halupka (2014) and Bennett & Sergerberg (2012), and here is the section where I situate the protest in the existing heuristics. I would start by presenting the characteristics of clicktivism discussed by Halupka (2014) listed in the **Clicktivism/slacktivism** section in this study, examining the data collected and the protest specifically to determine whether it possesses the distinguishing feature of being a clicktivist movement, in what has been presented as a process towards collective action.

*Table 4 - An application of the clicktivists heuristics to the EndSARS protest*

THE CLICKTIVIST HEURISTICS	THE ENDSARS PROTEST
<b>Was the protest situated online?</b>	<p>YES</p> <p>The protest was a political act with a political object within a digital environment. The protest was indeed situated online with a total tweet count of up to 57 million<sup>12</sup> and counting.</p>
<b>Was the protest an impulsive gesture?</b>	<p>YES</p> <p>The protest, although it had a historical context, the October 2020 protest wave, was a spontaneous response to a video showing police officers fleeing a crime scene after an alleged episode of brutality.</p>
<b>Was the protest noncommittal?</b>	<p>YES</p> <p>The protest was able to garner a large number of tweets as it was a campaign with temporal frames where some parts were consistent, and others changed as the situation evolved. As shown in 0, the hashtag changes and evolves, proving its noncommittal form.</p>
<b>Did the protest draw upon specialized knowledge?</b>	<p>NO</p> <p>The personalization and ability to relate to the content do not require specialized knowledge.</p>
<b>Was the protest easily replicated?</b>	<p>YES</p> <p>The protest message and frames were very relatable, thus aiding in replication and personalization. This was there with an expression of personal experience and a</p>

<sup>12</sup> Oloyede & Elegba, 2019

	willingness to further reinforce the protest message.
<b>Was the protest engaging a political object?</b>	YES This point is crucial for classifying any movement on social media as clicktivism. The EndSARS protest was a response to police brutality, a structural discriminatory act by the political institution, and a further commitment to the broader cause.
<b>Was the protest an action performed?</b>	YES As noted in the previous chapters, a clicktivist action is an individual action performed. Individual messages and frames make them a never-ending process. The end of offline activism does not guarantee the end of clicktivist actions as they are independent and individual.

The EndSARS protest was a clicktivist act, it was a process and a political act responding to a political object. The independence of the clicktivist action enables the longevity of movement goals on social media. Social media can be expressed as an abstract locus of memory<sup>13</sup>, with its provision of communication flow, accessibility, and extensive storage<sup>14</sup>, clicktivist acts can exist on social media even when the topic is no longer trending, and it could also re-emerge when an independent clicktivist action has been carried out. Examples of this are evident in the subsequent protests even after the end of the physical protests<sup>15</sup>, and the resurfacing of the protest theme and frames on social media.

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<sup>13</sup> The reference to social media as an abstract locus of memory is adapted from the works of Yates (1966) and Connerton (2009)

<sup>14</sup> Zhao and Liu, (2015) explain that the collective memory functions and an indicator change make social media a space for memory functions.

<sup>15</sup> An example was the recent protests held at the Lekki Toll Gate to remember the two-year anniversary of the protest

Slacktivism could be considered an outdated term, as clicktivism is by its very nature a non-committal, individual and independent act. This feature grants it the ability to remain even after the movement has ended. This assertion is perhaps why political institutions consistently try to contain and control media technology because clicktivist actions tend to regenerate and yet remain an issue for the political structures.

With these clicktivist features, connective actions were made possible. Based on the typologies theorized by Bennett & Sergerberg (2012), I could further categorize the EndSARS protest. After examining dates, backgrounds, historical complexities, and connections, the protest can be classified as a connective action with organization-supported networks.

There was decentralized coordination of actions. As I would examine the specifics of the protests and their distribution in the next section, it is worth noting here that the offline protests and actions were loosely coordinated. The tactic used was simple. The organizations provided funding and assistance to activists and organizers of protests across the country without direct involvement or control over the protests being held. The only connection encouraged was tagging and retweeting.

The organization's assistance was provided through social technology with examples including donation functions, provision of aids, and remembrance functions. Although I will address these discussions at length in the following sections, it is crucial to emphasize the necessary presence of organizations in this framework. Their creation of inclusive personal action frames, establishing connections and networks, and staying in the background with support functions indicate the strong presence of connective actions, proving that movements do not necessarily need to have strong organizational or formal ties to have a successful social movement.

### **6.3 PATTERN OF ORGANIZATION**

As discussed in previous chapters, organization and togetherness are critical to social movements. Organizations like NGOs and SMOs are present in movements and consistently use social media technologies to recruit, create, share, and broadcast messages, frames, and narratives. Several observable features emerged from the data collected, as inferred from the existing literature. To present my discussion of the result, I would divide this section into the three categories listed below:

- a) Protest distribution

- b) Pattern of security and organization
- c) Pattern showing the problem of organization.

### **6.3.1 Protest distribution**

The argument of many clicktivist/slacktivist theorists rests on the assumption that online actions cannot lead to offline actions. This assumption was critically questioned in the data collected. Several protests existed offline through references to images and tweets congratulating activists, posted images of offline protesters, and shoutouts to offline protests. The existence of protests was visible in all samples with some tweets showing solidarity with the offline protests and others acknowledging the event, with some of these tweets several classified as patterns of collectivity (discussed below). Results about the geographical locations were predominately from one sample, which was actively involved in the protests and has practices of transparency to adequately show where the protests took place. With the funds provided for the protests, I was able to create the map in **Figure 1** to show the locations where the protests took place.

The map produced covered a significant percentage of the nation, however, there were certain variations in these numbers as illustrated in the Pareto chart in **Figure 3**. Castells' (2010) argument on the progress of globalization and globalized networks in urban cities driving centralization and development in these areas, as well as the core utility of information systems and globalized networks for many aspects of the development of these regions, provides an empirical basis for the rationale for such result in the collected data. Metropolises because of their existing globalized networks and accessible networks for communication, events like movements are more likely to be held in metropolises, where movements could attract more attention and attract large participation through connective actions and the presence of a large population in those regions.

A larger number of protests took place in metropolitan areas, capital cities, and geographically in the South. Although they took place in other parts of the nation, the number of protests was incomparable. This discussion could be nuanced as the data only considers the number of protests held and not the total number of participants who turned up for the protest, which may lead to a different result.

This unequal representation and unequal access to digital technologies are likely to be fatal to collective action, as participants' connectivity through media technology may be

disproportionate and the movement may not be as widespread across geographic locations as it appears on social media. Unequal access puts the movement at risk of not making enough connections to foster collective action, and the frames or narratives generated go unseen by potential audiences and are not consumed by intended audiences.

Indeed, connective action and clicktivism are a precursor to collective action and social movements, but the consumption of frames, narratives, and messages may not be positive in all areas, and the movement goals may not be shared by all, running the protest risks of being clamors of the minority<sup>16</sup> (which might enable oppression) than a collective cry for help. Connective actions provide greater access to movement messages, but they are not equally accessible to all, as activists/NGOs/SMOs would prefer.

### **6.3.2 Patterns of Security and Organization**

This pattern discusses at length the financial behavior and provision of aid by organizations involved in the protest. As reflected in the existing literature, organizations involved in connective actions utilize organizational features of digital technology. These roles allow them to perform financial and organizational functions for the movement.

Information sharing was key, as a connective action movement, with loose organizational control, participants were consistently informed about events, news surrounding the protest, and how to protect themselves from violence. Organizations were widely involved in retweeting information deemed critical, and connecting activists, protesters, and protest organizers with organizations that provide services and publicly disclose information related to the protest to ensure quality, integrity, and transparency.

This function allowed legal aid to reach those who were in need. All the protesters had to do was tweet their message with relevant hashtags and tags, and these organizations picked them up by replying to their tweets and tagging relevant organizations that provide the service they need or retweeting them. This system also made it possible to compile a list of detained protesters and provide information about the protest location and instructions.

These organizations also structured their announcement in a consistent format. This consistency created a cognitive association with the audience of those messages. Anytime the audience sees these messages they are already aware of the context of the messages, this is

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<sup>16</sup> Aytac et al, (2017) mention that this strategy could be adopted during movement repressions.

another attempt to maintain transparency and integrity. This consistency was constant with financial announcements for giving and receiving grants as this was an important aspect of protest organizations.

Another form of organization present in this protest is the security aspect, these organizations perform security functions through security information and providing security personnel. Organizations also went on to form organizational links, although loosely affiliated, the links were made and maintained to provide needed assistance to the protesters. Several organizations served divergent functions, and organizations referred protesters through online technology to other organizations if they were unable to provide the services requested or if another organization provided that service already.

The sample organization used in this study collected funds and donated those funds to the protest needs and went further to recommend other organizations to provide needed services. Even after the offline protests ended, the remaining funds were transferred to other organizations with the core task of following up on the protests.

Because this protest was a clamor against a political institution, there was an underlying theme of safety and reassurance on the part of the sampled organization. Although I will detail the involvement of various organizations or political institutions in exclusionary and inclusionary practices while discussing public security in subsequent sections, political institutions strive to reassure citizens that they can provide security despite violence. Their pledges usually come with stipulations, but safety remains crucial to the political institution.

### **6.3.3 Problem of organization**

In previous chapters, I talked about protest repression and violent outbursts during protests. This pattern was commonly seen as it spoke of violent outbursts of protest, other issues with digital protests, and repressive strategies chosen by political institutions. As the protest relies heavily on digital technology, disruption of the internet or digital technology services could cause minor to significant problems for the protest.

The organizations supporting the EndSARS protest faced several problems. The first concerns donations to the protest. The applications used to donate funds faced some technical challenges that impacted funding opportunities to some extent. OrganizationA had to publicly inform potential donors not to use narratives that would link the transfer to the protest, donors had to



use a different narrative when transferring money to dedicated accounts. They also faced the challenge of having their accounts online and in banks suspended or closed temporarily, making it impossible for them to receive funds from dominant sources. Despite these problems, OrganizationA moved to accept funds through cryptocurrency alone.

Another frequent problem is the influx of messages cluttering up their inbox. There were so many requests from participants that in some cases they could not keep up, this was compounded by requests from participants asking for financial support for activities that were not necessarily protest-related. This, in my opinion, could be attributed to the connective action problem in digital protests. If we attribute the problem of collective action to individuals trying to achieve the same benefits without necessarily participating, I could point to the situation where people expect organizations that fund protests to fund their own needs as the connective action problem.

The problem of outbreaks of violence and repression is another issue to discuss in this section. Violence usually takes a physical form, while repression can be hybrid (physical and online). Like many others, this protest witnessed the outbreak of violence and the destruction of public and private property. Blame displayed on Twitter for those who destroyed these properties contained multiple exclusive and inclusive terms. The protesters and affiliated organizations claimed that the thugs who destroyed property and harmed the protesters were not part of the movement, while the political institutions held that the unscrupulous individuals were demonstrators who were inherently destructive and could not express their desires without violence. With this perspective, the political institution was able to justify its switch to repressive strategies that disregarded the rights of the protesters and caused further civilian deaths and damage to society contrary to its initial stance of concessions as presented on social media. The political institution was also accused of using digital media repression through proposed social media regulation and other digital repressive strategies.

The political institution displayed some tweets that are attributable to problems faced during violent eruptions of protests. The political institution reported prison breaks, unruly deaths of officers, stolen ammunition, and more, using words like rampaging protesters to refer to protesters as the people responsible for this damage.

Violence was not the end goal of the EndSARS protest, but it became part of it. Violence erupted after days of peaceful protests across the country. Looking closely at the data presented,

it is unclear whether the violence was in response to the repressive strategies used to break up the protests, or whether the repression was a response to the initial violence. However, the occurrence of repressive strategies is inevitable in cases like this, since both actors mirror their response based on observable characteristics (Carey, 2006). What is clear in this research, however, is that actors actively blame each other for the outbreak of protest-related violence, with language, frames, and narratives that communicate it properly.

#### **6.4 PATTERN OF RELATIONSHIP**

This pattern is crucial for this research as it answers the second research question posed in the previous chapter. The question is: What is the existing relationship between the protesters and the established political structures? This pattern rigorously examines the relationship between the protesters and affiliated organizations and the political institution.

Through the influence of the collected data and the subsequent analysis of the collected data, the relationship between the organizations and the political institution was nuanced. To understand the framework used by protesters and affiliated organizations when referring to the political institution, I examined the frequency of mentions of Organizations A and B. The frequency of mentions between these two organizations varied, despite their affiliation with the protest. Organization A had a minimal frequency of tagging/mentioning political institutions on social media, this organization mentioned political institutions when tweeting, however, they did not tag the political institution in a high frequency on social media, compared to Organization B. The reason for this could be that Organization A performed organizational functions rather than engagement functions, or it could be the case as suggested by Manji & O’Coill (2002) where organizations providing welfare services weigh the consequences of engaging political institutions. In this situation, Organization A provided support rather than performing engagement functions.

Organization B, on the other hand, fulfilled the engagement function. This organization constantly engages with political institutions and tags them on social media<sup>17</sup>. The reason for this is also uncertain as this research is not quantitative and cannot properly define the parameters for the reasons for this event. What this research reveals, however, is that this organization and the political institution were antagonistic.

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<sup>17</sup> See APPENDIX C and APPENDIX E

Another explanation for this occurrence can be explained from the work of Whitten-Woodring & James (2012), which postulates that media freedom from both political institutions and commercialization promotes journalism, reporting integrity, and freedom of expression. Organization B is an international organization that is not under strict control in its host country, nor is it commercialized, also its general activities usually involve avid criticism of the political institution, all of which could be the reason why it is a keen critic of the political institution.

The relationship between the political institution and protesters and affiliated organizations is imprecise. Carey (2006) explains that political institutions and protesters and their affiliated organizations are constantly observing and responding to each other's behavior, this consistent observation and response form the basis of their relationship. At Organization A, the reaction focused on the political object, the subject of protest, and paid maximum attention to welfare over the engagement of political institutions, while Organization B constantly challenged the political institution serving as a constant watchdog through an interaction with the political object and the actors as well.

From my observation of the data and the relationship between actors, while clicktivism and connective action take place, organizations typically fulfill two main functions, support, or engagement functions. Both functions deal with the political object, however, these functions are different and crucial to the protest movement. The support function maintains the protest, and the engagement function motivates the protest and repeats the protest goal by consistently engaging with all stakeholders. Because clicktivist actions are independent and self-sufficient, organizations performing engagement functions could keep the object online until some later time in the future, serving as an organization that preserves some memories of the protest. However, organizations that perform supportive functions exist to facilitate connective action, and the end of physical mobilization means the end of their engagement.

The data collected is limited when confirming these assumptions, therefore in a broader context and control environment, this may not be the case. What this data confirms, however, is that Organization A represents an organization that performs support functions, and the claim made in this study is consistent with this sample. While Organization B embodies the engagement function with the statement mentioned here appropriately corresponding to the sample as this

sample referenced history and consistently engages with the political object over time in the collected data.

These organizations were crucial to the protest, so their relationship to existing political institutions is part of the discursive patterns discussed in this chapter. Thus, the dissection of the relationship patterns and the existing characteristic of their relationship is a fulfillment of the research objectives.

## **6.5 PATTERN OF COLLECTIVITY AND REMEMBRANCE**

The fascinating aspect of clicktivist and connective actions is that they encourage collectivity and togetherness. The use of digital tools and the functions of the affiliated organizations enable this discursive feature. As a connecting act, it requires collectivism to express one's grievance toward the political object. Therefore, when organizations perform support and engagement functions, they constantly emphasize and encourage collectivity. In line with Valenzuela (2013) and Castells (2012; in Poell and Van Dijck, 2018), this collectivity does not refer to a common value but to a common goal. As shown in the previous chapters, many tweets were dedicated to motivating the protest goal, explicitly naming the victims, and reiterating the political object. The EndSARS protest consistently fostered collectivity through its messages, narratives, and frame.

Regarding remembrance, this is also a part of collectivity. This aspect, however, includes a theme of memory. As introduced in the previous sections, memories are stored on social media<sup>18</sup> and remembered online with the ability to spread quickly. The messages about the protest are saved on Twitter and if the protest objective resurfaced, these tweets would reappear. As Organization B was inferred to perform engagement functions, these functions included remembering and reminding people of the history of the political object and their consistent engagement with the political object over the years. The support function organization, Organization B, performed commemoration functions by paying tribute to the dead protesters and commemorating and motivating the protesters by reminding them of the political objective.

The reason for referring to the historical context in social movements is somewhat ambiguous. Considering the argument by Yang (2016) on the temporality of narratives and frames on social

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<sup>18</sup> See Khlevnyuk, 2019

media, there were numerous references to history in the data analyzed. The ability of the historical context surrounding the protest to re-emerge despite its temporality and lack of shared value is a context that unfortunately cannot be explained in this research. What this research can provide answers for, however, is the use of stored memory or historical context, collectivity, and remembrance to aid in recruitment and to motivate the protest movement.

My examination of the sampled political institution revealed collective memory and remembrance from a distinct perspective. Protesters and affiliated organizations used clear language and narratives of remembrance to commemorate the victims of police brutality, the political institution, on the other hand, did not use clear language for remembrance of the victims. Clear language and frames of remembrance in the PoliticalInstitution tweets were reserved for police officers and lost property. The reason for this could be consistent with Duncombe's (2019) claims that political institutions follow diplomatic language through their social media accounts that would not evoke strong emotions. The use of language reminiscent of victims of police brutality could suggest an admission by the political institution, indirectly allowing it to admit that human rights violations did take place and deviating from the regular language of the "alleged."

Memory, collectivity, and remembrance were dominant in the data collected, however, different actors had different approaches. Language, narrative, and frames were important in the recognition of these features, as they are the most prevalent means to which collectivity and remembrance could be expressed.

## **6.6 PATTERN OF INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION**

Inclusive and exclusive terms are predominant in the data collected. The actors involved in the political object were obviously on opposite sides, and the language used portrayed these differences. Inclusive and exclusive terms were used when actors referred to each other, they were present in the language used to describe the relationship between actors, they were present when information about protests and security was provided, they were present, as the protests faced different problems, and in promoting collectivity.

As I correctly stated, language, narrative, and frames are important in protest communication. The analyzed tweets used inclusive and exclusive terms for those who committed violence

during the protest. This othering was carried out by protesters, affiliated organizations, and political institutions. When used by protesters and affiliated organizations, it was intended to distinguish peaceful protesters from those involved in acts of violence. The people who committed violence were excluded from the protest goals. With language, narratives, and frames that make it clear why the outbreak of violence is not part of the protest goal, whoever resorts to violence is not considered a protester. As the literature shows, protesters share common goals and not values, the people who committed violence could have been protesters with different values, unfortunately, such assertions are difficult to prove.

The use of inclusive and exclusive terms is twofold; the attribution of defaulters or violent individuals as part or not part of the protest; and the generational distinction of protesters. Political institutions use these two types of inclusive and exclusive strategies. The first type is used when ascribing the behavior of protesters and labeling them as violent individuals, the other type is executed when protesters are classified into a specific generation to promote the narrative that the protest is unrepresentative, with narratives suggesting that “the youth are the protesters, therefore they are violent”, so the other population that is not part of the protest would take note of the “violent youth”. The narrative is succinct with Aytac's (2017) speculation that the protesters' right might be dismissed because it is not seen as collective and representative.

These inclusive and exclusive terms have also been used by protesters and affiliated organizations to encourage collectivity, recruit participants, and motivate other generations to engage in connective action. The political institution, on the other hand, used these terms when changing its strategies to synchronize the word “protester” with “destructive and criminal elements”, to distinguish the destructive protesters from the law-abiding citizens, it also uses these languages and narratives to alienate protesters' activities and to widen the generation gap and representative inequality in a bid to legitimize their repressive strategies against the protesters.

All parties deliberately used exclusive and inclusive terms to represent events, actions, and protest behavior in a way that would evoke positive emotions in their respective audiences and favor their narrative of the events. This pattern demonstrates how important frames and narratives are to protest communication and how they manifest themselves in larger contexts. Social media is a platform open to all, language, frames, and narratives that are inclusive and

exclusive could be used for the many benefits they could offer the users regardless of their drawbacks.

## **6.7 CONCLUDING REMARKS**

To achieve the research goals, I examined the various discursive features of the EndSARS protest by analyzing and enumerating the results of the collected data. Using appropriate methods and empirical literature, I have identified the discursive features and divided them into four categories and discussed them in detail. In doing so, I have successfully incorporated these features in the contemporary digital protest literature and filled the gap in the literature on the EndSARS movement.

Answering the research question “*What are the specifics of the EndSARS protests on social media?*” I examined the discursive patterns, discovering the specifics of the EndSARS protest on social media to be its protest distribution, its organizational features such as finance and security, its problem of violence and repression, its placement of memory and historical context, collectivity, and remembrance, and narratives of inclusion and exclusion.

I discovered that the protest was distributed across the nation, and organizations had strong civil connections to provide security, support, and finances. Social media also provided the space for collective memory and remembrance with vivid narratives and frames that usually include to a reasonable degree, inclusionary and exclusionary terms.

To answer the second research question “*What is the relationship between the protest actors and the established political institutions?*” I monitored the data for characteristics of the relationship between the actors and the political institution to derive a key understanding of the nature of their relationship, the functions they perform, and the pattern of their behavior towards one another. I detected that the relationship between the protest actor and political institutions is nuanced for several reasons. From the data collected, I inferred that organizations usually perform two distinct functions during social movement, engagement, and support, with a significant presence of different strategies of repression from the political institution.

In my effort to achieve the research objective, I have placed the EndSARS protest within the heuristics of clicktivism and connective action, and to state categorically that within these heuristics the protest carries no risk or is subject to no criticism would be a false statement. Evident in my discussion the EndSARS clicktivist movement carries the inherent risk of

inequality and unequal representation. This can apply to societies like Nigeria with large gaps in access to digital technologies. While not all participants in collective action are recruited through online media, the inability to reach a larger group can slow the transformation of connective action into collective action. Nevertheless, clicktivist act like the EndSARS movement was able to convert into collective action. Therefore, the distinction between media and public should not be a topic of discussion since this distinction still points to social media-induced protests as slacktivism and not to the applicable means of seeing them as a process towards collective action as clicktivism posits.

Another salient discursive pattern present in the analyzed data is the contrasting discussion of the existence and placement of historical context. Literatures such as Dadas (2017), Yang (2016), and several others criticized the lack of historical context in the personal action frames developed, however, in some cases, the data show a degree of memory retention and the influence of historical context. Perhaps the appropriate response to this contradiction is to understand this phenomenon as a feature of Digital Archives<sup>19</sup>.

This concept sees the storage of these historical contexts being used and remembered in nuanced forms, as these digital technologies are designed to facilitate the reappearance, sporadic, and reinterpretation of these contexts, making memory on digital media a mix of factual historical context and other subjective memories and new representations (Pöttsch, 2019). The representation of memory in this context across digital technologies thus becomes relevant to future discussions of clicktivist movements and social movements in general.

Although organizations are not the only stakeholders in the EndSARS movement, they are important parts of the processes of having a movement. Through the active use of digital tools and connective actions, they were able to successfully recruit participants into the movement and provide necessary aids, making them important in all areas. Based on the data collected, they usually either perform engagement or support functions on social media and typically adhere to the nature of their functions.

Protests could turn violent regardless of the other actors involved. However, since the political institution is an obvious actor, the issue of repression, physical or digital, may become apparent, as was the case with the EndSARS protest.

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<sup>19</sup> See Pöttsch, 2019



Finally, frames, narratives, and language proved useful in this research, as well as for protesters, affiliated organizations, and the political institution. They communicated collectivity, inclusion, and exclusion. The use of inclusive/exclusive strategies is commonly used by all interest groups, although not always intentional, they are usually evident in the framing and narratives of protest messages, making them a dominant strategy in digital protests today.

## **6.8 SUMMARY**

In this chapter, I discuss in detail the results of my analysis using relevant empirical literature. I have presented the four classifications of distinctive features in the EndSARS movement, which include features such as the distribution of protest during the protest, organizational features such as finance and security, the problem of violence and repression, the placement of memory and historical context, collectivity and remembrance, narratives of inclusion and exclusion, the characteristics of the relationship between the actors, the nature of their relationship, the functions they perform and the patterns of their behavior towards one another.

This research has revealed the distinctive features of the movement and examined the relationship between the actors. It has put forward many perspectives and ideas while carefully asserting based on the research data and making clear the limitation of the research to discourage generalizing outside the research area and making claims without adequate data. Future research would also benefit from this analysis, evident in its inductive approach, the discursive features would be of great relevance to other contemporary studies and could be applicable to other cases.

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## 8.0 APPENDIX

### APPENDIX A- OUTLINE OF EVENT

DATE	EVENTS
<b>Thursday, October 1st, 2020</b>	Start of fieldwork
<b>Saturday, October 3rd, 2020</b>	A video on social media that allegedly captured officers of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad SARS killing a Nigerian youth, after harassing him and taking his car went viral on Twitter.
<b>Thursday, October 8th, 2020</b>	The beginning of physical protests and media activism on Twitter on police brutality, with the #EndSARS trending. The first alleged death of a police officer because of the protest in Delta State.
<b>Friday, 9th October 2020</b>	Notable condemnation of the use of force on protesters across the nation. The establishment of a public fund on Flutterwave to cater for medical and legal bills for injured protesters.
<b>Saturday, 10th of October 2020</b>	The first alleged killing of a protester in Oyo State by the Federal Special Anti-Robbery Squad (FSARS).
<b>Sunday, 11th October 2020</b>	The first major gathering of protests along the Lekki-Epe expressway took place along the 49.5-kilometer road.
<b>Monday, 12th October 2020</b>	<p>Amnesty International reports that the Nigerian Police Force has killed 10 persons since the anti-police brutality protests against the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (FSARS) began.</p> <p>The Governor of Rivers State, Nyesom Wike announced that all forms of protest have been banned in the state.</p>

	<p>Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) working to secure the release of protesters during the #EndSARS protests.</p> <p>Police shootings were reported around Surulere, a suburb in Lagos State with one protester and police officer allegedly killed.</p>
<b>Tuesday, 13th October 2020</b>	Reconciliation attempts were announced in Lagos State
<b>Wednesday, 14th October 2020</b>	The announcement of the amount raised by the Feminist Coalition, the adoption of cryptocurrency to fund protests, and the tweet from Jack Dorsey on his support of the protest.
<b>Thursday, 15th October 2020</b>	The Nigerian Army releases its first statement on its involvement if law and order are not maintained, a message aimed at protesters.
<b>Friday, 16th October 2020</b>	The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) announced members of the independent investigation panel into the activities of the dissolved SARS.
<b>Saturday, 17th October 2020</b>	The Nigerian Army announced that it will commence a nationwide Exercise <b>Crocodile Smile VI</b> from the 20th of October to the 31st of December. A cyber warfare exercise designed to identify, track, and counter negative propaganda on social media.
<b>Monday, 19th October 2020</b>	<p>Edo State Government announced the imposition of a 24-hour curfew across the state with effect from 4 pm.</p> <p>Soldiers were deployed to the streets of Abuja to curb the #EndSARS protest</p> <p>Protesters continued their protests at the Lekki Toll Plaza with more youth pouring into the streets of Lagos.</p>

<p><b>Tuesday, 20th October 2020</b></p>	<p>The Dutse Makaranta police station in the Kubwa area of Abuja was burned down, after a clash between protesters and police officers.</p> <p>At 11:49 am, the Lagos State Government announced the imposition of a 24-hour curfew in all parts of the state, with effect from 4 pm Tuesday, October 20, 2020.</p> <p>A police station in the Orile-Iganmu area of Lagos State was set on fire.</p> <p>At about 4 pm, the Inspector General of the Nigerian Police Force ordered the immediate nationwide deployment of the anti-riot police unit.</p> <p>Lagos State Government had issued a directive to extend the enforcement of its 24-hour curfew from 4 pm to 9 pm, to enable residents stuck in traffic to get to their destinations</p> <p>The United States embassy and consulate in Nigeria announced the shutting down of its consulate in Lagos State for two days, from Tuesday, October 20, 2020.</p> <p>At about 6.45 pm Tuesday, October 20th, several videos posted on social media revealed protesters were allegedly being shot at by the Nigerian military at the Lekki toll gate holdout.</p> <p>Amnesty International claims that over 12 protesters have been killed at the Tollgate holdout.</p>
<p><b>Wednesday, 21st October 2020</b></p>	<p>Lagos State Government suspended all government activities and declared a lockdown for 72 hours given the growing violence in the state.</p> <p>Television Continental (TVC) station in the Ikosi-Ketu area of Lagos state has been allegedly burnt down.</p>

	<p>The headquarters of the Nigerian Ports Authority in Marina, Lagos was also reportedly set on fire.</p> <p>The Nigerian Army took to its official Twitter handle and denied deploying soldiers to attack #EndSARS protesters.</p>
<p><b>Friday, 23rd October 2020</b></p>	<p>First Presidential press conference on the EndSARS protest.</p> <p>Feminist Coalition, one of the leading supporters of the #EndSARS campaign, informed all financial supporters to halt all funds being sent to the group.</p> <p>Instagram apologized for its algorithm malfunction that flagged posts that supports the protests as false.</p>
<p><b>Saturday, 24th October 2020</b></p>	<p>HumanAngle reported that videos recorded during the Lekki shootings were authentic after its forensic investigation, despite claims by the Nigerian Army that the videos were doctored.</p>
<p><b>Sunday, 25th October 2020</b></p>	<p>The Lagos State Government revealed that assets worth N3.9 billion were destroyed.</p>
<p><b>Monday, 26th October 2020</b></p>	<p>The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) fined Nigerian media houses for allegedly using unverified videos from social media to cover the #EndSARS protests.</p>
<p><b>Tuesday, 27th October 2020</b></p>	<p>Lagos State Judicial Panel on police brutality commenced operations.</p>

<b>Saturday, 31st October 2020</b>	Lagos State Governor lifted the curfew imposed on the state.  Celebrities begin the WeMOVE webinar to discuss the way forward after the protests.
<b>Saturday, 31st October 2020</b>	END OF FIELDWORK
<b>Saturday, 7th November 2020</b>	Youth representatives at the Lagos State Judicial Panel pull out over complaints of CBN blocking accounts of #EndSARS activists.
<b>Wednesday, 18th November 2020</b>	CNN published its forensic report on the violence on the 20 <sup>th</sup> of October at Lekki Toll Gate.
<b>Saturday, 13th February 2021</b>	Protests over the resolution by the Judicial Panel to hand over the Lekki Toll Building back to LCC for repairs at the Lekki Toll Gate.  The arrest of over thirty (30) protesters.
<b>Saturday, 5th June 2021.</b>	The Nigerian government officially put an indefinite ban on Twitter.
<b>Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> November 2021</b>	The judicial panel of Inquiry presented its results.
<b>Thursday, 13<sup>th</sup> January 2022</b>	The ban on Twitter was lifted.

<b>Thursday, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2022</b>	A peaceful protest was staged at the Lekki Toll Gate in Lagos commemorate victims of police brutality and to reiterate protest aims two years after the initial protests.
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\*This timeline of events was compiled from empirical literature present in this thesis and Ukpe, W. (2020) at [NairaMetrics](#)

### ***APPENDIX B- RESEARCH RESPONSE TO ETHICAL CONCERNS***

To take proper care and make sure that this research is in line with ethical standards I explored the NESH etiquettes and show their status in this research in the table below.

<b>ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	<b>MY RESPONSE</b>
<b>The distinction between public and private</b>	This research selected verified public accounts to deter this research from using confidential information without consent. Therefore, this research used public pages with public information that is intended for the public.
<b>Concerns for children and other vulnerable groups</b>	Public organizations were the chosen sample for this research. It, therefore, poses no significant concern for children and vulnerable groups.
<b>Responsibility to inform and obtain consent</b>	The information provided by the sample is not sensitive and is provided to be accessed publicly by any party. Since the data is important for scientific or historical research purposes of a past historic event, requesting consent may prove fatal for the reliability of the research as tampering with datasets by the samples may occur. As identified by the guidelines of Pace and Livingston (2005),



	consent can be waived if it is in line with certain conditions that are duly fulfilled in this research.
<b>Responsibility for confidentiality and anonymity</b>	This research guarantees the confidentiality and anonymity of analysis by paraphrasing and anonymizing quotes from samples.
<b>Sharing of data, open data, and big data</b>	The researcher is aware of ethical concerns and difficulties surrounding data transparency and would therefore take necessary precautions to restrict and make transparent necessary information.

#### **APPENDIX C- FREQUENCY OF MENTIONS FROM ORGANIZATION A**

<b>Word</b>	<b>Word length</b>	<b>Frequency within Documents</b>	<b>Documents %</b>
<b>@organizationA</b>	9	224	32.09
<b>@fkabudu</b>	8	24	3.44
<b>@endsarsresponse</b>	16	9	1.29
<b>@kikimordi</b>	10	6	0.86
<b>@mentallyawareng</b>	16	5	0.72
<b>@standtoendrape</b>	15	4	0.57
<b>@humanitarian</b>	13	3	0.43
<b>@mrmacaronii</b>	12	3	0.43
<b>@adekunlegold</b>	13	2	0.29
<b>@organizationB</b>	15	2	0.29
<b>@donjazzy</b>	9	2	0.29
<b>@mbuhari</b>	8	2	0.29
<b>@politicalinstitution</b>	9	2	0.29
<b>@sars</b>	5	2	0.29
<b>@savvyrinu</b>	10	2	0.29

@theflutterwave	15	2	0.29
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**APPENDIX D- EVOLUTION OF HASHTAGS THROUGHOUT OCTOBER**

EndSARS, EndPoliceBrutality, EndSWAT, Lekkitollgate, Lekkitollgatemassacre, SARSMUSTEND, LekkiProtest, EndInsecurityNow,

**APPENDIX E- FREQUENCY OF MENTIONS FROM ORGANIZATION B**

Word	Word length	Frequency in Documents	Documents %
@politicalinstitution	9	25	5.95
@organizationB	15	16	3.81
@livingtruely	13	12	2.86
@amnesty	8	7	1.67
@humangle	9	4	0.95
@iamseunbakare	14	4	0.95
@thecableng	11	3	0.71

**APPENDIX F- SNAPSHOT OF MAXQDA SHOWING THE CLASSIFICATION OF TWEETS**





Peaceful Protest Donation Alert!

[redacted] has been donated for the [redacted] protest happening RIGHT NOW in [redacted] [redacted]

Please tag us in your pictures on Twitter [redacted] [redacted] [redacted]

[redacted] Oct 19, 2020 · [redacted]



Peaceful Protest Donation Alert!

55,000 has been donated for the [redacted] protest happening tomorrow, Oct 19th, in [redacted] [redacted] at [redacted] [redacted]

Please tag us in your pictures on Twitter [redacted] [redacted] [redacted]

[redacted] · Oct 18, 2020 · [redacted]