

## Review

# Perceived Value of Social Media in the #EndSARS' Protest in Nigeria

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The use of media in mobilization for protest actions has become a necessity in every social movement. The use of social media has been very influential in attaining this cause. The study examined the perceived value of social media in the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria. It analysed the kinds of messages that were posted on social media and the reactions to various turn of events in the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria. Survey and interpretative phenomenological analysis was used to generate data. The study employed The Public Sphere Theory and Technological Determinism Theory. 389 questionnaires were shared among the #EndSARS protesters in Nigeria, while in-depth interview was conducted with five special advisers to the governor on social media in five mostly affected states. Lack of exhaustive list of the protesters allowed the study to use convenient sampling in generating quantitative data and purposive sampling in selecting the respondents for the interpretative phenomenological analysis. The study discovered that majority of the protesters fall within the age bracket of 25-35. The study found that the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria was triggered as a result of several factors like unfavourable government policies. The study discovered that people who involve in the protest actions in Nigeria are mostly male. The study also discovered that social media platforms are good medium where people staged protest on issues affecting them. The findings of the study revealed that social media is an interactive medium where people come together to discuss issues. The study concludes that with the increasing use of social media in Nigeria, the citizens would continue to put pressure on government to address public issues. The study recommends that civil society groups in the country need to sensitize their followers on the usage of social media for effective participatory governance.

**Keywords:** #EndSARS, Nigeria, protest, perceived value and social media

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## INTRODUCTION

Social protest in Nigeria is dated back in the pro-independent movement of the colonial period. The movements later transformed into early political parties and their leaders in the new post-independence political elites. Salmon *et al.*, (2010) observed that the youth

movements of the African colonies emerged within the era of <sup>nationalism</sup>. Beginning from the early resistance and protest movements directed against colonial authorities and nationalists, thought the activity developed throughout the twentieth century and up to the independence period (Shuaib, 2017). It is evidence in the literature that the organized labour in Nigeria has been in

the social protest against unfavourable government policies (Croteau and Hoynes, 2003). The reaction of the Nigerian state to these protests during the days of the military dictatorship was characterized by violent repression. Literature has it that the proscription of labour movements and youth groups, such as the Nigerian Labour Congress (NLC), Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) at one point in time embarked on protest in the country. Recently, Nigerian youths embarked on a peaceful protest on October 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020 tagged #EndSARS to demand the disbandment of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) unit, as well as other reforms in the Nigerian Police Force (NPF). What started as a peaceful demonstration by thousands of youths, degenerated into chaos after the protests were hijacked by hoodlums.

Around 1990's, social protest were also given due consideration by social activist and civil society organizations, which necessitated mass protest against military dictatorship. Thus, under the military dictatorships of General Ibrahim Babangida and General Sani Abacha, social and human rights activists, like the late Gani Fawehinmi, Beko Ransome-Kuti and Femi Falana led mass protests and endured all forms of deprivations and imprisonment during the period. Again, Afrobeat superstar Fela Anikulapo Ransome-Kuti used protest music about social ills, corruption and military oppression to plant protest in people's conscience. EndSARS protest movement and its use of social media is yet another innovation in Nigeria.

The #EndSARS movement dates back to 2017, where Nigerian youths used to hashtag to share their experiences on violence and assault perpetrated by the defunct Special Anti-Robbery Squad. However, the movement only revived in early October, after a video emerged of police officers thought to be members of the SARS unit, allegedly killing an unarmed young man. This prompted Nigerian youth to troop to Twitter, Facebook, among other social media platforms calling on the Federal Government for police reform with the hashtag, #EndSARS, #End police brutality, #Buhair must resign, #End bad governance, and many more. The hashtag trended continuously on Twitter and Facebook as Nigerian youth aired their pain and experiences online (Nairametrics, 2020).

The #EndSARS protest was an effort made by the youths and other individuals on social media like Facebook and Twitter in informing relevant stakeholders to rescind for police reform in Nigeria. This led to a number of people being involved in digital public sphere compared to physical public sphere. Within this context, this study seeks to investigate the perceived value of social media in the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

For a long time now, many factors, including the 'hegemonic' nature of communication in Nigeria, people had little or no opportunity to be active in governance, or make their views known. Thus, with the advancement in communication technology, the situation seems somewhat different. The Internet tools like the social media have revolutionised the manner people interact and communicate. In Nigeria, people, who have higher levels of affinity with social media, are using it to achieve different needs. It holds lots of potential for information, mobilisation, interaction and expression. Given these potentialities, it is pertinent to examine the perceived value of social media in the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria. Titus-Fannie *et al.*, (2013) recommend that it is important to investigate the perceived value of social media in protest actions in Nigeria. Thus, this existing gap in the body of knowledge on the subject matter formed the crux of this study.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

In order to achieve the purpose of this study, the following objectives are set:

1. To examine how people participate in social media discussions on the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria.
2. To find out the categories of protest that were discussed on social media by the protesters during the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria.
3. To find out the correlation between socioeconomic and political problems discussed on social media by the protesters during the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria.
4. To ascertain messages that were posted on social media in reaction to various turn of events during the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The problem statement and the objectives informed the following research questions as the basic tools of inquiry in the study:

1. How do people participate in social media discussions on the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria?
2. What are the categories of protest that were discussed on social media by the protesters during the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria?
3. What is the correlation between socioeconomic and political problems discussed on social media by the protesters during the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria?

4. What kinds of messages that were posted on social media in reaction to various turn of events during the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Nnanyelugo and Adibe (2013) note that public sphere is an aspect of social life, which enable citizens to exchange views on matters of importance to the common good, so that public opinion on issues can be formed. This public sphere comes into being when people come together and discuss problems of political concern. The importance of this lies in the process of discussion, which enable rational and critical debate. This debate has a set of rules that include the use of emotion or emotive language, and focus on the rationality of the content. Participants should have a common interest of truth, which can bracket the status of differentials so that they can speak as if they are equal.

Networked on public sphere allows citizens to actively participate in debating national issues that are germane to the nation problems through social media. Obar and Wildman (2015) observed that internet offers a better medium for the creation of public sphere in which a truly democratic system of government debate issues. In a true democratic society, the wishes of the people should always remain the top priority of the government. Thus, Twitter and Facebook as forms of social media have the means of ensuring the effectiveness of public participation in an issue, especially when problems of national issues are discussed, like the one under investigation, which is the perceive value of social media of the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria. For public sphere to be adequately, every reasonably voice must be considered. Obar and Wildman (2015) posit that the efficacy of the new networked for public sphere points out the "Universal Intake." With this, it can be open to everyone. It must be establish and capable of filtering relevant information, that is, "plausibly within the domain of organised political action." It must contain a system for accrediting information sources that are likely to be reliable. It must be capable of synthesizing public notions into a coherent public opinion as well as the participation of people and independent from government control.

### Conceptualising Participatory Governance

The concept of democracy can be traced during the ancient Greece. Since democracy is the government of the people, by the people and for the people, public participation has always been strengthened as a means of effective democratic existence. This is so because there is tendency of voters to have an opportunity to correct their leaders through the ballot box when they are

making social and political decisions, which in turn have serious impact on them. Public participation is based on the belief that is rooted in the people and those affected by the decisions or those with the privilege to participate in the decision-making. This participation constitutes the premise that contributes to public influence on decision taken.

Also, public participation bridges the involvement of those who are potentially affected by a decision and helps to get input from participant in order to design how they participate. It is a method that provides participants with the needed information in order to contribute to meaningful decisions. It is important to note that participatory governance has different approaches. In developed countries, like the United States, Russia among others, there is an effective usage of referendum, which allow citizens to make decision whether to adopt a new policy or not (Olley and Ekharefo, 2013).

Another method is that of the public debate. People should be able to debate on issues that has to do with public interest or on matters that remains a top priority in the public domain. In this instance, members of parliament can organize public hearings, where citizens are expected to be involved in decision making process or individually through the submission of memoranda. Turkle (2012) affirmed this position by saying that all those who are directly affected by a decision should be involved in the decision-making. This means that participatory democratic bridges decision-making and encourage the spirit of belongingness and collective morale. In African for example, the practicability of the two methods remains arguable among citizens and activists because democracy is not carried out in the manner that supposed to be. Lack of accountability and disrespect for the rule of law exist among African leaders and this remains a big political challenge in Africa. These problems serve as an obstacle to effective public involvement.

Looking at the role of social media in the Arab world, Khamis and Vaughn (2011) noticed that most of user-generated news are spread using social media like Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. These media facilitate peer-to-peer communication among users who use them to publish ideas to other people. Thus, it suffices to say that one of the most prominent ways by which public opinions can be shaped is the internet. The imperativeness of the internet cannot be overlooked; this is because it defies all boundaries and governmental media censorship. It serves as an alternative channel to traditional media, which publish both official and governmental policies and views. By so doing, it facilitates the inflow and outflow of information across boundaries.

Khamis and Vaughn (2011) further established that citizen journalists who are not satisfied with the original version of event are fond of telling their own stories. They

observed that social media will not only facilitate democracies but also, help strengthen the one in existence. Social media have made it very easy for an individual to share his or her opinion. This has made protest action to spread very fast in the society. Information is no longer perceived to be a one-way but rather, an interactive process, which facilitates two equal exchanged of messages among audience.

Facebook is one of the best social media networks, for the purpose of organising protest, because information can travel within a short possible time to millions of people simultaneously. Information dissemination is even faster than leaflets because of those who receive information are already interested in the information source. Thus, Facebook is built on the connection between friends (Khamis and El-Nawawy, 2012). Debate on the use of social media like SMS, Facebook and Twitter do not have a single preordained outcome. Social media alter a political and social change, which is depending on the activists' objective to use the conditions in their communities in such a way that make change visible (Bennett, 2003).

### **Social Media and Mass Mobilization**

The occurrences in Egypt, Tunisia, Lebanon and Yemen are rather provocative or interesting as to how social media technologies users are catalyst for mass mobilization. Christakis and Moreno (2009) observed some methods the social media has in mobilizing groups of people for political actions and also, effective in its usage of ejecting President Joseph Estrada of the Philippines and Jose Maria Aznar, the former Prime Minister of Spain. These are clear cases of how social media were utilized to organize protests, which has proven not only successful but terrific. The social media is ineffective in Belarus where serious consequences followed citizens' demonstration. Belarus government as a classical example was quick to crack down internet communication on social networking sites to prevent similar reoccurrence or happening. Iran also blocked its internet access of its citizens to gain submission.

As early mentioned, the difference between various social medium and their effectiveness is the results. Christakis and Moreno (2009) outline the difference between networking sites, informational sites, internet and cellular messaging. Although, countries like U.S Departments have made it compulsory to promote access to information through sites like Google and Wikipedia. This action is vulnerable because it fell short of restricting informational freedom to social media and other private channels of communication.

These social networking sites provide information about how individual may want to organize a protest, how a protest could be organized and illustration of a previous

demonstration. It is imperative to consider social networking sites just like any other website no matter how many hits and views they have. Whenever an individual has some information that is of high relevance, he or she shares it with a number of other individuals on the same social networking platform. This action can be carried out in university campuses, and even on street corners. Today, people are engaging themselves on social media sites while relying less on face-to-face interaction. They now focus on getting information directly from social networking sites.

### **Protest Mobilization**

A Protest can be described as an expression of discontent over an issue or event. A protest can be seen as an expression in different ways, like strike actions, hunger, public demonstrations and so on. Kymlicka (2002) describes protest as "a political expressible, collective gathering in a public place." Protest usually occurs due to discontent; when people are not satisfied on issues, they gather up to tackle it in many different ways. In the case of #EndSARS protest in Nigerian, the dissatisfaction is the allegedly killing an unarmed young man, which caused an instant reaction among the youths, demonstrating on the streets. It is important to note that protests can be violent or peaceful depending on the status of people's dissatisfaction. With reference to protest rally in Argentina, (Lim, 2011) notes that protest mobilization simply entails information about where and when the demonstration take place and short introduction to reason why members should take part.

Mobilization connotes a lot of information especially when motives for complaints are involved. In January 2012, there was fuel subsidy protest in Nigeria as against the hidden issues behind removal of fuel subsidy. On 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2020, there was also the #EndSARS protest, in many cases, such information is important in order to ensure people's expression, anger and dissatisfaction. A protest cannot take place if the people are not mobilized to contribute to it. For a protest to succeed, someone among the protesters must live up to the task of passing information around the potential participants in order to give reasons for the protest, the time and the specific venue. Mobilization is much similar to coordination, as all parties need to be convinced before carrying out such a protest, and social media is a vital platform for achieving this.

Social media communication channels are formed to work through social interaction using highly accessible and scalable methods. Social media make use of web-based technologies to broadcast media monologues into social media conversation. They facilitate the democratization of both knowledge and information thereby, turning people from content consumer to content

producer. Social media are quite different from traditional mass media, which are owned by government and private individuals. They are quite inexpensive compared to conventional media and they enable anyone to have access to information.

Social media technologies including feeds, picture uploads, emails, instant messaging, are Voice over IP (VOIP). These social media can be integrated into other social media aggregation platforms, such as Plaxo and MyBlogBlog. Weber uses the term "Social Web" in place of social media to connote an online platform where people of like interest gather to share opinions. It includes social network like, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, among others. Social networks are platform where people come to have common interest and to meet and express themselves. In the same vein, some sites are based on image-sharing and video-sharing, like Flickr and YouTube, which serves about 10 billion videos in a month to countries, like United States.

## EMPIRICAL REVIEW

The important of social media in protest action is sourced from experiences in different countries, such as Egypt, Tunisia and Libya in recent times. These countries use social media to protest the removal of unwanted regimes. The use of social media as a way of mobilizing protests helped in the removal of harsh government in these countries. A study by Murphie and Potts (2003) revealed that social networks have changed the notion of freedom of expression. He maintained that social media may not have been the principal tool in protests but the way it was used by participants in these countries has helped citizens to express their opinions and discontent. It presented protesters with a chance, which does not exist in conventional media. Social media have essential advantages when they are used effectively to mobilize people to participate in a protest. Facebook for example creates connection between and among friends while Twitter to a great extend allows its users to comment about a subject.

McClurg (2003) observed that the potential of social media lies mainly in their support of civil society and public sphere, change measured in years and decades rather than weeks or months. Civil society has a chance for expression in the social media. Social media has prompted freedom of expression, especially among the male gender. When issues that are likely to cause argument or disagreement occur, like that of the #EndSARS, people had different expectations. Social media helped to enable self-empowerment among citizens in Egypt. The people were able to express their thoughts without fear on social media. These practical outcomes have demonstrated that the concept of public sphere and technological determinism of social media

being a successful tools in tackling discontent during protest.

The revolution, which was experienced in both Egypt and Tunisia serve as a point of reference in the use of social media during the time of insurgence and protests. In some of these countries, social media have played an important role in the revolution, which further escalated to the overthrow of governments. As citizens came against their government for various motives, leaders of these protests found social media to be an important tool in achieving the success. At first, social media allowed citizen to criticize the government and again discuss their point of view with others.

Khamis and Vaughn (2011, p. 25) give an explanation about this fact when they wrote that the revolt in Egypt should not be taken as social media played the major roles in mobilizing the citizenry. Social media only acted as a catalyst, which proved to be effective because the citizens were willing to participate in it at all cost; physical injuries, finance, loss of life and so on. Social media were like the driving forces for the empowerment during the period. Furthermore, it is important to note at this point that social media were used as an active catalyst. It depended to a degree to which these media were made use of. Social media may exist in other protest situations but one should not forget that if they are not used properly, they will not produce any desirable results as the case of Egypt. It also depends on the protesters to make use of social media in a way that their goals are accomplished. Obar and Wildman (2015) repeated this same statement by claiming that "social media alone cannot erupt revolutions like the recording of Ayatolla Ruholla Khomeini, which were not responsible for the 1979 upheaval in Iran".

In Nigeria, Castells (2012) observed that the emergence of mass communication offers an extraordinary medium for social movements and rebellious individuals to build their autonomy and confront the institutions of society in their own terms. Naturally, social movements are not originated by technology alone. Castells further observed that technology is not simply a tool, it is a medium, and it is a social construction, with its own implications. Facebook as form of communication during 2012 fuel subsidy removal in Nigeria is imperative as Arabs did in their 2011 uprisings. Nigerians went to the extent of creating different groups in order to share their opinions and comments on the #EndSARS protest decision.

A study by Turkle (2012) found that Facebook appears to be the most popular website visited by Nigerians. Participants also reported extensive use of Twitter, blackberry messenger and YouTube. The rapid spread and penetration of mobile telephony and internet is another driving force of social media in the country. Turkle (2012) established that "mobile telephone penetration in Africa stood at 63% while about 16% of the

population was using the internet". This has increase compare to the last few years, Nigeria has the highest penetration rate in Africa as shown in the study. He maintained that "Nigeria has more than 55 million internet users with a penetration rate of about 33%".

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is moored on two theories, they include: The Public Sphere Theory and Technological Determinism Theory. The Public Sphere Theory was propounded by the German sociologist and a member of the Frankfurt school, Habermas in 1989. His discourse on the structural transformation of the public sphere, which contributed immensely to the refinement of the theory in which he devoted attention to the interaction between the civil society and the state based on concern for legitimacy in the political system of a society. As Okoro and Diri (2009) note, the public sphere is an area in social life where individuals can come together freely discuss and identify societal problems and through that discussion influence political action. It is a discursive space in which individuals and groups congregate to discuss matters of mutual concern. Discourse on the political imperatives of media in raising the issues of governance and political participation to the plane of discourse, reflects on Habermas, Mongenthau and Max's ideals of the public sphere, which is described as a genuine articulation of a fundamental social need; thus, political communication between the state and its citizens is considered a very fundamental principle in developing the public sphere. This is because; information plays a vital function in helping the public to have a considerable public opinion rather than merely a state of consensus.

This theory is relevant to this study because it provides a forum for explaining how citizens through the platform of social media, could be brought to the public domain for participatory discourses on protest. The underlining principles of the public sphere involves an open discussion of all issues of general concern in which discursive argumentation is employed to ascertain general interests and the public good. The public sphere thus presupposes freedoms of speech and assembly, a free press, and the right to freely participate in political debate and protest decision-making, and the study notes here that social media facilitates such a discourse.

Technological Determinism Theory was propounded by McLuhan in 1962. The theory supports this study because the theory states that media technology shapes how individuals in a society think, feel, act and how the society operates as people move from one technological age to another. The theory has various assumptions, which he broke down into individual interpretations, Metatheoretical assumptions, which cover ontological assumptions, epistemological assumptions and axiological

assumptions.

The theory postulates that in individual interpretations, people learn, feel and think the way they do because of the messages they receive through the current technology that is available. The radio required people to only listen and develop their sense of hearing. On the other hand, television engages both hearing and visual senses. People then transfer those developed senses into everyday lives and they want to use them again. The medium is then the message. This to an extent seems to be closely related to the agenda setting theory, which describes the ability (of the social media) to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda.

That is, if a news item is covered frequently and prominently the audience will regard the issue as more important. The innovations that affect the media especially in the area of online technology have to a large extent influenced some of the notable changes in the society. The types of phones that were used to communicate back then are now advanced and have been a major tool used to influence the way communication is done this days. Taking a look at some other assumptions of the theory sheds more light on the role, the changes in technology has on the media as well as media consumers (Castells, 2012).

Humans do not have much free will at all. Whatever society as a whole is using to communicate, they too will use to communicate. Therefore they will adapt to the medium they are using so that they can send and receive messages like everyone else. People know that there is one truth by observing what has happened over time. As the medium changes so does society's way of communicating. People can only use the medium for which it was created (phone for talking over lines or electronic mail for talking via computer). If the medium is impersonal (social media) then the message too is impersonal. Despite some of the criticism of the theory, it is safe to say that as much as the changing technology affects the various mass media it is not a sole requirement to changing the way humans think, feel or act, there are other factors that could also influence the way people behave the way they do. However it should be noted that the various technological developments in the Nigerian society have brought about an improvement and change in the way the various traditional mass media operates, thus, the theory is considered in this study.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

The study adopts mixed methods of quantitative and qualitative approach to generate data where survey and in-depth interview methods were used. Using Taro Yamane's formula, the study arrived at a sample size of 389. Questionnaires were shared among the #EndSARS protesters in Nigeria and the data were presented using

Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The selection was based on the respondents that participated in the protest and used social media to send messages concerning the protest within the period of the study. Lack of exhaustive list of the protesters allowed the study to use convenient sampling in generating quantitative data, while purposive sampling method was used in selecting the respondents for the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Therefore, protesters who participated in the #EndSARS protest were given questionnaires to fill while five (5) Special Advisers to the governor on social media in five states were interviewed. In order to collect the respondents' opinions on the

#EndSARS protest in Nigeria, questionnaires in the form of 5-point Likert-scale ranging from (1) Agree (2) Strongly Agree (3) Disagree (4) Strongly Disagree and (5) Neutral were used to collect data. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011) Likert-Scale or summated rating is the most popularly used questioning technique in research. Thus, 389 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents, while interpretative phenomenological analysis was used to generate qualitative data with five (5) Special Advisers to the governor on social media in five states that were mostly affected during the #EndSARS in Nigeria. Codes were generated and allocated to the respondents for the in-depth interview method, like respondent 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

389 questionnaires were administered to respondents and the study used the data to examine the perceived value of social media in the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria. The demographic information shows that majorities of the respondents were aged between twenty five and thirty five years, whose responses are examined as follow: gender, age and education.

**Table 1: Gender**

Magnitude	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	246	63.2
Female	143	36.8
Total	389	100

Source: authors' compilation (2020)

The data in table 1 shows that 63.2% of the respondents are male while 36.8% are female. It means that there are more male respondents than female within the period of the study.

**Table 2: Age of Respondents**

Age Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
15-20	131	33.7
25-35	209	53.7
40 - above	49	12.6
Total	389	100

Source: authors' compilation (2020)

Table 2 shows the age of respondents. Based on the result, 63.2% are within the age bracket of 15-20, 53.7% are from 25-35 while 12.6% are 40 and above. This means that majorities of the respondents were aged between twenty five and thirty five years.

**Table 3: Educational Attainment**

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Primary Education	59	15.2
Secondary	174	44.7
Tertiary	112	28.8
Non-formal	44	11.3
Others	0	0
Total	389	100

Source: authors' compilation (2020)

Table 3 shows educational qualification of the respondents. The data indicates that 15.2% of the respondents have primary education. 44.7% have secondary certificate, 28.8% hold tertiary certificates while 11.3% are non-formal and nothing was recorded for others. This indicates that majority of the respondents' attained secondary school.

**Table 4. Participants in social media discussion on the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria**

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agree	155	39.8
Strongly Agree	234	60.1
Disagree	0	0
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Neutral	0	0
Total	389	100

Source: authors' compilation (2020)

Research question one is an attempt to know community members' participation in social media discussion on issues relating to the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria. Based on the responses obtained from the respondents, most of them strongly agree that they participated in social media on issues relating to #EndSARS protest in Nigeria. 39.8% of the respondents agree that they participated, 60.1% strongly agree while nothing was recorded on the option of disagree and strongly disagree. This means that 60.1% of the respondents participated in social media discussion on the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria. This affirms the position of McClurg (2003) that social networks have changed the notion of freedom of expression and association. He maintains that social media may not have been the principal tool in protests but the way and manner it was used by participants in some countries has helped citizens to express their discontent. It presented protesters a chance, which does not exist in the conventional media.

**Table 5. Kinds of messages posted on social media in reaction to various turn of events on #EndSARS protest in Nigeria**

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Buhari must resign	120	30.8
Justice for SARS victim	51	13.1
End police brutality	102	26.2
End bad governance	116	29.8
Stop killing leaders of tomorrow	0	0
Total	389	100

Source: authors' compilation (2020)



Research question four is an attempt to examine the messages posted on social media in reaction to various turn of events on #EndSARS protest in Nigeria. Based on the findings, it evidence that 30.8% are messages of Buhari must resign, 13.1% justice for SARS victim, 26.2% end police brutality and 29.8% end bad governance. This means that Buhari must resign dominated the pages of social media in the course of the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria. This also reaffirmed the position of Castells (2012) that the emergence of mass self-communication offers an extraordinary medium for social movements and rebellious individuals to build their autonomy and confront the institutions of society in their own terms and around their own projects using different kinds of messages on social media.

**RQ2: Categories of protest that were discussed on the social media by the protesters during the #EndSARS protest.**

Based on the result obtained from the respondents on research question two, Respondent one observes that among the issues that were discussed on social media by the protesters are #EndSARS protest, ASUU strike, economic hardship of the country, high cost of food items in the market, among others. This coincided with the assumption of the public sphere theory, which according to Salmon *et al.* (2010) established that the potential of social media lies mainly in their support of civil society and public sphere. Civil society has a chance for expression of any issue on social media. Social media has helped people to gain freedom of expression among male and female gender in the society.

Respondent two describes the protest actions by Nigerian youths as a good thing. He maintained that protest is one of the fundamental aspects of every citizen in any given country. The only way people can express their grievance is by staging a peaceful protest in order for people in authority to be aware of the existing issue on ground and to come up with a lasting solution to address it. He therefore maintains that protest is a way of calling on government to attain to the needs of the people in the society. He also mentioned the issues of Covid-19 palliatives, the hike in fuel price were discussed on social media during the protest.

Respondent four also agree that the failure of government to do what is right and for the benefit of the citizenry is what is causing problem and prompting cases like the #EndSARS protest in the country. He is of the view that in Nigeria today, issues like the non-payment of salaries, rape, kidnapping, the Biafra Agitation among others encourage protest actions in Nigeria. One suggestion that was made by the respondent four is that government must live up to their responsibilities, especially on issues that affect the well being of the

members of the society. By addressing such societal problems, cases of protest may no longer be necessary. Addressing those societal challenges squarely will go a long way in creating a good environment for the citizenry. All the respondents agree that other categories of protest were discussed on social media by the protesters during the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria.

**RQ3: The correlation between socioeconomic and political problems discussed on social media by the protesters during the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria**

Based on the result obtained from the respondents, respondent one said unfavourable government policies, lack of political accountability and financial transparency correlate with the socioeconomic issues or problems the protesters posted mostly on social media, like *Facebook* and *Twitter* during the protests. According to respondent two, bad governance and poor policy implementation and electoral malpractices were also among the problems highlighted during the protests.

Respondent three established that in some of the states in Nigeria, it was due to economic hardship that necessitated the protest. According to the respondent, most of the post on social media was on the issues of what Nigerians are passing through. Respondent three maintained that during the protest, some people were posting the pictures of the Covid-19 palliatives that were not distributed to people. Respondent three cited some examples where the pictures of the youths in Lagos, Kaduna and other parts of Nigeria were on social media showing how the protesters were breaking in to the store houses to make away with the Covid-19palliatives.

Again, in some states, some governors were threatening the youths to bring back the Covid-19 palliatives or they will face the law. This affirm the position of Howard (2011) who distinguished the lines of effect, which social media may have gotten when he noted that although social media did not aid the inception of democracies, it can entrench a form of government through its network, which is often a threat to authoritarian regimes.

According to respondent four, some of the hoodlums were sponsored by politicians in the name of the #EndSARS protest to siphon money and to create problems in the country in order to tarnish the image of Nigeria so that they can be able to have the chance to pick ticket in the 2023 election. According to respondent four, the #EndSARS protest was a pure politics, looking at the way the hoodlums were operating.

Respondent five states that the socioeconomic hardship was among the reason for the escalation of the #EndSARS protest as some of the youths were using the opportunity to break into people's shops to carry food items, clothes, money and other items. According to

respondent five, politics and religious issues were also involved in the protest leading to destruction of cars, houses, churches and mosques. All the respondents agree that there was a correlation between socioeconomic and political issues discussed on social media in the course of the protest in Nigeria. Based on the tenets of technological determinism theory, social media have been successful tools in tackling discontent during uprising and protest. Facebook for example, has helps users to invite others in creating events on the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria.

To determine some of the variable studied on social media, a Pearson Product-Movement correlation was used as shown in the table below to validate the categories.

Categories	Facebook (x) <sup>1</sup>	X <sup>2</sup>	Twitter (Y) <sup>1</sup>	Y <sup>2</sup>	YouTube (y) <sup>1</sup>	X <sup>2</sup>	XY
#EndSARS protest	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
ASUU strike	2	4	2	4	2	4	4
High cost of food items in the market	3	9	4	16	3	9	12
Economic hardship	4	16	3	9	4	16	12
Government Siphon of public fund	5	25	5	25	4	16	25
Corruption	6	36	6	36	5	25	36
N = 6	Σx= 21	ΣX <sup>2</sup> = 91	Σx= 21	ΣY <sup>2</sup> = 91	Σy= 19	Σx <sup>2</sup> = 71	ΣXY= 90

FB= Facebook, TT= Twitter and YT= YouTube.

$$N = 6, \Sigma xy = 90, \Sigma x^2 = 91, \Sigma x^2 = 21, \Sigma x^2 = 21, \Sigma y^2 = 91, \Sigma x = 21, \Sigma y = 19$$

The Formula  $r = \frac{N\Sigma xy - \Sigma x \Sigma y}{\sqrt{[N\Sigma X^2 - (\Sigma X)^2][N\Sigma Y^2 - (\Sigma Y)^2]}}$

$$r = \frac{6 \times 90 - 21 \times 19}{\sqrt{[6 \times 91 - 21 \times 21][6 \times 91 - 19 \times 19]}}$$

$$= \frac{540 - 399}{\sqrt{[546 - 441][546 - 362]}}$$

$$= \frac{141}{\sqrt{(105)(185)}}$$

$$= \frac{141}{\sqrt{19425}}$$

$$= \frac{141}{\sqrt{139.3736}}$$

$$= 1.01$$

The correlation score of 1.01 shows that there is a high correlation among the variables studied on social media platforms. This simply shows that there is high degree of variability in the nature in which social media report the protest actions. These also reduce or possibly eliminate the impact of extraneous variables as regards the protest activities on social media within the study period.

## CONCLUSION

Protest is described as an expression of discontent over an issue or event. Protest are easily seen and can be expressed in different ways; strike actions, hunger, public demonstrations and so on. Protest occurs due to discontent; when people are not satisfied about an issue, they gather up to tackle it in many different ways. In this case, Nigerian youth showed dissatisfaction when one of them was killed and they demand justice through protest. Thus, the study found that majority of the protesters fall within the age bracket of 25-35. The findings of the study also revealed that the #EndSARS protest in Nigeria was triggered as a result of several factors like unfavourable government policies. The study discovered that people who involve in protest actions in Nigeria are mostly male. The study also discovered that social media platforms are good medium where people staged protest on issues affecting them. The findings of the study revealed that social media is an interactive medium where people come together to discuss issues. The study concludes that with the increasing use of social media in Nigeria, the citizens would continue to put pressure on government to address public issues.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are put forward:

1. Government at all levels should always allow their citizens to have input in any policy that will have direct or indirect impact on them.
2. The social media should be recognized as a tool for aggregating public opinion by public office holders, and should encourage free expression therein, and let such views guide their activities.
3. Civil society groups in the country need to sensitize their followers on the usage of social media for effective participatory governance.
4. Given the ever-changing nature of Internet communication, it is necessary to conduct more research in this area to find out how it affects the dynamics of the society in different ways. In addition, mobilization of people and socio-political issues need to study on how more people interact on social media.

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