

**THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: A STUDY OF THE ENDSARS
MOVEMENT OF 2020 IN AWKA URBAN**

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Abstract

The study examined the effects of social media on social movements, focusing on the EndSARS movement in Awka urban. The motivation for the study was the widespread youth protests during that period and the role social media played in spreading and sustaining the movement. The study adopted a mixed-method research design, utilizing questionnaires and in-depth interviews. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 204 respondents. Data were analyzed using percentages and frequency tables, while the chi-square (χ^2) statistical test was used to test the hypotheses. The findings revealed that the factors that led to the EndSARS movement included police brutality (52.6%), human rights violations (16.3%), police extortion (12.8%), youth unemployment (10.7%), and bad governance (7.7%). The study also found that social media facilitated the success of the movement by creating massive awareness about police brutality (35.2%), providing youths with the opportunity to freely express themselves (18.4%), providing a platform for cash donations that sustained the movement (14.3%), giving a voice to the voiceless (14.3%), and through the influence of Twitter (10.7%). Finally, the study recommended that social media influencers should be sincere with their followers, participants in social movements should avoid spreading fake news, the government should stop crackdowns on activists and provide security for protesters, and the police should stop harassing youths on the streets.

Keywords: Social media, social movements, protest, EndSARS, youths, police brutality

Introduction

According to Ojedokun, Ogunleye and Aderinto (2021), social movement is an organized effort by a large group of people to achieve a common goal, typically a social or political goal. It is a type of group action and may involve individuals, organizations or both. Social movements are purposeful, organized groups striving to work toward a common goal. On the other hand, social media according to Asongu and Odhiambo (2018) refers to websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking. Simply put, social media is a computer-based technology that facilitates the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information through the building of virtual networks. For Orji (2020), EndSARS was a campaign aimed at drawing attention to human rights violations committed by SARS, as well as calling for good governance and an end to police brutality.

Across the world, social movements have caused significant social change in a cause they choose to stand for. Solidarity is built around an interest which could be religious, security, gender equality, injustice, corruption, child abuse, racism, human rights infringement etc (Oginni & Moitui, 2015). Often times, most social movements do not set out to use violence but peaceful protests, demonstrations, petitions, and dialogue to pass their message to the appropriate channels. Notwithstanding, they sometimes embark on the use of violence as one of their strategies when the authorities concerned employ repressive or violent measures to tame or destroy them. According to Dambo, Ersoy, Auwal, Olorunsola, Olonode, Arikewuyo and Joseph (2020), some social movements disappear after sometimes but some transform into political parties, and even form government like the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa which started out as an anti-apartheid movement and the South West African Peoples' Organization (SWAPO) in Namibia which started out as a liberation movement (Dambo et al, 2020). Since Nigeria became an independent nation from its former colonial masters (Britain) in 1960, it has witnessed a series of protest mainly in the forms of general strikes, boycotts and mass demonstrations organized and led by labour unions, youth movements and social activists to press home a variety of demands and grievances (Soladoye & Ojo, 2020). The factors or issues that dominate these protests include demands for better wages, better living conditions, high unemployment, rampant poverty, corruption and freedom from repressive military dictatorship. Besides the civil war of 1967-1970, Nigeria has been in the struggles of social movements and conflicts bothering on ethnic, political and religious dimensions.

Ohia and Salawu (2020) observed that myriads of social movements have occurred in Nigeria such as the Niger Delta Volunteer Force of the 1960s, whose appeal was for the sovereignty of the Niger Delta region, the Maitatsine Movement of 1980, which pushed for the imposition of the Sharia legal system on the country, the Oodua People's Congress which called for the sovereignty of the predominantly Yorubas of the Western region, the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign States of Biafra, which for long has been clamouring for a sovereign State of Biafra for the Igbo ethnic group, the current Boko Haram insurgency which justifies its activities on the imposition of an Islamic State system, the Bring Back Our Girls movement which advocated for the release of 219 kidnapped female students, and the EndSARS movement – which happens to be what this study would be focused on – which was centred on advocating for the disbandment of Special Anti-robbery Squad and a total reform of the Nigeria Police Force.

The protest began with a demand for an end to criminality by security operatives and the dissolution of the now-defunct Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) of the Nigerian police which later led to the demand for better governance and institutional reforms. Officers of the police unit were accused of extortion, abuse of fundamental human rights of suspects, and extrajudicial killings. According to Obaid (2020), the case that triggered the protest was the alleged shooting of a young man in Ughelli, Delta State by police officers on October 3rd, 2020, the incident was filmed and went viral. Although the police said the victim did not die and that the officers involved in the incident were not SARS operatives, angry youths stormed the streets to demand an overhaul of the police force. Dozens of people, including protesters and police officers, eventually died in the violence that followed the protests. Security operatives used tear gas and live bullets to disperse the crowd – mostly youths.

Based on the foregoing issues, this study set out to answer two questions. The first is to identify the factors that led to the ENDSARS protests. The second is to examine how social media facilitated the success of the EndSARS movement

Literature Review

The paper reviews related literature in line with relevant subheadings.

The Concept of Social Media

According to Lusk (2010) social media is the collection of online communications channels dedicated to community based input, interaction, content sharing and collaboration. Asur and Huberman (2010), defined social media as computer mediated technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks. Lorenzo and Sterfano (2012) opined that the variety of stand-alone and built-in social media services currently available introduces challenges of definition; however, there are some common features of social media; social media are user generated contents such as text posts or comments, digital photos or videos, and data generated through online interactions; users create service-specific profiles for the website or app that are designed and maintained by the social media organization. According to Roberts and Garton (2014) social media facilitates the development of online social networks by connecting a user's profile with those of other individuals or groups.

Defining Social Movements

According to Diani (2012) social movement is a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and organizations engaged in a political or cultural conflict on the basis of shared collective identity. Charles-Tilly (2015) defined social movement as a series of contentious performances, displays and campaigns by which ordinary people make collective claims on others. According to the author, social movement is a vehicle for ordinary people's participation in public politics. There are usually three elements to a social movement namely, campaigns, repertoire and displays. Shirky (2008) defines it as collective challenges (to authorities, other groups or cultural codes) by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interactions with elites, opponents and authorities. McCarthy (2014) defines social movement as a set of opinions and beliefs in a population which represents preferences for changing some elements of the social structure and/or reward distribution of a society.

Furthermore, in our contemporary society, social movements are often made possible through the use of social media. From the American #BlackLivesMatter to #EndSars in Nigeria, social media played critical roles in those instances (Hattingh, 2020). To start with, the American #BlackLivesMatter (BLM) movement picked up its pace internationally in 2020 following the death of George Floyd. A few months later, Nigeria's #EndSars campaign also flooded social media waves. In both instances of social movements, appreciable changes that brought about remarkable institutional modifications such as police reforms, international condemnation and solidarity were recorded. In the case of the #BlackLivesMatter social movement, the former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin was found guilty of murder and manslaughter in George Floyd case (Hattingh, 2020). According to Erezi (2021), the last Endsars movement in Nigeria was a pointer to the fact that the citizens can become a powerful

force through careful application of technological tools such as the new media. Thus, employing the use of social media platforms such as Twitter is an important enabler in most contemporary social movement campaigns. According to Erezi (2021), it is safe to say that the end goal of social movement actors is ultimately achieving social change. Social movement actors include organizations and individuals who make social problems visible by spreading their complaints and concerns through collective action. Traditionally, social movement actors carry out demonstrations in physical places. They choose a particular geographical location to come together to demonstrate their objections to the status quo and from there they spread to other places. With the emergence of internet and faster communication means, social media has become a common means of organizing social movement protests. The social media have created massive networks that not only connect the entire world, but also give people the ability to easily publicize opinions at a low cost, and to hasten the speed and scale of group coordination conveniently.

The EndSARS Movement

The EndSARS movement is a decentralised social movement and series of mass protests against police brutality in Nigeria (Ademoroti, 2020). The slogan calls for the disbanding of the Special Anti – Robbery Squad (SARS), a notorious unit of the Nigerian police with a long record of abuses. For Orji (2020), EndSARS movement was a campaign aimed at drawing attention to human rights violations committed by SARS, as well as calling for good governance and an end to police brutality. The protests which took its name from the slogan EndSARS started in 2017 as a Twitter campaign using the hashtag #EndSARS to demand the disbanding of the unit by the Nigerian government. After experiencing revitalization in October 2020 following more revelations of the abuses of the unit, mass demonstrations occurred throughout the major cities of Nigeria, accompanied by vociferous outrage on social media platforms. About 28 million tweets bearing the hashtag have been accumulated on Twitter alone. Solidarity protests and demonstrations by Nigerians in diaspora and sympathizers occurred in many major cities of the world. The protest was notable for its patronage by a demographic that is made of entirely young Nigerians. The movement has since expanded to include demands for good and accountable governance.

Social Factors that led to the EndSARS Movement

According to Amnesty International (2020), many social factors were alleged to be responsible for the EndSARS movement in Nigeria, one of such factors was the fact that SARS officers have been accused of profiling young Nigerians, mostly males, based on their fashion choices, tattoos and hairstyles. SARS operatives were also known to mount illegal road blocks, conduct unwarranted checks and searches, arrest and detain without warrant or trial, rape women and extort young male Nigerians for driving exotic vehicles, using laptops and iphones. Nigerians have shared both stories and video evidence of how officers of SARS engaged in kidnapping, murder, theft, rape, torture, unlawful arrests, humiliation, unlawful detention, extrajudicial killings and extortion of Nigerian citizens. These accumulated social atrocities contributed to the EndSARS movement in Nigeria.

According to Ohia and Salawu (2020), the squad (SARS) was created as a masked police unit to perform undercover operations against violent crimes like armed robbery, car snatching, kidnapping, cattle rustling, the bearing and use of illegal firearms. Contrary to its mandate, SARS has been accused of several human rights violations, illegal ‘stop and search’, illegal arrests and detentions, extrajudicial killings, sexual harassment of women and brutalization of young Nigerians. The human rights abuses were documented in trending videos on social media. For example, in 2017, Nigerian activists, youths and celebrities across the nation took to the streets in a peaceful protest to spread awareness of SARS brutality and extortions and to demand its disbanding.

In a separate but related development, Ugwueje (2017) carried out a study tagged analysis of cost of governance and its reduction options in Nigeria, a study of Enugu Metropolis. The survey relied on both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection to uncover factors responsible for mass riots, political movements and protests in Enugu Metropolis from the past to the present. Using a sample size of 300 respondents, a good number (87.5%) of the respondents said that since Nigeria became an independent nation from its former colonial masters (Britain) in 1960, it has witnessed series of protests mainly in the forms of general strikes, boycotts and mass demonstrations organized and led by coal miners, labour unions, youth movements and social activists to press home a variety of demands and grievances. The factors that dominated these protests amongst others include demands for better wages, better living conditions, high unemployment, rampant poverty, ethnicity, marginalization, corruption and freedom from bad leadership. The study found that besides the civil war of 1967-1970, Nigeria has been in the struggles of social movements and conflicts bothering on socio-cultural, ethnic, political and religious dimensions.

Ways that Social Media Facilitated the Success of the EndSARS Movement

In the past years, Nigeria has witnessed many social movements that were amplified through the use of social media (Obaid, 2020). Some of them include; BringBackOurGirls, OccupyNigeria, EndSARS etc. The ease of

access to journalism and information that social media affords has allowed for a reduction in information imbalance between those in power and those fighting for change, by providing both parties with evidence to support and inform their cause. For scholars like Asongu and Odhiambo (2018), this evidence can be shared with international audiences, eliciting support and commentary in communities that are not bound by geography. The social media facilitated the success of the EndSARS movement in many ways. For example, social media's visual culture means that evidence of injustice can be communicated widely and quickly, which holds those responsible accountable for their actions. The social media was also used as a platform to educate and inform, particularly at a time when more people are not able or willing to protest in person, thereby leading to the success of EndSARS protest.

According to Soladoye and Ojo (2020), social media's ability to spread information quickly also made EndSARS protest a success. However, it has to be said that social media is also a double-edged sword, which means that misinformation can also spread so quickly and can fuel the flames of hatred and disunity. No social movement can deny the effective power of social media to galvanize and facilitate its smooth running. Therefore, in this era of rapid information distribution, the citizens and the government have a responsibility to make sure that these social media platforms do not undermine the unity and corporate existence of Nigeria as a country (Soladoye & Ojo, 2020). A number of public commentators and scholars have given their opinions about the activities, implications and the aftermath of EndSARS protests, with many of them pointing towards one direction, which is the fact that social media was instrumental to the success of the EndSARS movement in Nigeria. The power of the social media particularly the use of Twitter and Facebook cannot be overemphasized as demonstrated in the just concluded EndSARS protests in Nigeria. According to Soladoye and Ojo (2020), social media was largely responsible for the success of EndSARS social movement. This happened because the use of social media facilitated online meeting points for all the activists and their followers.

Theoretical Orientation

This paper is anchored on the Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT). The resource mobilization theory is a major sociological theory in the study of social movements that emerged in the 1970s. It was first developed in 1977 by John McCarthy and Mayer Zald (Jenkins, 1983). It is a theory that seeks to explain the emergence of social movements. The theory asserts that social movements occur when people who share grievances are able to mobilize resources and take action. This theory places resources at the centre of both the emergence and success of social movements. In this case, resources include knowledge, money, media, labour, solidarity, legitimacy and internal and external support from powerful elite. The centrality of resources to the success of social movements explains why some discontented people are able to form movements while others are not. The theory argues that social movements develop when individuals with grievances are able to mobilize sufficient resources to take action. The assumptions of the theory are as follows: (a) there will always be ground for protest in modern society because there is constant discontent (i.e. grievances or deprivation) (b) actors are rational and they are able to weigh the costs and benefits from movement participation (c) members are recruited through networks; commitment is maintained by building a collective identity and continuing to nurture interpersonal relationships (d) social movement require resources and continuity of leadership (e) social movement entrepreneurs and protest organizations are the catalysts which transform collective discontent into social movements.

RMT is adopted as the theoretical framework for this study because it is the best theory that can clearly explain the effects of social media on social movements. RMT assumption relates to the ideas of EndSARS movement of 2020 because they both talk about the ability of a movement's members to acquire resources and to mobilize people (especially the youths) towards accomplishing their organizational goals (which is usually to bring about a social change). Resource Mobilization Theory sees protests as rational movements that are created and populated by social actors with a goal of taking political action. Furthermore, RMT maintains that a professional group in a social movement works towards bringing money, supporters, attention of the media, alliances with those in power, and correcting an injustice in the system. The theory revolves around the central notion of how messages of social change are spread from person to person and from group to group through the use of social media. Thus, the major condition needed for a social movement to occur is the notion that a particular group, arm of government, agency or organization is cruel, brutal and corrupt thereby fuelling public distrusts and lack of confidence in the activities of these agency or group of individuals. This mirrors what was seen in the case of EndSARS in Nigeria and Awka urban in particular. These assumptions, interpretations and submissions make the Resource Mobilization Theory apt and best suited for this study.

Methods

Design of the Study

A research design is a plan of the research work which specifies the type and source of information relevant to the research. It also shows which approach will be used to gather and analyze data. The study adopted mixed

methods research design which is a method of research that involves the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection to gather information from a given population at a specific period of time.

Area of the Study

The study location was Awka Urban, Anambra State. Awka Urban comprises eight Igbo groups (quarters) sharing common blood lineage and are divided into two sections. The first section is Ifite section which is the senior section and comprises four other groups namely: Ayom-na-Okpala, Nkwelle, Amachalla and Ifite Akwa. The second section is Ezinato section which consists of another four groups namely: Ezinato, Amikwo, Ezi-Oka and Agulu. Each of these groups has a number of villages. All together, Awka Urban comprises thirty-three (33) villages. The largest market in Awka Urban is Eke-Awka, named after one of the four market days in Igboland, and located on a former community burial ground in the centre of the city. The second largest market in Awka Urban is Nkwo Amaenyi located further down on the busy Zik Avenue business district (Awka History & Facts, 2021).

Furthermore, Awka Urban has one of prominent universities in Anambra State known as Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Nnamdi Azikiwe University is owned and run by the Federal Government of Nigeria providing undergraduate and postgraduate education to an estimated student population of 36,000 at its over 100 acre main campus located at Ifite, Awka (Awka History & Facts, 2021). The major festival in Awka Urban is Imo-Akwa festival; this is a two weeks-long festival of masquerades and dances held in May at the beginning of the farming season in honour of a female deity who is hoped would make the land fertile and yield bountiful crops. The Imo-Awka festival showcases a variety of masquerades (mmnanwu) from sinister ones which flog spectators to friendly ones which sing or dance. The masquerades are believed to represent the spirits of Awka ancestors coming from the land of the dead for the festival (Awka History & Facts, 2021).

Sample Size

A sample size of 204 was chosen for this study. When a study entails a large population, all of them cannot be studied. This is the basis for selecting a sample. A sample is a smaller group of elements drawn through a definite procedure from a specified population. For the purpose of this study, the Taro Yamane's (1967) statistical formula was adopted to determine the sample size of the study. The choice of 204 as the sample size was informed by the statistical tool that was used and the limited time and resources at the disposal of the researcher.

The formula is given as thus, $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population of the study

1 = constant

e = level of significance which is assumed to be 0.07.

Therefore,

$$n = \frac{301,657}{1+301,657(0.07)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{301,657}{1+ 301,657(0.0049)}$$

$$n = \frac{301,657}{301,658(0.0049)}$$

$$n = \frac{301,657}{1,478.1242}$$

$$n = 204.0809$$

n=204 (approximately).

Sampling Techniques

The population of Awka Urban is large and hence the researcher could not study the whole population in the short period of time available to conduct the study. In view of the above, the researcher used the probability and non probability sampling methods to ensure that data gotten from the field are accurate. Under the probability sampling method, the researcher used the multi-stage sampling procedure. This form of sampling technique incorporates the cluster and simple random sampling techniques. Awka Urban has eight communities which are; Nkwelle, Amachalla, Ayom-na-Okpala, Ifite-Awka, Ezinato, Amikwo, Ezi Awka and Agulu Awka. Out of which two communities were selected using simple random sampling technique (hand drawing by the use of slip of papers without replacement), the two communities were Ayam-na-Okpala and Amikwo. The villages in Ayam-na-Okpala and Amikwo were listed and two villages were selected per community using simple random sampling technique. Thus, a total of four villages were selected namely; Umuoramma and Umunoke from Ayam-na-Okpala community, and Umudiana and Isiagu from Amikwo community.

The researcher thereafter numbered the households in the selected villages from which fifty-one (51) households were selected from each of the four villages. The households in the selected villages were picked randomly. After picking/selecting the households, the questionnaire was administered to the respondents including youths and other members of the public aged 18 years and above. Hence, using the simple random sampling technique a total of 204 respondents were selected for the study. For the in-depth interview, four youths comprising two males and two females living in Awka Urban were purposively selected and interviewed. These IDI participants were chosen equally to ensure gender balance in the interview responses and reportage.

Instruments for Data Collection

The researcher made use of quantitative and qualitative method of data collection consisting of the questionnaire and In-Depth Interview (IDI) Guide. In this research, questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data. The questionnaire was divided into two sections; the first section dealt with the personal data of the respondents while the other sections dealt with general information that bothers on the effects of social media on social movements, with a focus on the just concluded EndSARS protests in Awka Urban Anambra State and across Nigeria. Furthermore, the questionnaire items were structured in a manner devoid of ambiguity and technical details, so that they would elicit appropriate responses. The questionnaire schedule consists of close ended questions. The advantage of using close ended questions included the fact that it provided a strong guide for respondents and led them to provide only the responses that were relevant to the research interest for easy coding and analysis.

The researcher also made use of the In-Depth Interview (IDI) Guide to help get more information about the objectives of the study. The IDI was unstructured in nature so as to give study participants the opportunity to express their views freely on the questions or issues raised in the course of the interview.

Administration of Instruments

The researcher adopted face-to-face administration of questionnaires. The researcher was assisted by two research assistants comprising a male and a female to ensure gender equity. These research assistants were trained by the researcher for two days on the objectives of the study. This was to ensure that the return rate was high and that the necessary data were provided and also to clarify any ambiguity in any of the questions. Vernacular was used for the uneducated respondents. Self-administration method enabled the researcher to get first hand and accurate information from the respondents especially when sensitive questions were asked. The researcher interviewed the four study participants identified earlier. The note taker wrote down the proceedings of the interview while tape recorder recorded the information from the in-depth interviewee sessions. The above research assistants (i.e. the note taker and tape recorder) were used to ensure that no information or detail was lost during the interview sessions/proceedings.

Methods of Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected from the field was processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) while descriptive statistics was used for quantitative data analysis. Specifically, charts, frequency tables and simple percentages were used for the presentation, interpretation and analysis of the data for easy understanding and clarity. Hypotheses formulated were tested using chi-square (χ^2) inferential statistics at $P < .05$. This helped to determine and brought out clearly the existing relationships between the cross-tabulated variables. The qualitative data were analyzed using the thematic method of data analysis, thematic method is a process of qualitative analysis where the information collected were organized in different themes after thorough editing in line with the objectives of the study.

Results

Personal Data of the Respondents

Table 1: Personal Data of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	96	49.0
Female	100	51.0
Total	196	100
Age		
18-23	122	62.2
24-29	38	19.4
30-35	26	13.3
36-41	5	2.6
42 and above	5	2.6
Total	196	100
Marital status		

Single	147	86.4
Married	34	6.6
Separated	6	3.5
Widowed	5	2.0
Divorced	4	1.5
Total	198	100
Occupation		
Unemployed	21	10.7
Civil servant	23	11.7
Student	51	26.0
Business	77	39.3
Farmer	24	12.2
Total	196	100
Level of education		
No formal education	31	15.8
FSLC	19	9.7
SSCE	14	7.1
OND/NCE	19	9.7
BSc/HND	92	46.9
Postgraduate	21	10.7
Total	196	100
Religious affiliation		
Christianity	180	91.8
Islamic Religion	7	3.6
African Traditional Religion (ATR)	6	3.1
Atheist/Agnostic	3	1.5
Total	196	100

Field survey, 2025

Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents (51.0%) are females. In terms of the age distribution of the respondents, table 1 shows that majority of the respondents (62.2%) are between the ages of 18-23 years. The table shows that majority of the respondents (86.4%) are single. Table 1 also shows the occupational distribution of the respondents. It could be observed from table 1 that majority of the respondents (37.0%) indicated that they are into business. In terms of level of educational attainment, table 1 shows that majority of the respondents (46.9%) are B.Sc./HND holders. Finally, table 1 shows the religious affiliation of the respondents. It can be observed from table 1 that majority of the respondents (91.8%) are Christians.

Two questions were asked in this paper. These questions were restated and analyzed accordingly

Question One: What are the Social Factors that led to the EndSARS movement in Awka Urban in 2020?. Findings are presented in figures 1 and 2.

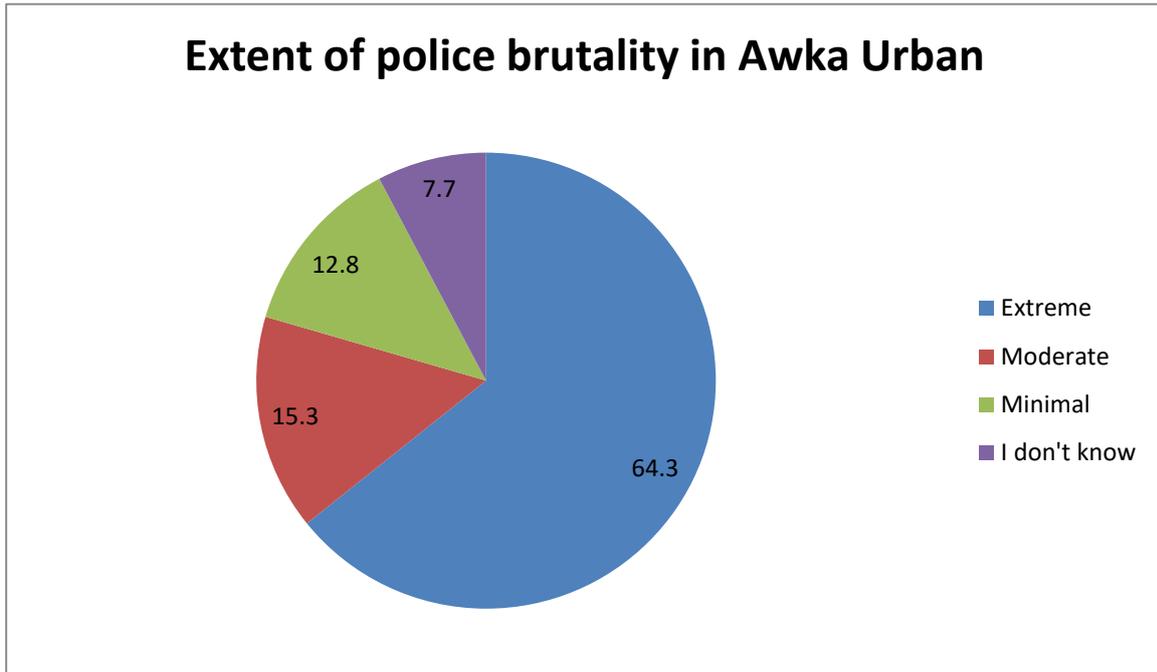


Fig 1: Extent of police brutality in Awka Urban
 Field survey, 2025

Figure 1 shows that majority of the respondents (64.3%) indicated that police brutality in Awka Urban is extreme.

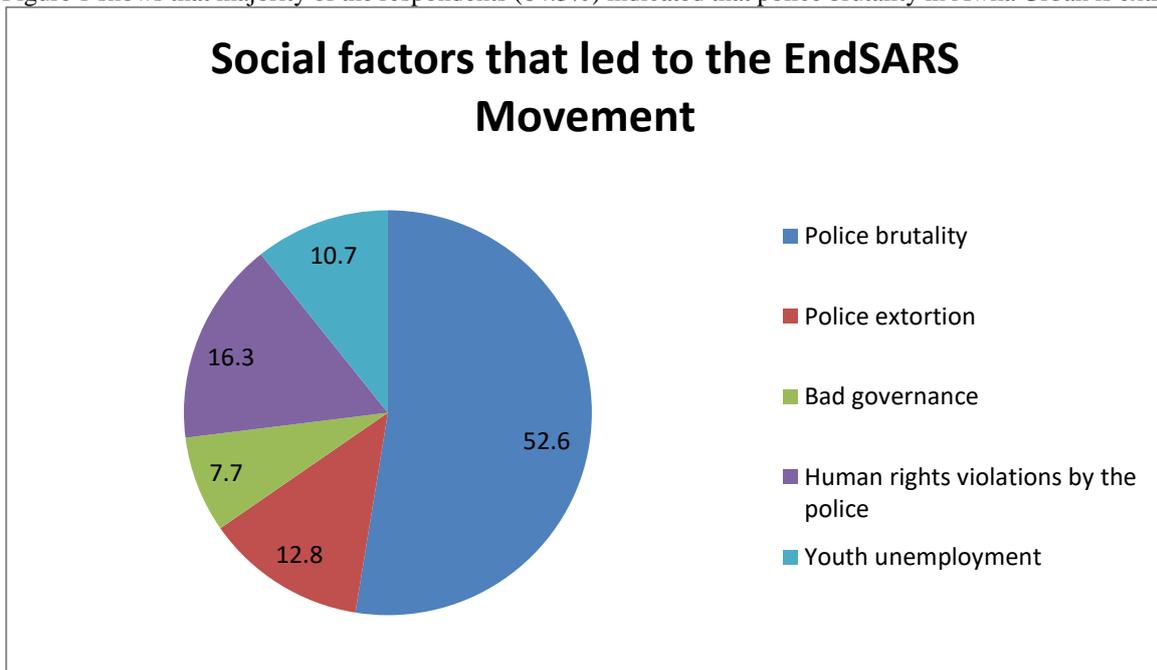


Fig 2: Respondents` views on the social factors responsible for the EndSARS movement of 2020 in Awka Urban
 Field Survey, 2025

Figure 2 shows that majority of the respondents (52.6%) indicated that police brutality is the major social factor that led to the EndSARS movement of 2020 in Awka Urban. Other social factors as can be seen in the table include human rights violations by the police (16.3%), police extortion (12.8%), youth unemployment (10.7%) and bad governance (7.7%). This data is corroborated by data from the interviews conducted.

An interviewee stated:

I believe it was police brutality that triggered the movement that we experienced in most parts of the country in 202 including in this Awka. The police were increasingly becoming high handed and brutal in enforcing their law enforcement responsibilities. This led to the social movement across the country and also in Awka Urban (Male, 35, married, civil servant)

Another interviewee stated:

The issue of police brutality and extortion for me were the reasons for the social movement. People became very tired of the whole thing and decided to take their destinies in their hands by going out to fight for their rights (Female, 24, single, student).

Question Two: How did social media facilitate the EndSARS movement in Awka Urban in 2020? Findings are presented in figures 3 and 4.

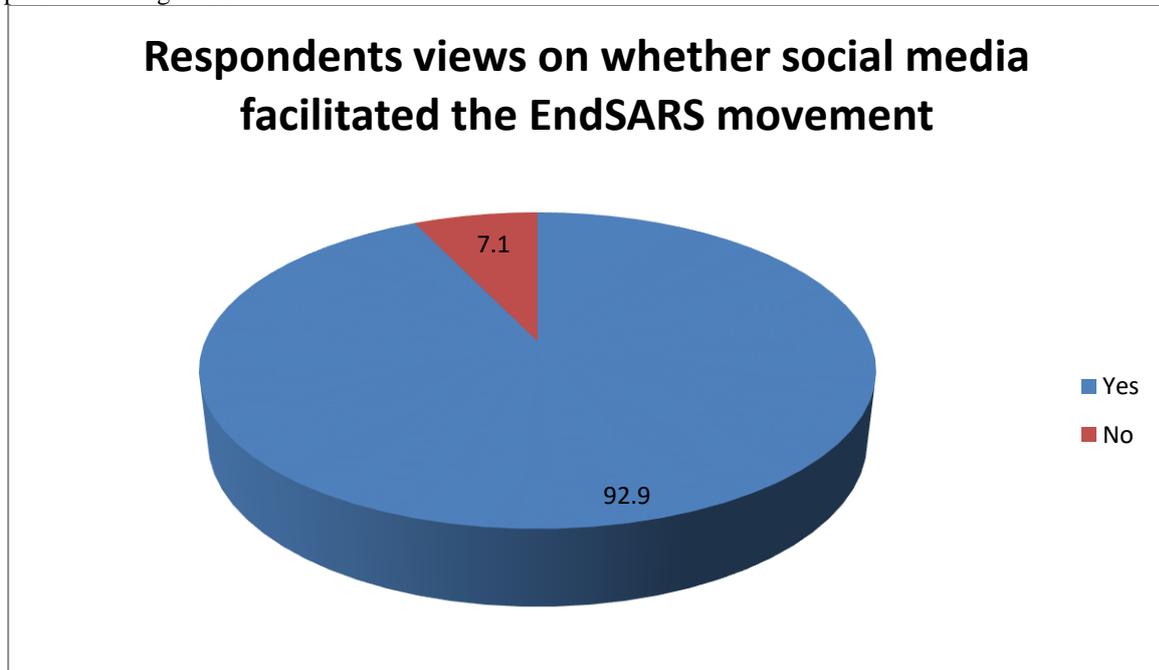


Fig 3: Respondents` views on whether social media facilitated the EndSARS movement
Field survey, 2025

Figure 3 shows that majority of the respondents (92.9%) agree that social media facilitated the EndSARS movement of 2020.

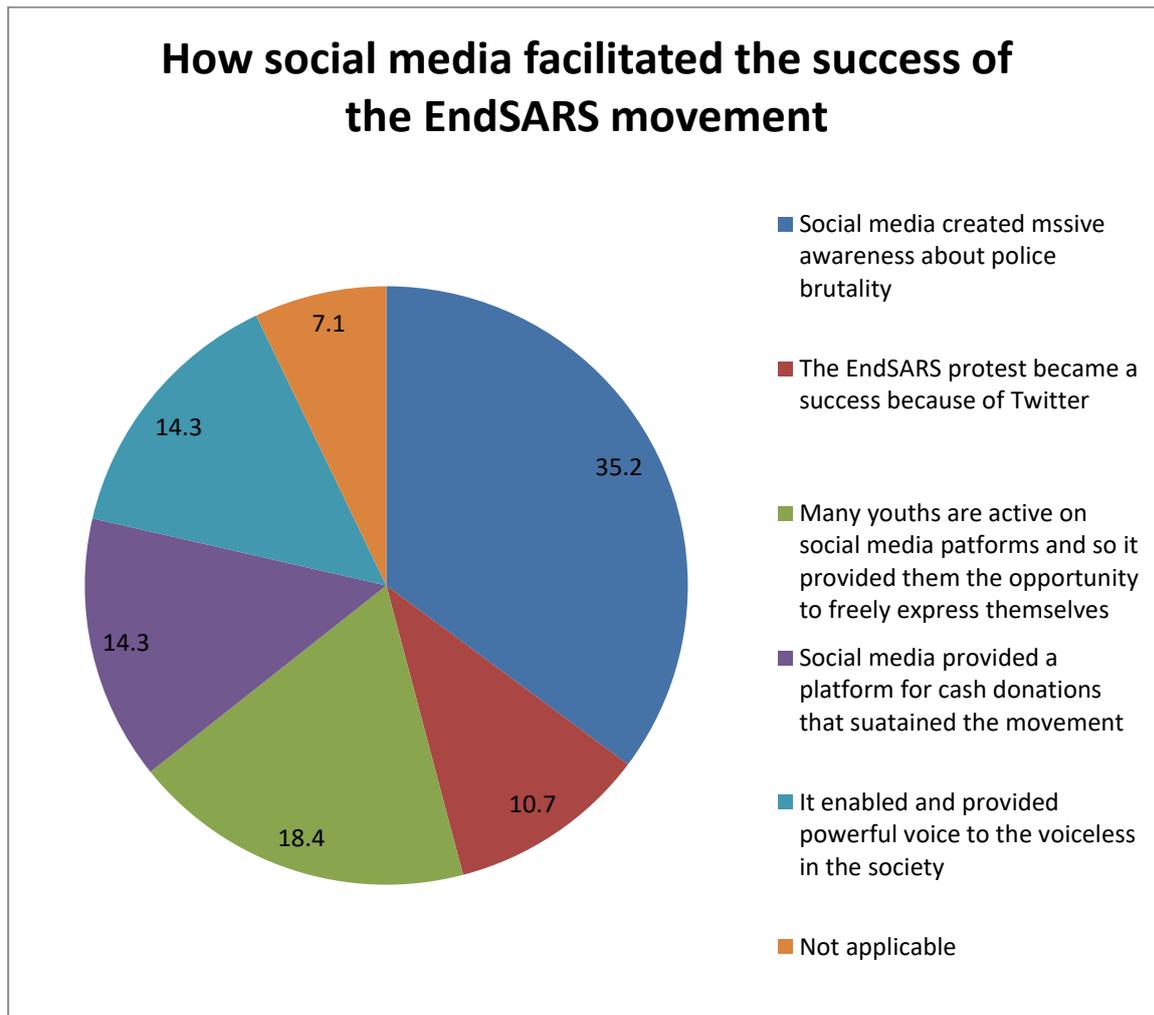


Fig. 4: Respondents views on how social media facilitated the success of the EndsSARS movement in Awka Urban

Field survey, 2025

Figure 4 shows that majority of the respondents (35.2%) indicated that social media facilitated the success of the EndSARS movement by creating massive awareness about police brutality. Other ways social media facilitated the success of the EndSARS movement in Awka Urban include active nature of youths on social media which created the opportunity to freely express themselves in their comforts (18.4%), provision of a platform for cash donations that sustained the movement (14.3%), enabling and providing powerful voice to the voiceless in the society (14.3%) and the influence of twitter (10.7%). This is in line with data from the IDI.

An interviewee stated:

I can categorically say that social media was the most important factor that led to the success of the EndSARS movement. People became very much aware of what was happening with respect to police brutality and how they could join the protests that were going on in different parts of the country. In Awka here I joined the protest. I saw a lot of people talking about the protest on various social media platforms so I had to join because of this massive awareness that was created (Female, 23, single, student)

Another interviewee stated:

Social media was useful in different ways including creating awareness and also helping to organize the movement. The movement was really so organized that it was difficult to understand how this was possible in our country judging from previous experiences where people found it difficult to join social movements due to poor planning and execution (Male, 35, married, civil servant)

Discussions

The study examined the effects of social media on social movements: a study of the EndSARS movement of 2020 in Awka urban. The study looked at the social factors that led to the EndSARS movement. The major social factor identified as being responsible for the EndSARS movement is police brutality. Other factors identified in the study

include police extortion, bad governance, human rights violations by the police and youth unemployment. This corroborates with the findings of Asongu and Odhiambo (2018) who identified police brutality as a motivating factor for social movements.

On how social media facilitated the success of the EndSARS movement, the study found that social media created massive awareness about police brutality. Also, social media created a platform for effective planning and donation of cash that sustained the movement all through the period it lasted. Social media made it easier for people to express themselves without being censored or hounded and this further made the movement to be very successful. The theoretical framework of the study also explains this. The resource mobilization theory amplifies the importance of bringing resources together if social movements must be successful. The success of the EndSARS movement can be attributed to the effective mobilization of resources by those who participated in it. There was massive mobilization of material and non-material resources for the movement.

Further findings show the factors that led to the decline of the EndSARS movement. The major factor that led to the decline of the movement was the mass killing of protesters by security forces. Other factors include hijack of the movement by hoodlums, dialogue with government, promise to set up a panel of enquiry and the disbandment of SARS.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations were made:

1. On the part of social media influencers, the study found that social media influencers should be sincere with their followers, they should reject bribe from politicians that could make them derail from the course of the social movements they support and they should desist from false alarms.
2. For social movement participants, the study found that they must avoid creating and spreading fake news, they should resist attempts by politicians to hijack future protests, resist intimidation by security forces and also identify and handover hoodlums who see to disrupt social movement activities to the police.
3. For the government, provision of security to social movement participants must be prioritized, stoppage of all forms of crackdown on activists/social movement participants, refusal to shutdown social media platforms and provision of affordable internet access to the masses.
4. The police should stop harassing youths on the streets. This was found to be the major role the police can play in enhancing the future social movement in the country. They should also provide adequate security during social movement activities while respecting the rights of the citizens to peaceful protests.

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