

EndSARs Protest in Nigeria: Assessing Its Political, Economic, Social and Administrative Implications

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ABSTRACT

The EndSARS protest of October 2020 represents one of the most significant episodes of youth-led civic mobilisation in Nigeria's recent democratic history, emerging from widespread grievances over police brutality and broader concerns about governance and institutional accountability. Despite the immediate achievement of the dissolution of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), the protest generated substantial political, economic, social, security, and administrative consequences, raising questions about the responsiveness of the Nigerian government to citizens' grievances. This study examines the implications of the EndSARS protest for the Nigerian government, focusing particularly on its economic, political, social, and administrative effects, the government's response, and the prospects for alternative citizen-government engagement mechanisms. The study is anchored on Structural Functionalist Theory, which explains social protest as a manifestation of dysfunction within interconnected institutional structures and a demand for institutional adjustment. An exploratory research design was adopted, relying exclusively on secondary sources obtained from academic literature, institutional reports, newspaper publications, and credible online materials. Data were analysed qualitatively through content analysis. Findings indicate that EndSARS compelled the government to dissolve SARS, heightened demands for police accountability, strengthened youth political participation and stimulated institutional mechanisms such as Judicial Panels of Inquiry. However, the protest and its violent aftermath also disrupted economic activities, destroyed public and private assets, weakened social order and imposed high administrative and security costs. The study concludes that unresolved institutional grievances can escalate into disruptive collective action. It recommends stronger police accountability, institutionalised grievance resolution mechanisms, structured youth engagement, rights-based protest management, and responsive digital governance.

Keywords: EndSARS Protest; Police Accountability; Youth Mobilisation; Government Responsiveness; Democratic Governance

INTRODUCTION

Protest represents an important mechanism through which citizens communicate grievances, demand accountability and seek changes in public policy and institutional behaviour. In democratic societies, collective action can provide citizens with an avenue for expressing dissatisfaction where conventional channels of political participation appear inadequate or unresponsive. Protest therefore occupies an important position within the broader architecture of democratic governance because it can expose institutional weaknesses, stimulate public debate and compel governments to reconsider policies or practices that generate widespread discontent. At the same time, protests can produce significant political, economic, social and administrative consequences when grievances remain unresolved and confrontations between citizens and state authorities escalate. The relationship between protest and government is consequently complex, involving both the

democratic right of citizens to demand accountability and the responsibility of government to maintain public order while addressing legitimate grievances.

Nigeria has experienced a long tradition of protest and collective mobilisation, extending from the colonial period to the present democratic era. Historical episodes such as the Aba Women's protest of 1929, labour demonstrations, student movements, anti-military campaigns and protests against economic policies demonstrate that collective action has repeatedly been employed by Nigerians to challenge perceived injustice and demand institutional change. Contemporary protests have increasingly been influenced by economic hardship, unemployment, corruption, insecurity, human rights violations and concerns about the quality of governance. The EndSARS protest of 2020 represented a particularly significant manifestation of this tradition because it brought together questions of policing, human rights, youth participation, accountability and governance within a single nationwide movement.

The #EndSARS movement emerged principally from widespread dissatisfaction with the activities of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a unit of the Nigeria Police Force that had been repeatedly accused of torture, arbitrary detention, extortion, extrajudicial killings and other forms of human rights abuse. Amnesty International had previously documented serious human rights violations attributed to SARS and reported that abuses continued despite repeated government commitments to reform the unit (Amnesty International, 2020). The protests consequently reflected not only opposition to individual police officers or a particular police formation, but also deeper concerns about institutional accountability and the relationship between citizens and security agencies. As the movement expanded, its demands increasingly incorporated justice for victims of police abuse, police reform, accountability, good governance and respect for fundamental rights.

The extraordinary scale of the movement was facilitated by social media, particularly Twitter, which enabled young Nigerians to circulate information, document alleged abuses, coordinate demonstrations and construct a collective identity around the #EndSARS campaign. Research on the movement indicates that social media became an important space for mobilisation and political communication, allowing participants to connect online activism with physical demonstrations. Bello *et al.* (2023), for example, found that the #EndSARS discourse on Twitter involved the sharing of direct and vicarious experiences of police encounters, mobilisation of supporters and demands extending beyond police reform to broader questions of governance. This digital dimension distinguished EndSARS from many earlier Nigerian protests and demonstrated the growing significance of networked communication in contemporary citizen mobilisation.

The response of government to the movement further complicated its implications for Nigerian governance. On 11 October 2020, the Inspector General of Police announced the dissolution of SARS, ostensibly responding to one of the central demands of the protesters. However, the announcement did not immediately terminate the demonstrations because protesters demanded broader and more concrete reforms. Amnesty International reported that the protests continued amid demands for an end to police brutality, extrajudicial killings and impunity, while the subsequent use of force by security agencies intensified tensions between protesters and government authorities (Lambo, 2020).

The events of 20 October 2020 at the Lekki Toll Gate and Alausa in Lagos marked a particularly consequential stage in the crisis. Amnesty International reported that security forces opened fire on protesters and subsequently documented at least 12 deaths at the two locations. The organisation called for independent investigation into the killings and broader allegations of excessive use of

force against protesters (Human Rights Watch, 2020). The confrontation and the subsequent escalation of violence transformed the character of the movement and generated wider consequences for public administration, security, economic activities and relations between citizens and government.

The consequences of EndSARS were therefore multidimensional. On the positive side, the movement demonstrated the capacity of Nigerian youths to participate actively in political affairs, brought sustained national and international attention to police accountability and generated pressure for institutional reform. Nkasi (2020), in his analysis of the movement, situates EndSARS within the broader question of mass mobilisation for police accountability in Nigeria. The movement consequently became an important expression of youth political agency and citizen demand for responsive government. On the negative side, however, the escalation of violence resulted in disruption of commercial activities, destruction of public and private property, interruption of transportation and other public services, loss of livelihoods and heightened insecurity. The economic consequences were particularly significant in Lagos and other urban centres, where prolonged disruption affected businesses and public infrastructure. The attached reference study similarly documents substantial economic losses and disruptions associated with the protest and its violent aftermath.

From the perspective of public administration, EndSARS raises a fundamental question about the capacity of government institutions to anticipate, manage and resolve citizen grievances before they develop into large scale social conflict. The protest exposed weaknesses not only in policing but also in institutional communication, accountability, responsiveness and mechanisms for citizen engagement. It further demonstrated that government responses to public grievances can influence the trajectory of collective action. Where citizens perceive institutions as unresponsive, formal grievances may increasingly migrate into streets and digital spaces, thereby placing additional pressure on governmental institutions. Conversely, responsive governance, meaningful dialogue, institutional accountability and credible reform mechanisms can provide alternative channels through which citizens can pursue legitimate demands.

The EndSARS experience therefore presents an important case for examining the interaction between citizen mobilisation and governmental response in Nigeria. It illustrates how a protest initially centred on police brutality can develop into a broader critique of governance and subsequently generate consequences extending across political, economic, social, security and administrative spheres. This study consequently examines the impact of the EndSARS protest on the Nigerian government, with particular attention to its economic, political, social and administrative implications, the role of social media in facilitating mobilisation, the response of government to the movement, and alternative mechanisms through which citizens can engage government and communicate grievances. By examining these dimensions collectively, the study seeks to contribute to the understanding of protest, state responsiveness and democratic governance in Nigeria, while highlighting the importance of institutional reforms and constructive channels of citizen government engagement.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The EndSARS protest of October 2020 remains one of the most consequential episodes of citizen mobilisation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Although the immediate trigger of the movement was widespread opposition to alleged police brutality and human rights violations associated with the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), the protest rapidly evolved into a broader expression of

dissatisfaction with governance, accountability, insecurity, institutional failure and the perceived inability of government to respond effectively to citizens' concerns. The movement therefore exposed tensions within the relationship between citizens and state institutions and raised fundamental questions about the responsiveness and effectiveness of government in a democratic setting.

The problem is, however, not limited to the grievances that generated the protest. Of equal importance is the extent to which the protest affected the functioning of government and the wider Nigerian society. The escalation of the initially peaceful demonstrations produced significant disruptions to economic activities, public transportation, governmental operations and social order. Businesses were forced to close in several locations, public and private properties were destroyed, transportation networks were disrupted, and insecurity intensified in some parts of the country. The attached study on the economic consequences of EndSARS similarly documents substantial losses to businesses and economic activities following the escalation of the protests. These consequences raise important questions about the capacity of government to maintain public order while simultaneously responding to legitimate citizen demands.

At the same time, interpreting EndSARS solely as a source of disruption would provide an incomplete understanding of the movement. The protest generated important positive consequences for democratic participation and public accountability. It brought unprecedented attention to police brutality, strengthened public discourse around human rights and police reform, demonstrated the political mobilisation capacity of Nigerian youths and compelled government to announce the dissolution of SARS. The movement also demonstrated the growing significance of social media as a mechanism for political communication, mobilisation and citizen engagement. Consequently, EndSARS presents a complex phenomenon in which citizen protest simultaneously functioned as an instrument for demanding institutional accountability and generated consequences that challenged governmental authority, public administration and social stability.

Despite the considerable attention devoted to EndSARS, an important analytical gap remains concerning the relationship between the protest and government response. Existing discussions have tended to concentrate on particular dimensions of the movement, especially police brutality, human rights violations, economic losses, social media mobilisation or the events surrounding the Lekki Toll Gate. Olubiyi (2020), for instance, examines EndSARS in relation to mass mobilisation for police accountability, while the economic literature has emphasised the substantial disruption experienced by businesses and economic activities. The available literature consequently provides valuable insights into individual aspects of the movement, but comparatively less attention has been devoted to examining its multidimensional implications for government as an institution of governance and public administration.

Furthermore, the government's response to EndSARS presents an unresolved policy and administrative problem. The dissolution of SARS represented an immediate response to one of the protesters' principal demands, yet the persistence of demonstrations and the subsequent escalation of conflict suggested that institutional responses were perceived as insufficient to address the broader grievances of protesters. This raises questions concerning the adequacy of existing mechanisms for citizen government dialogue, police accountability, conflict management and public grievance resolution. It also raises the question of whether alternative and institutionalised mechanisms of citizen engagement could reduce the likelihood that unresolved grievances would develop into disruptive mass protests.

The problem is therefore twofold. First, there is a need to understand the multidimensional consequences of EndSARS for government, particularly in relation to political governance, public administration, economic activities, social stability and security. Second, there is a need to assess the effectiveness of government responses and identify alternative mechanisms through which citizens can communicate grievances, participate in governance and demand accountability without necessarily resorting to prolonged or disruptive protests.

It is against this background that this study examines the impact of the EndSARS protest on the Nigerian government. The study focuses on the political, economic, social and administrative implications of the protest, the role of social media in facilitating mobilisation, the response of government to the movement and alternative mechanisms for citizen government engagement. By addressing these dimensions, the study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of EndSARS as both a manifestation of democratic participation and a challenge to governmental responsiveness, institutional stability and effective public administration in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

Protest

Protest refers to a collective and often public expression of dissatisfaction, opposition or disagreement with government policies, institutional practices or prevailing social conditions. In democratic societies, protest provides citizens with an avenue to communicate grievances, demand accountability and influence public decisions. Protests may take different forms, including demonstrations, marches, strikes, petitions, boycotts and civil disobedience. Their implications depend substantially on the nature of the grievances, the methods adopted by participants and the response of government. In the Nigerian context, protest has historically served as an instrument through which citizens and organised groups have challenged perceived injustice, economic hardship, political exclusion and institutional failures. The EndSARS protest represents a contemporary manifestation of this broader tradition of collective citizen action.

EndSARS Protest

The EndSARS protest refers to the nationwide youth led mobilisation that occurred principally in October 2020 in response to allegations of police brutality, human rights violations and misconduct associated with the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) of the Nigeria Police Force. Although the immediate demand was the dissolution of SARS, the movement subsequently expanded to include demands for police accountability, justice for victims, institutional reform, good governance and respect for human rights. The movement combined physical demonstrations with extensive digital mobilisation, particularly through social media. Its significance therefore extends beyond the dissolution of SARS to broader questions concerning state citizen relations, democratic participation and government responsiveness.

Government Response

Government response refers to the actions, policies, institutional measures and communication strategies adopted by public authorities in reaction to citizens' demands, protests or other forms of collective mobilisation. In the context of EndSARS, government response included the announcement of the dissolution of SARS, attempts at police reform, engagement with protesters and the deployment of security agencies as the protests escalated. Government response is important because the manner in which authorities manage public grievances can either facilitate

peaceful resolution or intensify conflict. Consequently, responsiveness, accountability, dialogue and institutional reform constitute important dimensions of effective governmental response.

Governance

Governance refers broadly to the processes through which public authority is exercised, collective decisions are made and public affairs are managed. It extends beyond government institutions to encompass accountability, participation, responsiveness, transparency and the interaction between state and non-state actors. In this study, governance provides the broader context within which the EndSARS protest is examined. The movement raised questions about the responsiveness of public institutions, accountability of security agencies, citizen participation and the capacity of government to address grievances through legitimate institutional channels. Thus, EndSARS can be understood not merely as a protest against policing but as an expression of wider concerns about the quality and responsiveness of governance in Nigeria.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM

This study is anchored on the Structural Functionalist Theory, principally associated with Talcott Parsons. The theory views society as a system comprising interconnected institutions and structures whose effective functioning contributes to social order, stability and equilibrium. From this perspective, dysfunction in one institutional component can generate consequences for other components because social institutions are interdependent and perform functions necessary for the maintenance of the wider social system (Ritzer, 2012).

The relevance of Structural Functionalism to this study lies in its capacity to explain the EndSARS protest as both a manifestation of institutional dysfunction and a mechanism through which citizens sought to restore functional balance within the Nigerian social and political system. The police, as a major state institution responsible for maintaining law and order and protecting citizens, constitute an important component of this system. Allegations of police brutality, arbitrary arrests, extortion and violations of human rights represented perceived failures in the performance of this institutional function. The emergence of EndSARS can therefore be interpreted as a societal reaction to these perceived dysfunctions and demands for institutional correction.

The theory further provides a framework for understanding the wider consequences of the protest. While the movement sought to promote accountability, police reform and responsive governance, its escalation also disrupted economic activities, public administration, social order and security. This demonstrates the interconnectedness of social institutions: dysfunction within policing generated collective mobilisation, while the resulting protest affected governmental, economic and social structures. The protest consequently possessed both functional and dysfunctional dimensions. Its functional dimension lay in drawing attention to institutional weaknesses and stimulating demands for reform, while its dysfunctional dimension manifested as violence, destruction, disruption of public services, and threats to social stability.

Applied to the present study, Structural Functionalism therefore facilitates an examination of how weaknesses in one component of the Nigerian governance system, particularly policing and institutional accountability, generated reactions that affected other components of society. It also highlights the government's responsibility to restore equilibrium through effective governance, institutional reform, accountability, dialogue, and responsive public administration. The theory consequently provides an appropriate analytical lens for assessing the political, economic, social

and administrative implications of EndSARS and the capacity of government to respond constructively to citizen grievances.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts an exploratory research design to examine the implications of the EndSARS protest for the Nigerian government. The exploratory approach is considered appropriate because the study seeks to develop a broader understanding of the political, economic, social, and administrative dimensions of the protest and of the government's responses to the demands generated by the movement (Ayamba, 2026). The study relies exclusively on secondary data sources. Relevant information was obtained from published journal articles, academic books, institutional reports, official publications, reputable newspapers, credible online sources and other documentary materials addressing the EndSARS protest, police reform, governance, public administration and citizen mobilisation in Nigeria. Particular attention was given to sources containing substantive evidence on the causes, dynamics, consequences and governmental responses associated with the protest. Data obtained from these documentary sources were subjected to qualitative content analysis. The study therefore does not employ questionnaires, interviews, surveys or quantitative statistical techniques. Instead, conclusions are derived through critical interpretation and synthesis of relevant documentary evidence, enabling the study to provide an integrated qualitative assessment of the relationship between citizen protest, governmental responsiveness and governance in Nigeria.

HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF PROTEST IN NIGERIA

Protest has historically constituted an important form of collective action through which Nigerians have expressed opposition to perceived injustice, unpopular policies, political exclusion and institutional failures. Its evolution can be traced to the colonial period, when collective resistance emerged against taxation, administrative practices and other policies perceived as exploitative. Early Nigerian activism was not restricted to physical demonstrations; newspapers and other forms of public communication also provided platforms through which grievances were articulated and political consciousness developed. The 1929 Aba Women's protest remains a notable example of organised resistance against colonial administrative practices and demonstrates the historical significance of collective action in challenging governmental authority.

Following independence, protest became increasingly intertwined with Nigeria's changing political and socioeconomic circumstances. Labour organisations, students, civil society groups and other social movements employed strikes, demonstrations and other forms of collective action to challenge authoritarian governance, economic hardship, political repression and unpopular government policies. During periods of military rule, protest frequently assumed a distinctly pro democratic character, reflecting demands for political freedom, constitutional government and respect for citizens' rights. With the restoration of democratic rule in 1999, the character of protest gradually shifted towards issues of governance, socioeconomic welfare, corruption, public policy and institutional accountability. The 2012 Occupy Nigeria movement, for example, demonstrated the continuing capacity of citizens to mobilise against government economic policies, particularly the removal of fuel subsidy.

The evolution of communication technology subsequently introduced a significant transformation in the organisation and dissemination of protest. Digital platforms increasingly enabled citizens to transcend conventional organisational structures by communicating grievances, coordinating activities and mobilising participants across geographical boundaries. This development became

particularly evident during the EndSARS movement. Although opposition to the activities of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad had existed before 2020, the widespread circulation of allegations of police brutality through social media transformed individual grievances into a highly coordinated national mobilisation. The movement consequently combined conventional street demonstrations with digitally mediated forms of political participation.

The EndSARS protest can therefore be situated within a broader historical continuum of Nigerian collective action while also representing a significant transformation in the nature of citizen mobilisation. Unlike many earlier protests that depended heavily on labour unions, political organisations or established civil society structures, EndSARS was strongly associated with youth mobilisation and decentralised digital communication. Social media facilitated rapid information dissemination, public documentation of alleged abuses and coordination among protesters, thereby expanding the speed and geographical reach of collective action.

The historical evolution of protest in Nigeria consequently reveals a gradual movement from predominantly traditional and institutionally organised forms of resistance towards more decentralised, networked and digitally amplified mobilisation. EndSARS represents an important culmination of this transformation. It simultaneously reflected longstanding grievances concerning state institutions and introduced new dynamics of citizen engagement with government. Understanding this historical trajectory is therefore essential to appreciating why EndSARS developed beyond a demand for police reform into a broader challenge concerning accountability, governance, institutional responsiveness and the relationship between citizens and the Nigerian state.

CAUSES AND DYNAMICS OF THE ENDSARS PROTEST

The emergence of the EndSARS protest was not attributable to a single incident but reflected the convergence of longstanding grievances concerning policing, human rights, institutional accountability and socioeconomic conditions in Nigeria. At the immediate level, the activities of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) constituted the principal trigger. Reports of arbitrary arrests, extortion, torture, unlawful detention and extrajudicial killings had generated considerable public resentment, while concerns about the absence of effective accountability mechanisms further weakened public confidence in the police. Amnesty International's documentation of human rights violations associated with SARS reinforced the perception that police misconduct represented a systemic institutional problem rather than isolated individual misconduct (Amnesty International, 2020).

A second important factor was the historical pattern of limited accountability within security institutions. The literature indicates that allegations of human rights abuses by security agencies in Nigeria predated EndSARS and were connected to institutional practices developed during periods of military rule. The persistence of such practices under democratic governance contributed to perceptions that security institutions were insufficiently responsive to citizens and inadequately constrained by oversight mechanisms. The problem was compounded by concerns surrounding the discretionary powers exercised by police officers and the perceived inability of victims to obtain effective redress.

The protest was also situated within broader socioeconomic grievances. Youth unemployment, poverty, economic insecurity and dissatisfaction with the quality of governance contributed to an environment in which grievances about policing could acquire wider political significance. Consequently, the demands of protesters gradually extended beyond the dissolution of SARS to

encompass justice, police reform, accountability and improved governance. The movement thus reflected a broader crisis of confidence in the capacity of public institutions to respond adequately to citizens' concerns.

Social media constituted another critical dimension of the protest's emergence and expansion. Digital platforms enabled young Nigerians to share personal experiences, circulate allegations of police misconduct, mobilise participants and sustain public attention. The literature suggests that social media can facilitate mobilisation by expanding communication networks, generating collective identities, and enabling the rapid dissemination of information (Valenzuela *et al.*, 2012). In the case of EndSARS, this digital infrastructure transformed individual grievances into a nationally visible collective movement.

The dynamics of the protest subsequently changed as government responses failed to satisfy protesters' broader demands. Although the Inspector General of Police announced the dissolution of SARS, protesters continued to demand comprehensive police reform and accountability. The emergence of alternative demands and hashtags demonstrated that the movement had developed beyond its original objective. As tensions increased, the initially peaceful mobilisation was followed in several locations by attacks, looting, destruction of public and private property and violent confrontations.

Thus, EndSARS should be understood as the product of interacting institutional, socioeconomic and technological factors. Police brutality provided the immediate grievance, institutional distrust sustained dissatisfaction, socioeconomic pressures broadened the movement's appeal, and social media accelerated mobilisation. These interacting factors explain how a demand initially directed at a particular police unit developed into a wider challenge to governmental accountability, responsiveness and governance in Nigeria.

EFFECT OF THE ENDSARS PROTEST ON THE NIGERIAN ECONOMY

The EndSARS protest had substantial and multifaceted implications for the Nigerian economy, particularly through the disruption of commercial activities, destruction of productive assets, interruption of transportation and supply networks, and heightened uncertainty for businesses and investors. The economic consequences were particularly pronounced in Lagos, Nigeria's principal commercial centre, where prolonged disruption to mobility and business operations affected several interconnected sectors of the economy. The closure of major commercial activities in Lagos was considered particularly significant given the state's central position in Nigeria's economic system. Abuede (2020) reported that Primero Transport Services Limited, the operator of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system, lost more than N100 million during the six days of disruption caused by the protest. Such losses illustrate how disruptions to transportation can generate multiplier effects across other sectors by restricting the movement of workers, consumers, goods and services.

The destruction of public and private assets constituted another major economic consequence. According to the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI, 2020), the replacement cost of damaged assets in Lagos was estimated at approximately N1 trillion, with the destruction expected to contribute to a decline in economic output, supply chain disruptions, and increased inflationary pressures. Commercial establishments, retail outlets, government facilities, transport infrastructure and police stations were among the assets affected. BRT infrastructure was particularly impacted, with numerous buses reportedly destroyed. Beyond the immediate financial cost of replacing these assets, such destruction represented a loss of productive capacity and public investment that could otherwise have been deployed to support economic development.

The disruption extended beyond Lagos. Several states experienced interruptions to commercial and economic activities, including Enugu, Rivers, Plateau, Anambra, Kano, Oyo, Ogun and the Federal Capital Territory. In some locations, banks, shops, government facilities and other commercial establishments were vandalised, looted or destroyed. Business activities in several urban centres were consequently brought to a standstill, while movement restrictions affected individuals' and firms' ability to conduct routine economic transactions. The geographical spread of these disruptions demonstrates that the economic consequences of EndSARS were not confined to the epicentre of the protest but extended to interconnected regional and national markets.

Small and micro businesses were particularly vulnerable to the economic consequences of the protest and its violent aftermath. Evidence from a survey of 180 business owners in Oshodi Isolo and Lagos Mainland indicated that many of the affected enterprises were sole proprietorships and micro or small businesses, including retail traders and shop owners. These businesses were exposed not only to temporary closure but also to looting, the destruction of merchandise, and the loss of operating capital (Morgen, 2020). For enterprises operating with limited financial reserves, such losses could have significant implications for business continuity, employment and household livelihoods.

The protest also raised concerns about employment, poverty, and investment. The LCCI (2020) projected that the disruption could contribute to declining output, job losses, and increased poverty, particularly where businesses lacked the capacity to absorb the financial shocks resulting from prolonged closures and asset destruction. Similarly, the uncertainty stemming from widespread unrest could undermine investor confidence and heighten perceptions of economic risk. These effects demonstrate that the economic consequences of civil unrest extend beyond immediately measurable physical losses to include opportunity costs, foregone production, disrupted investment decisions and weakened business confidence.

Nevertheless, the economic implications of EndSARS should not be interpreted exclusively in negative terms. The protest also generated renewed attention to institutional weaknesses, police reform and the quality of political governance. The LCCI acknowledged that, despite the considerable economic disruption, the protest produced positive effects by reawakening public and governmental attention to shortcomings in Nigeria's political governance (LCCI, 2020). From this perspective, the movement may be understood as producing an important governance externality: although the protest generated substantial short-term economic costs, it simultaneously increased pressure for institutional reform and greater governmental accountability.

Overall, the EndSARS protest imposed high short-term costs on the Nigerian economy through the disruption of businesses and transportation, the destruction of public and private property, the loss of productive assets, and heightened uncertainty. The effects were particularly severe for small businesses and vulnerable households whose capacity to withstand economic shocks was limited. However, the movement also demonstrated that economic stability cannot be considered in isolation from institutional quality, public accountability, and responsive governance. The economic experience of EndSARS therefore underscores the need for the government to establish credible mechanisms to address citizen grievances and institutional failures before social tensions escalate into widespread disruption of economic activity.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE ENDSARS PROTEST

The EndSARS protest of October 2020 represented one of the most significant episodes of youth-led civic mobilisation in Nigeria's recent democratic history. Although the movement did not

achieve all of its demands and several aspects of its reform agenda remain contested or incomplete, it generated important political, institutional and social outcomes. Its significance, therefore, lies not only in the government's immediate policy response but also in its capacity to place police accountability, human rights, and citizen participation firmly within national political discourse.

Dissolution of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad

The most immediate and tangible outcome of the protest was the official dissolution of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) by the Inspector General of Police on 11 October 2020. The decision followed years of allegations concerning extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary arrests, extortion and other forms of abuse attributed to the unit. The announcement represented a direct institutional response to one of the protesters' central demands and demonstrated the capacity of sustained civic mobilisation to compel government action (Amnesty International, 2021). Although the subsequent replacement of SARS generated continuing concerns about the effectiveness and implementation of police reform, its dissolution constituted a significant symbolic and policy outcome of the movement.

Elevation of Police Reform and Accountability

EndSARS broadened public discussion from the abolition of SARS to the structural reform of policing in Nigeria. The protesters' demands addressed issues including justice for victims, accountability for police misconduct, improved welfare and professionalisation of police personnel, and institutional mechanisms for preventing future abuses. The movement consequently shifted police brutality from a recurrent public grievance to a prominent national governance and human rights issue. In this respect, EndSARS strengthened demands for greater transparency, civilian oversight and institutional accountability within the Nigeria Police Force.

Expansion of Youth Civic and Political Participation

Another important outcome of EndSARS was the demonstration of the capacity of Nigerian youths to organise, mobilise resources and participate directly in political discourse outside conventional party structures. Through the combined use of social media and physical demonstrations, young Nigerians transformed individual experiences of police abuse into a collective national demand for accountability. Olisah (2020) characterises the movement as an important instance of mass mobilisation for police accountability. The protest consequently contributed to heightened public consciousness among young Nigerians regarding governance, human rights, and their capacity to influence public affairs.

Increased National and International Attention to Human Rights

The movement also attracted considerable national and international attention to police brutality and human rights conditions in Nigeria. Human rights organisations, international media, civil society organisations and members of the Nigerian diaspora amplified allegations of police abuses and called for accountability. This internationalisation of the issue increased scrutiny of Nigerian security institutions and placed additional pressure on the government to address concerns regarding policing, human rights protection, and institutional accountability (Amnesty International, 2021).

Establishment of Judicial Panels of Inquiry

The establishment of Judicial Panels of Inquiry by several state governments constituted another important institutional outcome of the movement. The panels provided formal mechanisms through which victims of alleged police abuses could present petitions, narrate their experiences and seek redress. In several jurisdictions, the panels investigated allegations, documented cases and recommended compensation and other forms of institutional response. Although the implementation of recommendations varied across states, the panels created an official avenue for documenting grievances and examining allegations that might otherwise have remained unresolved.

Broader Governance Significance

Beyond these immediate outcomes, EndSARS contributed to a wider public conversation about governmental responsiveness, accountability and the relationship between citizens and state institutions. The movement demonstrated that sustained citizen mobilisation can place institutional deficiencies on the public agenda and compel government to respond to issues that have remained unresolved for extended periods. Its achievements should therefore be understood not as evidence that all protesters' demands were fulfilled, but as evidence of the movement's capacity to influence public policy discourse, institutional responses and citizen consciousness. In this broader sense, EndSARS represented an important moment in the continuing development of participatory citizenship and demands for accountable governance in Nigeria.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE ENDSARS PROTEST

The EndSARS protest generated significant implications for the Nigerian government, extending beyond the immediate demand for the dissolution of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad to broader questions of governance, institutional legitimacy, public administration, security and citizen-state relations. From a Structural Functionalist perspective, the protest can be interpreted as a manifestation of dysfunction within an important component of the political system and a subsequent demand for institutional adjustment. The consequences of the movement, therefore, need to be considered not only in terms of the disruption it generated but also in terms of the pressures it placed on the government to respond to institutional deficiencies.

Political and Governance Implications

Politically, EndSARS exposed a significant gap between citizens' expectations and the perceived responsiveness of government institutions. The persistence of demands after the announcement of SARS dissolution indicated that protesters regarded police brutality as symptomatic of wider governance problems rather than an isolated institutional failure. The movement consequently expanded the public debate to include accountability, transparency, human rights and the responsiveness of public institutions. Fagbo (2020) observes that EndSARS was an important instance of mass mobilisation for police accountability, demonstrating citizens' capacity to exert pressure on the government through collective action.

The protest also challenged conventional assumptions about political participation in Nigeria. The prominence of young people and the decentralised nature of the movement demonstrated that political engagement increasingly occurs outside established political parties and traditional civil society organisations. Social media enabled citizens to articulate demands, mobilise support and scrutinise government actions in real time. This development has important implications for

democratic governance because government institutions must increasingly engage citizens within both conventional and digitally mediated political spaces.

Administrative and Institutional Implications

The protest exposed weaknesses in the administration and oversight of the Nigeria Police Force and raised questions concerning the effectiveness of existing mechanisms for receiving and resolving citizen complaints. The dissolution of SARS constituted an immediate institutional response, while the establishment of judicial panels of inquiry in several states provided additional mechanisms for investigating allegations of police misconduct. However, the persistence of public concerns about police accountability demonstrates that institutional reform cannot be achieved solely by replacing or dissolving a particular unit.

From a public administration perspective, EndSARS therefore highlighted the importance of institutional responsiveness, accountability and effective grievance resolution. Where citizens perceive administrative institutions as inaccessible or unresponsive, grievances may accumulate until they assume a collective and disruptive character. Government consequently faces the challenge of strengthening administrative mechanisms through which citizens can report abuses, seek redress and participate in policy processes without relying exclusively on street mobilisation.

Security and Public Order Implications

EndSARS also created substantial challenges for the government's responsibility to maintain public order and national security. The transformation of peaceful demonstrations into episodes of violence, looting, arson and destruction of public and private property placed significant pressure on security agencies and local administrative authorities. Police stations, government facilities, transport infrastructure and commercial establishments were affected in several locations.

The security implications were particularly complex because the government had to balance citizens' constitutional rights to peaceful assembly and expression against its responsibility to protect lives and property. The violent escalation of the protest demonstrated the difficulties of managing large-scale demonstrations where distrust between citizens and security institutions is already pronounced. Consequently, the EndSARS experience underscores the importance of proportionate policing, effective communication, de-escalation strategies and institutional mechanisms for preventing peaceful demonstrations from degenerating into violent conflict.

Social Implications

Socially, the movement altered the relationship between Nigerian youths and governmental institutions. EndSARS provided a platform for young Nigerians to express accumulated grievances concerning police conduct, unemployment, insecurity, and perceived shortcomings in governance. It also strengthened public awareness of citizens' rights and increased the visibility of police accountability as a national issue.

At the same time, the violent aftermath generated social costs through fear, displacement, loss of livelihoods, destruction of property and disruption of community life. The movement therefore produced both integrative and disruptive consequences. Its integrative dimension was evident in the collective mobilisation of citizens around common demands, while its disruptive dimension emerged when violence and destruction undermined social order. This duality is consistent with the Structural Functionalist argument that disturbances within one component of a social system can generate consequences across interconnected institutions.

Economic and Public Resource Implications

The economic consequences of EndSARS placed additional pressure on the government. The destruction of public infrastructure and government property led to significant replacement and reconstruction costs, while the disruption of commercial activities reduced economic productivity and affected public revenue. The Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry estimated substantial losses resulting from the destruction and disruption caused by the protest (LCCI, 2020).

For the government, the implications extend beyond the immediate cost of replacing damaged infrastructure. Public resources that could have been directed towards development, social services, and infrastructure were potentially diverted towards reconstruction, security, and crisis management. The economic disruption also demonstrated the interconnectedness of governance and economic stability: weaknesses in public institutions can generate social unrest, while social unrest can, in turn, undermine the economic environment on which effective governance depends.

Overall, the EndSARS protest placed considerable pressure on the Nigerian government to reconsider its approaches to policing, citizen engagement, institutional accountability and conflict management. Its implications were simultaneously corrective and disruptive. It compelled government to respond to longstanding grievances and stimulated broader debates about institutional reform, while the escalation of the protest generated substantial security, administrative, social and economic challenges. The central lesson for government is therefore that sustainable governance requires not merely the capacity to respond to crises after they emerge, but the institutional capacity to identify grievances early, provide credible avenues for redress and maintain continuous engagement between citizens and public institutions.

CONCLUSION

The EndSARS protest of 2020 represents a significant episode in the evolution of citizen mobilisation and democratic participation in Nigeria. Although it originated from opposition to police brutality and demands for the dissolution of SARS, the movement subsequently developed into a broader expression of dissatisfaction with institutional accountability, governance, and government responsiveness. The study has established that EndSARS produced both corrective and disruptive consequences. On the one hand, it compelled government to dissolve SARS, stimulated renewed attention to police reform, strengthened youth civic participation and generated institutional mechanisms for investigating allegations of police abuse. On the other hand, the escalation of the protest led to considerable economic losses, the destruction of public and private infrastructure, the disruption of public administration, insecurity, and social dislocation.

Viewed through the Structural Functionalist perspective, EndSARS can be understood as a manifestation of dysfunction within interconnected components of the Nigerian governance system. Weaknesses in policing and institutional accountability generated public dissatisfaction, which subsequently affected political, economic, social and administrative structures. The experience therefore demonstrates that effective governance requires more than the maintenance of public order; it requires institutions capable of responding credibly and promptly to citizens' grievances. Ultimately, the enduring significance of EndSARS lies in its demonstration that unresolved institutional problems can lead to large-scale social mobilisation with consequences that extend far beyond the original grievance. Strengthening accountability, responsive administration and constructive citizen engagement is consequently essential to preventing future grievances from escalating into disruptive conflict.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Strengthening police accountability and professionalisation: The Nigerian Police Force should strengthen internal accountability mechanisms, independent civilian oversight, human rights training and transparent disciplinary procedures. Allegations of brutality and misconduct should be investigated promptly, with appropriate sanctions imposed where violations are established.
2. Institutionalising effective grievance resolution mechanisms: Government should establish accessible, independent, and responsive mechanisms through which citizens can report grievances, seek redress, and communicate concerns to public institutions. Such mechanisms should operate at federal, state and local levels to address grievances before they escalate into mass unrest.
3. Promoting structured government youth engagement: Government should institutionalise regular platforms for meaningful engagement with young Nigerians, including youth consultations, policy dialogues and digital engagement mechanisms. Youth participation should extend beyond symbolic representation to genuine involvement in policy formulation and implementation.
4. Developing effective protest and crisis management strategies: Security agencies should adopt rights-based approaches to managing demonstrations, emphasising negotiation, communication, de-escalation and proportionate use of force. Clear protocols should be established to protect peaceful protesters while preventing violence, vandalism and the destruction of public and private property.
5. Strengthening digital governance and responsible social media engagement: The government should recognise social media as an important component of contemporary citizen participation, rather than treating it primarily as a security threat. Public institutions should develop credible digital communication and feedback platforms through which citizens can obtain information, report abuses, and engage with authorities, while simultaneously promoting responsible online communication and countering misinformation by providing transparent, timely official information.

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