

# Existential Struggles in Nigeria and Social Movement Theory: Case Study of #ENDSARS

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*Existential struggles appear to be unending in developing nations, including Nigeria. Some of the existential struggles lead to citizen agitations and evolve into social movements, some of which have recorded varying success rates. This paper thus seeks to examine #ENDSARS protests as a case study vis-à-vis the social movement theory. It explores the theory to provide meaning to what happened with #ENDSARS, outcomes and recommendations for future social movements or otherwise. Findings indicate that New Social Movement Theory (NSMT) played out effectively during the #ENDSARS protest, with technology driving all the attributes of the social movement theory. As a recommendation, the policymakers must approach issues affecting the welfare and livelihoods of its citizens carefully before it snowballs into agitations like the #ENDSARS protest. Government must balance the need for fiscal responsibility and economic growth with the need to protect the interests of ordinary Nigerians and ensure social stability. Theorists must hereafter review new theories against contemporary realities and technological potential.*

*Keywords: New Social Movement Theory, ENDSARS, communication theories, existential struggles*

## INTRODUCTION

On October 13, 2020, CNN reported that Kanye West and other international celebrities had joined the ongoing #ENDSARS protests over police brutality in Nigeria. The apex news outlet described the #ENDSARS social movement as a ‘global protest’. This collaboration by the international community came after weeks of online protests by young people in Nigeria over allegations of kidnapping, harassment, and extortion by a police squad known as the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). The inspector general of police stated weeks after the protests began that the SARS unit was being dismantled and its officers were being redeployed, yet the protests persisted (CNN, 2020). The situation reached a climax with the #LekkiMassacre on October 20, 2020, when the Nigerian military (according to eye-witnesses) opened fire, shooting to kill protesters gathered at the Lekki toll gate in Lagos (TIERS (The Initiative for Equal Rights), 2020). While parties are still seeking justice after the ENDSARS movement, issue-based agitations have continued to spark up, including the agitation by a group called the Indigenous People of Biafra (#IPOB) and the latest being a call for mass protest following the removal of fuel subsidies in Nigeria, and the resultant increase in the cost of living and doing business. It appears the existential struggles in Nigeria are unending. This brings to question the framework and implications of social movements in the country. This paper thus seeks to examine #ENDSARS protests as a case study vis-à-vis the social movement theory. It explores the theory to provide meaning to what happened with #ENDSARS, outcomes and recommendations for future social movements or otherwise.

## Social Movements in Nigeria

Social movements arise organically to address societal challenges. Meyer (2021) defines social movements as “the rational employment of less conventional means to achieve political gains unlikely to be won otherwise and can also be seen as the expressed frustration of a constituency unsuccessful in winning acceptance or accommodation from mainstream society” (Meyer, 2021 p.543). Social movements may arise as a result of the emergence of national institutions or policies that a section of the populace finds obnoxious (Barrett & Kurzam, 2004). However, they can also transcend national boundaries and find expression in countries outside of which their main theater of action is focused. While some choose to adopt a non-violent approach, others are outrightly violent. Some are single issue based while others exist to tackle multiple issues. They are known to cut across political, economic, ideological, cultural and even professional spheres. Nigeria has a rich history of social movements that have challenged the status quo and brought about change. Such movements in Nigeria can be divided into two broad categories based on time frame: the older versions and the contemporary ones. Among the older versions, the following are memorable:

1. *The Aba Women’s Riot*: In 1929, thousands of women in eastern Nigeria took part in a protest against the British colonial administration’s taxation policies. The protest, known as the Aba Women’s Riot, was successful in pressuring the colonial authorities to abandon their plans to increase taxes on women.
2. *The Nigerian Independence Movement*: Nigeria gained independence from British colonial rule in 1960, following a long and sustained independence struggle led by nationalist leaders such as Nnamdi Azikiwe, Obafemi Awolowo, and Ahmadu Bello. The movement succeeded in achieving Nigeria’s independence and paved the way for other African countries to gain independence.
3. *The National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS)*: NANS is a student-led organisation that has been at the forefront of several social agitations in Nigeria. In 1978, NANS led a successful campaign against the government’s decision to increase tuition fees, which resulted in a reversal of the policy.
4. *The Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB)*: MASSOB is a secessionist movement that seeks the creation of an independent state of Biafra in Southeastern Nigeria. While the movement has not achieved its objective of secession, it has been successful in raising awareness about the marginalization of the Igbo people in Nigerian politics.
5. *The Bring Back Our Girls Movement*: In 2014, the Islamist extremist group Boko Haram kidnapped over 270 school girls from the town of Chibok in North-eastern Nigeria. The Bring Back Our Girls movement, led by Nigerian activists such as Oby Ezekwili and Aisha Yesufu, campaigned for the release of the girls and succeeded in putting pressure on the government to take action. While some of the girls have been rescued, many are still missing.

These outcomes of the campaigns of these groups demonstrate that social movements in Nigeria can be effective in achieving their objectives, whether it is challenging colonialism, advocating for student rights, or raising awareness about the plight of marginalized communities. However, they also highlight the need for sustained and strategic organizing, as well as the importance of building strong coalitions and alliances to amplify the voice of marginalized communities.

Newer social movements challenging the political status quo are gaining momentum. Some examples and their achievements are discussed below:

1. *#FixPolitics*: This movement seeks to address the issue of bad governance and political corruption in Nigeria. It is led by young Nigerians demanding accountability and transparency from their political leaders. The movement aims to mobilize citizens to participate in the political process and encourage electoral reform. The movement has succeeded in raising awareness about the need for electoral reform in Nigeria. It has also encouraged more young people to participate in the political process, with several young Nigerians declaring their

intention to run for public office. The movement also led to the formation of political parties that prioritize youth participation and civic engagement.

2. *#RevolutionNow*: The movement seeks to challenge the political status quo in Nigeria and bring about a revolution in the country's political system. It is led by the activist and journalist Omoyele Sowore, who was arrested and detained by the government on charges of treason in 2019. The movement advocates for a peaceful and nonviolent revolution to bring about political change in Nigeria (The Nation Newspaper, 2020). The movement has succeeded in raising awareness about the need for political change in Nigeria. It has also put pressure on the government to address issues such as insecurity, corruption, and economic inequality. The movement has also mobilized young people to participate in protests and other forms of civic engagement.
3. *#EndImpunity*: This movement aimed to end the culture of impunity in Nigeria, particularly regarding human rights abuses. It is led by civil society organizations, lawyers, and activists who are calling for accountability for crimes such as extrajudicial killings, torture, and sexual violence. The movement aims to encourage legal and judicial reforms that will ensure justice for victims of human rights abuses. The movement has succeeded in drawing attention to the issue of human rights abuses in Nigeria. It has also put pressure on the government to hold security agencies accountable for their actions. The movement also led to the establishment of legal clinics that provide free legal services to victims of human rights abuses.
4. *#SecureNorth*: This movement attempted to address the issue of insecurity in northern Nigeria, particularly concerning the activities of Boko Haram and other armed groups. It is led by civil society organizations, religious leaders, and community members who are advocating for peace and security in the region. The movement aims to encourage dialogue and community-led solutions to the problem of insecurity. The movement has succeeded in bringing together religious and community leaders to address the issue of insecurity in northern Nigeria. It has also encouraged dialogue and community-led solutions to the problem of insecurity. The movement has also led to the establishment of peace committees that aim to promote peace and security in the region.
5. *#OurMumuDonDo*: This movement sought to promote good governance and hold political leaders accountable for their actions. It is led by the activist and musician Charles Oputa, also known as Charly Boy. The movement has succeeded in mobilizing young Nigerians, private and commercial motorcycle riders to participate in peaceful protests against bad governance and corruption.
6. *#NotTooYoungToRun*: This movement sought to reduce the age requirement for running for political office in Nigeria. It was led by young Nigerians who are advocating for greater youth participation in politics. The movement succeeded in 2018 when the Nigerian government passed the Not Too Young to Run bill, which reduced the age limit for running for political office.
7. *#EndSARS Protest*: This social movement started with the aim to end police brutality in Nigeria. It functioned as a decentralized social movement, with a series of mass protests across various cities in Nigeria against police brutality perpetuated by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). Protesters blocked the roads and toll gates as part of the protest. While the roads were blocked, protesters gave speeches before the crowd and media, they entertained themselves and shared their police brutality experiences whilst reeling out their demand to government and other stakeholders. Part of their demand included the improvement of police welfare packages to minimize the temptations they faced. The protests went on for two weeks across the nation, starting on 8<sup>th</sup> October and climaxing on October 20, 2020, with the Lekki Toll Gate shootings.

The movement faced challenges such as police brutality against protesters, sabotage of peaceful protests by thugs, and government repression. However, the movement was able to mobilize a large number of young Nigerians through sustained and strategic organizing, social media campaigns, and building alliances with other civil society organizations. Eventually, the government disbanded the Special Anti-Robbery

Squad (SARS) and pledged to reform the police force, which was seen as a significant victory for the movement.

These movements demonstrate the resilience of civil society in Nigeria, as well as the determination of young people to challenge the status quo and demand change. They also highlight the need for sustained and strategic organizing, as well as the importance of building strong coalitions and alliances to amplify the voice of marginalized communities. Their achievements demonstrate the potential for social movements to effect change in Nigeria.

### **Existential Struggles in Nigeria and the EndSARS Movement**

Nigeria is a country that has faced several existential struggles over the years, ranging from political instability to economic challenges, social inequality to religious and ethnic tensions (Chigbo, 2022), (TIERs (The Initiative for Equal Rights), 2020). These struggles have had a profound impact on the lives of Nigerians, shaping their collective experience and shaping the country's national identity (Akinyetun, 2020). These struggles have had a profound impact on the lives of Nigerians, shaping their collective experience and shaping the country's national identity (Ojo & Olakojo, 2019; Chukwudi & Ojatorotu, 2021; Chigbo, 2022). One of the most significant existential struggles in Nigeria has been political instability. Despite Nigeria's vast natural resources and potential for economic growth, political instability has hindered its development. The country has experienced numerous coups, military dictatorships, and corrupt governments, which have resulted in a lack of trust in political institutions. This has led to a sense of disillusionment among Nigerians, with many feeling that their voices are not being heard and that they have little control over the political processes that affect their lives (Ojo & Olakojo, 2019).

Another major existential struggle in Nigeria is economic inequality. Despite being one of the wealthiest countries in Africa, Nigeria has a high poverty rate, with over 40% of the population living below the poverty line. This economic inequality is exacerbated by corruption and mismanagement of public resources, which has resulted in a lack of access to basic services such as healthcare and education. This has led to a sense of frustration and hopelessness among Nigerians, with many feeling that they are unable to achieve their full potential due to a lack of opportunities (Chukwudi & Ojatorotu, 2021).

Social inequality is also a significant existential struggle in Nigeria (Olawumi, 2023). The country is home to over 250 ethnic groups, each with its own culture and language. This diversity has created a complex social landscape that is often marked by tensions and conflicts. Discrimination and marginalization of minority groups are common, and this has led to a sense of alienation among some Nigerians. This sense of division and inequality has been exacerbated by the government's failure to address these issues effectively. Religious tensions are another existential struggle in Nigeria (Tuki, 2023). The country is divided between a predominantly Muslim north and a predominantly Christian south, and this has resulted in sectarian violence in some parts of the country. The government's failure to adequately address these tensions has led to a sense of mistrust and fear among some Nigerians, and this has contributed to the country's political instability and social inequality.

Addressing these struggles requires sustained and strategic efforts from the government, civil society, and the private sector to create a more inclusive and equitable society. It also requires a commitment to the principles of democracy, good governance, and respect for human rights, which can provide a foundation for a more stable and prosperous future for Nigeria and its people. Existential struggles are pervasive in Nigeria, a country plagued by corruption, poverty, and insecurity. In recent years, social movements have emerged to challenge the status quo and demand change.

### **Challenges and Strategy of Social Movements in Nigeria**

Social movements in Nigeria face several challenges when trying to gain public support, including:

1. **Lack of awareness:** One of the biggest challenges for social movements in Nigeria is a lack of awareness about the issues they are advocating for. Many Nigerians may not be aware of the issues at stake and how it impacts on them or may not understand the significance of the movement's objectives.

2. **Political repression:** The Nigerian government has been known to crack down on social movements that challenge the political status quo. This can take the form of arrests, detentions, and other forms of intimidation that can make it difficult for social movements to gain public support and mobilize effectively.
3. **Divisions within civil society:** Civil society in Nigeria is diverse and often fragmented, with different organizations and groups pursuing their agendas. This can make it difficult for social movements to build coalitions and alliances that can amplify their voice and mobilize support from the public.
4. **Limited resources:** Social movements in Nigeria often operate on limited resources, which can make it challenging to organize and mobilize effectively. This can limit their ability to reach a wider audience and build support for their cause.
5. **Stigmatization:** Some social movements in Nigeria may face stigmatization from those who disagree with their objectives or do not understand their cause. This can make it challenging for social movements to gain public support and can limit their ability to mobilize effectively.

This work focused on examining social movements and how they operate based on the NSMT, with a focus on ENDSARS protests. Social movements require sustained and strategic organizing, as well as the building of strong coalitions and alliances to amplify the voice of the marginalized communities. While there have been failed movements, some eventually record successes in gaining public support and government response using key strategies. These strategies amplify the voice of the movement and raise awareness about their cause. Social movements in Nigeria gain support from the public through various means, including:

1. **Social media:** Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram have become powerful tools for social movements in Nigeria. They provide a platform for activists to reach a large audience and mobilize support for their cause. Social media campaigns such as hashtags, online petitions, and viral videos have been instrumental in raising awareness and mobilizing support for social movements in Nigeria.
2. **Grassroots organizing:** Social movements in Nigeria often begin as grassroots movements, with activists organizing in local communities to raise awareness and build support for their cause. This involves holding public meetings, rallies, and marches, as well as distributing flyers and other materials to educate people about the issues at stake.
3. **Solidarity, Building Alliances and Coalitions:** Social movements in Nigeria often build alliances, and coalitions, and gain support from other civil society organizations, human rights groups, and religious groups who share their values and objectives. This solidarity can take the form of joint statements, joint protests, and other forms of collaboration that amplify the voice of the movement.
4. **Celebrity endorsements:** Celebrities in Nigeria are often influential in shaping public opinion and can lend their support to social movements. This includes musicians, actors, and other public figures who use their platform to raise awareness and mobilize support for social movements. This was particularly prominent during the ENDSARS protests.
5. **Mainstream media:** Mainstream media outlets such as newspapers, radio, and television can also play a role in shaping public opinion and raising awareness about social movements. Interviews, news reports, and other forms of media coverage can help to amplify the voice of the movement and mobilize support from the public.
6. **Nonviolent resistance:** Many successful social movements in Nigeria have adopted nonviolent resistance tactics such as sit-ins, boycotts, and peaceful protests. These tactics can be powerful in demonstrating the strength and determination of the movement while also minimizing the risk of violence and repression though recently, the social movements have unleashed terror on those that defy their directives for boycotts.
7. **Strategic litigation:** Some social movements in Nigeria have used strategic litigation to achieve their objectives. This involves using legal action and court cases to challenge government policies and practices that are deemed unjust or unconstitutional. This strategy has

been used successfully by movements such as #EndImpunity, which seeks to end the culture of impunity in Nigeria.

Social movement theory's relevance to existential struggles in Nigeria will serve to highlight its generalizability or otherwise. Though there are several social movements in Nigeria, the prominent ones in recent times include the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) with members mainly from the Igbo ethnic group in the south-eastern part of Nigeria and some in the diaspora. Closely related to this is the agitation by the Niger Delta region which has several groups. The main ones are The Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF) and the Niger Delta Vigilantes (NDV) (Oguji, 2021). The Yoruba nation agitators began the EndSARS movement in the Southwest (Nwangwu, 2022), and then it spread to all geopolitical zones in the country and featured international collaboration including the former owner of Twitter, Jack Dorsey (PremiumTimes, 2020). This paper will present a conceptual framework of social movement theory and will then review it vis-à-vis a social movement that rocked the nation in 2020, #EndSARS.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK & METHODOLOGY – NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY (NSMT)**

NSMT seeks to explain why people come together to challenge power structures and demand change, as well as the processes and dynamics of collective action and social movements. The theory also assumes that social movements are not homogenous, but rather consist of diverse individuals and organizations with different goals, strategies, and ideologies. The predominantly Marxist perspective, which treats social movements as reflecting a fundamental struggle among classes organized around economic production, is what gave rise to the new social movement theory. The previous social revolutions were organized by official groups, centered on economic and political causes, and employed conventional forms of protest. Meanwhile, the new social movements concentrated on cultural and social issues, were more decentralized, varied, and used new methods such as social media and cultural resistance. It also acknowledges that social movements can have both positive and negative consequences and that the outcomes of social movements are shaped by a complex interplay of factors, including political context, organizational capacity, and strategic choices.

NSMT provides a methodology and framework for understanding the emergence, development, and outcomes of social movements. By analyzing the principles and core assumptions of social movement theory, researchers can gain insights into the dynamics of collective action and the factors that contribute to social change. Key principles and assumptions that underpin the theory include:

1. **Grievances:** Social movements emerge when people experience grievances or injustices that they perceive as intolerable and unjust. These grievances can be economic, social, political, or cultural.
2. **Mobilization:** Social movements require the mobilization of resources, including people, money, organizations, and networks, to achieve their goals. Mobilization involves organizing and coordinating collective action, such as protests, strikes, and boycotts.
3. **Framing:** Social movements use framing strategies to communicate their grievances and demands to a broader audience. Framing involves defining the problem, identifying the causes, and proposing solutions in a way that resonates with people's values and beliefs.
4. **Political Opportunity:** Social movements are influenced by political opportunities or constraints that affect their ability to achieve their goals. These opportunities or constraints can include changes in political regimes, changes in public opinion, or the availability of allies and resources.
5. **Repression:** Social movements often face repression from those in power who seek to maintain the status quo. Repression can take many forms, including violence, coercion, censorship, and surveillance.

NSMT is a communication theory that seeks to explain how social movements emerge, develop, and achieve their objectives. Hence it is used here to understand 'Existential struggles in Nigeria and Social

movements' with a focus on #ENDSARS. The fact that NSMT tends to minimize the tensions between various socioeconomic strata in society is one of its main criticisms. Different socioeconomic strata do exist, nevertheless, and they do clash with one another even in postmodern societies. The main advantages of NSMT are that it is decentralized, diverse, and makes use of social media. The effect of the #ENDSARS protest was greatly attributed to this.

### DISCUSSION: IMPLICATIONS OF THE NSMT IN THE #ENDSARS MOVEMENT

Using NSMT to discuss the #ENDSARS movement provides a framework for understanding how the social movement emerged, developed, and achieved its objectives. The theory highlights the importance of grassroots organizing, coalition-building, and strategic communication in mobilizing public support and achieving and framing the success of social movements and change. The success of the #ENDSARS movement can be attributed to the principles of the NSMT.

NSMT also recognizes the role of communication technologies, such as social media, in facilitating the spread of information, building networks, and mobilizing support for social movements. The #ENDSARS movement relied heavily on social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook to organize and mobilize supporters. The biggest feature of NSMT amplifiers is the use of New Technologies in the #ENDSARS movement. New communication technologies as well as resource mobilization and online/mobile banking technologies have opened new frontiers to social movements. The #End SARS movement started in 2017 as a Twitter campaign using the hashtag #EndSARS. Leaders of social movements deployed these new technologies in promoting their movements and in recruiting members. The new communications technologies also enabled capturing state brutality against citizens that created an upsurge in membership or sympathizers for the social movements as highlighted by George (2020). Social media was used to share the successes of the movement and sustain public interest in the movement. The funds' management technologies used like crowdsourcing, Paypal etc, facilitated resource mobilization for the social movement. The #EndSARS movement deployed these tools to grow their campaign and mobilize resources.

See table below showing the core assumptions in NSMT and the outcomes during #ENDSARS protests.

**TABLE 1**  
**IMPLICATIONS OF THE NSMT IN THE #ENDSARS MOVEMENT**

SN	NSMT Framework	Implications of the NSMT in the #ENDSARS Movement
1	Grievances	<p>One of the most significant social movements in Nigeria's history is #ENDSARS, a movement that started in 2017 was borne out of a grievance to protest police brutality and extrajudicial killings by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) of the Nigerian Police Force (Fabiya, 2023). The #ENDSARS movement gained momentum in October 2020, following the killing of a young man by SARS officers in Lagos. The incident sparked nationwide protests, with young people taking to the streets to demand an end to police brutality and the disbandment of SARS. The protests quickly spread to other parts of the country, and the movement gained international attention. The social movement aimed to end police brutality and reform the police force.</p> <p>The #ENDSARS movement in Nigeria is a case study that demonstrates the implications of this theory in the context of existential struggles in Nigeria and social movements. It gained significant support from Nigerians, both at home and in the diaspora via cash support and online videos calling the</p>

		government and police force to order. EndSARS activists were able to mobilize large-scale protests and civil disobedience in cities around the country for 2 weeks, 8 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> October, 2020.
2	Mobilization	<p>The movement began as a grassroots effort, with activists organizing in local communities to raise awareness about police brutality and the need for police reform. These grassroots organizing helped to build support for the movement and created a sense of community among supporters.</p> <p>The New Social Movement Theory (NSMT) also highlights the importance of strategic communication in mobilizing support and achieving social change. The #ENDSARS movement relied heavily on social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook to organize and mobilize supporters. They used social media to communicate with protest venues and get support for logistics.</p>
3	Framing	<p>NSMT emphasizes the importance of framing, or how social movements frame their objectives and messages to appeal to a wider audience. The #ENDSARS movement framed its message in terms of police brutality and corruption, which resonated with many Nigerians who had experienced or witnessed police brutality.</p> <p>The movement also built alliances with other civil society organizations and international organizations. The movement’s media posts, sustained protests and advocacy led to the disbandment of the SARS unit in the Nigeria Police Force. The police announce this via social media and a press briefing. The positioning of the movement demonstrated the potential for social movements in Nigeria to overcome challenges and achieve their objectives. They were successful in engaging the public via the media, building alliances, and adopting strategic and sustained organizing to amplify their voice and make change.</p> <p>Framing also helped the #ENDSARS movement in coalition-building, as different groups sought to identify with the vision after viewing ENDSARS agitators and police brutality online. The movement was able to build alliances with other human rights and religious groups who shared their values and objectives. This solidarity helped to amplify the voice of the movement and create a broader base of support.</p>
4	Political Opportunity	<p>The #ENDSARS movement was a significant social movement in Nigeria’s history; it impacted the international community and sparked discourse on issues of police brutality globally (CNN, 2020; PremiumTimes, 2020). The movement was significant because it challenged the Nigerian government’s authority and legitimacy (TIERS, 2020). The government responded to the protests with violence, using the military to disperse protesters and imposing a curfew in Lagos. The government also arrested and detained several protesters, including prominent activists. The government’s response drew widespread condemnation from the international community and further fuelled the protests.</p> <p>Despite the government’s efforts to suppress the movement, #ENDSARS succeeded in achieving some of its objectives. The government disbanded SARS and promised to reform the police force. The movement also sparked a national conversation about police brutality and the need for police reform.</p>



		<p>The #ENDSARS movement also exposed some of the challenges facing social movements in Nigeria. The movement lacked a clear leadership structure, which made it difficult to negotiate with the government and sustain the protests. The movement was also vulnerable to infiltration by political actors seeking to manipulate and exploit the protests for their interests.</p> <p>The success of the movement in achieving some of its objectives shows the potential for social movements to effect change in Nigeria, but it also underscores the need for sustained and strategic organizing.</p>
5	Repression	<p>The #ENDSARS movement was significant because it highlighted the existential struggles faced by young Nigerians. Many young people in Nigeria face high levels of unemployment, poverty, and insecurity, and they feel marginalized and excluded from the political process. The movement gave voice to these struggles and provided a platform for young people to demand change.</p> <p>The #EndSARS movement was able to overcome the challenge of political repression by using social media to organize and mobilize. The government could not stop the free-flow of information online about police brutality and government in-action.</p> <p>Media houses were sanctioned by the government for broadcasting the ENDSARS protests. Perceived leaders and some protesters in the social movement were arrested. The most controversial repression happened on October 20, 2020, when the world watched a live Instagram video featuring Nigerian military shooting protesters at Lekki Toll Gate in Lagos. The lights and the cameras at the tollgate were switched off when this incident occurred. The government denies the event and justice is still being sought by the victims. However, that incident quelled the physical ENDSARS protest gatherings.</p>

In conclusion, the success of the #ENDSARS movement in Nigeria can be attributed to the adoption of the principles of the New Social Movement Theory, including new technology optimization, grassroots organizing, coalition-building, strategic communication, and framing. The movement provides an important case study for understanding the implications of this theory in the context of existential struggles in Nigeria and social movements. It demonstrates the potential for social movements to overcome challenges and achieve their objectives through sustained and strategic organizing. #ENDSARS was further successful as a social movement in Nigeria because it used a combination of grassroots mobilization, social media campaigns, building alliances and coalitions, strategic litigation, and nonviolent resistance tactics to mobilize public support and achieve its objectives. These strategies require sustained and strategic organizing, as well as the building of strong coalitions and alliances to amplify the voice of marginalized communities.

## CONCLUSION

The #ENDSARS protest, which took place in Nigeria in October 2020, had a significant impact on the country. The social movement was in tandem with the core elements of the New Social Movement Theory (NSMT). The protest was a response to police brutality and the need for police reform in Nigeria, and it quickly gained momentum, leading to widespread demonstrations and civil disobedience across the country. The #ENDSARS protest as a social movement had a significant impact on Nigeria, raising awareness about police brutality, putting pressure on the government to reform the police force, inspiring

a new generation of young activists, and increasing engagement by civil society organizations and other stakeholders. This helped to raise awareness about the problem among Nigerians and the international community.

While the protest was marked by some violence and disruptions, it highlighted the power of peaceful protest and the potential for social change in Nigeria. The #ENDSARS protests put pressure on the Nigerian government to reform the police force. The government responded by disbanding the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), the unit responsible for many of the allegations of police brutality, and announced plans for police reform.

The #ENDSARS protest had a significant economic impact on Nigeria. The protests led to disruptions in economic activity, with businesses closing and supply chains being disrupted. The economic impact was particularly felt in Lagos, where many businesses were looted and vandalized during the protests.

The movement also gave rise to youth activism. The #ENDSARS protest was largely driven by young people, who used social media and other forms of activism to mobilize support for the movement. The protest highlighted the power of youth activism in Nigeria and inspired a new generation of young activists to demand change. The #ENDSARS protest and social movement also led to increased engagement by civil society organizations and other stakeholders in Nigeria. The protest brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including human rights groups, religious organizations, and business leaders, who worked together to demand police reform and accountability.

From a theoretical standpoint, it is important to note what the movement achieved. But more significant, is the fact that the movement disrupted the system and drew attention to what needs to be fixed in society, whilst leveraging technology. The use of new technology, especially social media, amplified the grievance, aided mobilisations, framing of the police, political reactions and government repression. The #EndSARS movement can be well situated in the NSMT with this position. The movement started with a single issue of police brutality but gathered people with other grievances as the days went by. When the government clamped down on them, it would appear that they have been defeated, however, they achieved something by demonstrating to the Nigerian people that with a collective will, they can take on the government and demand accountability. Social movements are springing up all over the world and Nigeria is not an exception.

## **Recommendations**

Social movements have the potential to significantly help in solving problems in Nigeria. Social movements are collective efforts by groups of people who come together to advocate for social change and challenge social injustices. They can be effective in bringing about change in Nigeria because they provide a platform for citizens to express their grievances, demand accountability, and push for policy reform. One of the significant problems in Nigeria that social movements have attempted to solve is political corruption. Corruption has been a significant challenge in Nigeria, and social movements have been instrumental in holding politicians accountable for their actions.

Social movements have also been effective in addressing human rights abuses, such as police brutality, in Nigeria, #ENDSARS, and helping to bring about positive change in the economy and society. It is important to note that social movements alone may not be sufficient to solve all of Nigeria's problems. Social movements can provide an important platform for citizens to express their grievances and demand change, but sustainable change also requires policy reform, institutional change, and political will. Therefore, it is crucial to have a coordinated effort between social movements, civil society organizations, the private sector, and the government to address the challenges facing Nigeria.

The advent of new technologies has changed the dynamics of social movement as shown in the New Social Movement Theory dynamics and EndSARS movement. Given the fast pace of the development of new technologies and the new frontiers that they create, scholars should anticipate that several existing theories will become obsolete soon and therefore require review. The traditional media stakeholders should recognize that not all members of a constituency or group in a social movement share all the tactics adopted by the social movement, and so should make an effort (as the fourth estate of the realm) to ensure that all the voices within that group are heard. The citizens, scholars and agitators should acquire new media

technology skills and become tech-savvy to raise their perspectives when the leaders of any social movement are not fully representing their views.

Given the findings of this study, all theories need to be revisited to examine the technological impact on their core principles. The human element, especially leader and follower dynamics for NSMT could be exploited further.

Like any developing nation, there are pending issues affecting society and daily living e.g., the recent removal of fuel subsidy on May 29, 2023. While the removal of fuel subsidies may not be considered an existential struggle in the same way as other issues in Nigeria, it is a significant issue that affects the lives of Nigerians and has implications for the country's economic and political stability. These existential issues affect the livelihood of the masses and can snowball into the formation of social movements. Therefore, the present government must approach its reform agenda carefully before it snowballs to agitations like the #ENDSARS protest. The Presidency must balance the need for fiscal responsibility and economic growth with the need to protect the interests of ordinary Nigerians and ensure social stability.

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