

Nonviolent Movement in the Covid-19 Era: Exploring the Role of Social Media among Youths in Nigeria

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Abstract

Nonviolent Movement (NM), otherwise known as people-power movement, always triggers massive protests or marches and demonstrations which are considered as 'symbolic methods' for social change. While the virus took the world by surprise, it did not deter youths in Nigeria to voice their displeasure against Police brutality and other social injustices in the country. This study collected data from secondary sources to explore the role played in the movement by social media. And findings indicate that the paradigm shift from physical protest to online protest and mobilization was not only frustrating to government but also forced it to violate the civil liberties of citizens, leading to what many described as "digital authoritarianism". The study also shows that, emergent technologies and social media do not deter nonviolent activists. Instead, the use of social media created diversity among participants and the opportunity to engage youths who would not usually support 'in-person nonviolent participation' during the demonstration.

Keywords: Covid-19, Nonviolence, Nonviolence Movement, Social-Media and Democracy

Introduction

Conflict is a phenomenon that is accepted as inevitable in any given society. Conflicts can have a variety of causes which may be political, economic, and cultural but they are always part of life in society. Since the United Nations was created 77 years ago, the nature of war and violence between states and terrorist groups has radically morphed (ACLD, 2021). In Africa, conflict is endemic and systemic. It is endemic because it is constantly present on the continent. It is also systemic because, the system, structures, and institutions in most African countries encourage conflict (Julia and Jonathan, 2021). Conflicts in Africa are largely the result of national governance crises, lack of dividends of democracy, and the failure of African governments to mediate conflict effectively. In the Sahel region, both Burkina Faso and Mali's administrations are fragile, as seen by the spike in violence this year in both nations.

Meanwhile, Nigeria has long been celebrated as one of the leading African countries with a promising potential for political and socio-economic development as well as success in the international community. However, these lofty expectations have not been met largely because of state weakness and what some would call the 'state failure' in critical areas of national governance (Uzonwanne, 2013:15; Yagboyaju, and Akinola, 2019:4). This poor governance is reflected in the hapless social and physical infrastructure exemplified by chronic power shortage, the deplorable state of the road despite the huge investment, poor healthcare system, poor educational institutions and facilities which have resulted in frequent industrial actions by labor unions, high unemployment, and generally poor service delivery in all spheres of national life leading to socio-political instability and discontentment.

In Nigeria, the level of insecurity is challenging the foundation of the country. With every attack, human lives are lost or people are permanently harmed, and trust in democracy and the country is decreasing daily. Since the beginning of Nigeria's newest and lucrative business of abduction in March 2020, at least 1409 pupils have been abducted from their classrooms (Sbmintel, 2021). The kidnapping in Zamfara state is one among the 19 cases in which 17 instructors and teachers, together with their kids, were kidnapped and at least

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₦220 million ransom was paid (Sbmintel, 2021). Sadly enough, 16 of the victims have died during incarceration.

The late sage, Chinua Achebe, correctly concluded, that Nigeria's problem is simply and squarely a failure of leadership. He also explained that there is nothing wrong with Nigerians, their culture, water, climate, or anything else. He went on to predict that Nigeria's problem is the 'unwillingness and inability of its leaders to rise to the responsibility, to the challenge of personal example, which are the hallmarks of a true leader' (Achebe, 1983:1). The inability of Nigerian citizens to enjoy the dividends of democracy and the gross extortion and violation of human rights by the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and its counterparts have made courageous and determined citizens resort to

the use of nonviolence, or to organize Nonviolent Movement (NM) such as sit-in, protest, strikes, symbolic colour painting, boycotts, mass-petition and so on to ‘force’ a social-political change in all parts of the country. This paper refers to nonviolence as the technique of attaining peaceful social change through symbolic demonstrations, civil disobedience, political and economic non-cooperation, and other tactics. The year 2019 saw a wave of mass mobilization expressed through nonviolent means. For instance, the Global Climate Strikes that involve over 7.6 million participants from different countries is a good example (Laux, 2021).

Despite the hundreds of mass mobilizations that were done nonviolently, the outbreak of coronavirus in late 2019 and early 2020 harmed symbolic demonstrations. This of course is buttressed by the belief that the outbreak of the pandemic may hinder the participation and success rate of nonviolence which may be difficult to achieve without defying physical distancing and Covid-19 lockdown protocols that were set up by different governments of the world. Interestingly, Nonviolent Movement (NM) is always accompanied by a ‘participatory component’ in which the exhibition of personal, group or institutional sacrifice enhances socio-political changes. As the virus closed certain doors of participation, other doors such as shifting protest online became more broadly open, and nonviolent activists must be innovative in adopting means that do not require physical contact.

Conceptual Framework

Conflict: The concept of conflict has been studied and reviewed by different scholars, politicians, diplomats, and conflict management practitioners. Despite this conceptual review, there is no consensus on the definition of the concept. The reason for this assertion is that disputes differ greatly based on the culture of a specific civilization (Onouha, 2011). In a simple form, conflict is known to be any form of tension felt when one individual believes his or her desire or aspirations are going to be hindered or disappointed. Conflict is described as a mismatch of objectives or values between two or more participants in a relationship, along with attempts to dominate each other and antagonistic sentiments toward each other.

While looking at the definition from the perspective of the people, Chadan (1995) noted that conflict is defined as the practice of disagreeing on public problems that impact the lives of groups, primarily over the methods and objectives of their mutual connections, various interests, and beliefs, as well as their institutions and organizations. In a similar vein to the preceding point, conflict is defined as a disagreement between or among two or more nations, persons, groups, or organizations attempting to achieve acceptance of one’s ideas or aims over those of others (Pinto da Costa and Oliveria, 2019). Most definitions of conflict defined it as the pursuit of incompatible goals. It is on this premise that Ezemenaka and Ekumaoko (2018) view conflict as a disagreement in the pursuit of incompatible or conflicting requirements, desires, ideas, interests, or individuals. Thus, to these scholars, conflict tends to occur when people or groups meet goals that neither party can achieve satisfactorily.

A completely different definition was given by Salihu and Yahaya (2020). They emphasized that conflict is a “process that begins when one party thinks another party has negatively impacted or is about to negatively impact something that the first party cares about”. This definition forced more on perception rather than facts of human interactions as the basis of conflict in society. To be in conflict implies being opposed to one another.

It refers to a conflict between individuals or members of an organization. This type of dispute is present in all human interactions.

In another definition, Apuwabi (2018), defined conflict as the pursuit of incompatible interests and goals by different groups. Armed conflict is the resort to the use of force and armed violence in the pursuit of incompatible and particular interests and goals. The worst form of armed conflict is mass murder and genocide against unarmed civilians. A typical example of mass murder is the killing of 72 people in Benue state in 2018 in a fight between nomadic herdsmen and farmers (Bukola and Busari, 2022). Conflict resolution scholars have also argued that conflict has an ontological basis in human needs and it is the denial that causes violent conflicts or causes re-solvable differences to degenerate into armed violence and conflict. The conception of conflict, its management, and its resolution have led to terms such as conflict prevention, peacemaking, and peacekeeping

From the above definitions, it can be deduced that conflict may be defined as a contradiction or dispute between two or more parties caused by misunderstandings, and rivalry for resources, power, and prestige. However, human society's experience has proven that there are degrees of variance in disputes. Conflict may take many different shapes. That is, its nature varies greatly, ranging from nonviolent grievance expression to structural problems and injustice, to blatant use of physical force or violence.

Specifically, depending on the conditions, the parties participating in the conflict, and the methods used to resolve disagreements or conflict, the parties involved in the conflict might range from relatively calm institutionalized ethnic conflicts to violent struggle, civil war, and ethnic cleansing (Shawn, 2017). Thus, poor communication, rivalry for positioning, common but limited resources, contradictory objectives and wants, inequality and social discrimination, access to competitive possibilities, or increasing desire for dominance, power, or status are all possible drivers of conflict (Andrea et al, 2018).

The Concept of Nonviolence

In order to understand the concept of nonviolence, it is imperative to associate nonviolence with historical events such as India's independence struggle prior to August 15, 1947, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, and the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa in 1994. Nonviolence has also been linked to historical figures such as Mahatma Gandhi of India, Martin Luther King Jr, Nelson Mandela, Aung San Suu Kyi, and the late John Lewis. All of them have the tremendous advantage of providing instances that identify paradigms or phases of development that are unique and distinct from other ideological models that are contemporary with the dominating narrative of violence (Powers et al, 1997).

Many academics, diplomats, and practitioners have also defined nonviolence. It is imperative to understand that nonviolence has two closely related meanings. In the first place, it can be referred to as a broad concept of abstaining from violence for moral or religious reasons. Secondly, it can relate to people's peaceful behavior. *The Oxford Dictionary* defined nonviolence as "the employment of nonviolent means, rather than force, to effect political or social change" (Oxford Dictionary, 2022). In other words, civil resistance or nonviolent action is the technique of accomplishing goals without resorting to violence. This is done through mass protests, symbolic demonstrations, civil disobedience, economic or political noncooperation, and other means.

As the name implies, nonviolence or nonviolent action is active, that is, it involves a collective activity in the pursuit of social or political objectives. It is nonviolence because these actions or movements do not support the physical use of force or the threat of physical force(s) against human beings. Specifically, Kurt (2003) explained that nonviolence entails an active process of applying political, economic, social, emotional, or moral pressure to the wielding of power in contentious interactions between collective actors.

In an article entitled, *“Gandhi’s Nonviolence Concept: A Panacea for Peaceful Coexistence in Contemporary Nigeria”*, (Aremu, 2020) defined the concept of nonviolence in two different ways. Firstly, the author sees nonviolence as avoiding the utilization of physical violence particularly as a way of objection or protest. Secondly, she affirmed that nonviolence is the choice of flexibility from physical violence. She draws her conclusion that nonviolence is a philosophy that is deeply rooted in the idea that “God is harmless”. Nonviolence is directly the negation of physical violence. It entails the use of peace to bring social and political change.

One of the founding scholars of the concept defined nonviolence as the personal habit of being innocuous to oneself and others in all circumstances. It refers to a general concept of abstinence from violence based on moral, religious, or spiritual grounds and stems from the conviction that harming people, animals, or the environment is unnecessary to attain a goal (Sharp, 2012). In another definition, (Odey, 2018) defined nonviolence as the act of “resisting injustice” as a response to social demonstrations or a protest against injustice.

Nonviolent action is non-institutional. This means that it operates outside the bounds of the institutions and it is commonly associated with civil resistance. The fundamental principles of nonviolence include refraining from employing physical force to attain a goal or an objective, as well as active participation in fighting oppression, elite dominance, and other types of injustice. As a result, it may be used to resist both direct physical violence and systemic violence (Beckman, 2015).

From the foregoing, this paper concludes that nonviolence is a peaceful technique of waging conflict using active, nonviolent means such as sit-ins, boycotts, strikes, civil disobedience, satire and so on to achieve a goal. Nonviolence is a way of life for activists. Thus, people who live a peaceful style of life express their lives in a certain way based on strong ideals about living a virtuous existence. Cautiously, this idea, nevertheless, does not indicate that all peaceful activities should be nonviolent. Nonviolence may be characterized as a direct alternative to violent behavior: it comprises the deliberate avoidance of violence in the context of conflict between two or more opponents (Francis, 2018).

Nigeria: An Overview of Structural Conflicts

Structural conflict in Nigeria is a severe societal disturbance that compels the present system to adapt or modify dramatically to satisfy the alienated and unsatisfied. With special relevance to Nigeria, the structural crisis is manifested in persistent social conflicts that have continued to threaten national integration and unity due to the difficulty of unequal resource distribution and some of the problems such as poverty, mismanagement, police brutality, ethno-religious upheavals, political unrest, boundary

disputes, and weak management, to name a few, that encourage and exacerbate conflicts in the country (Okafor, 2003).

Johan Galtung (1990) explained that the core of the structural conflict is that, conflicts are built into society in the form of ‘political and economic exclusion, injustice, poverty, illness, exploitation, inequality, and others, as sources of conflict’. These causes of conflicts are deeply embedded in the social structure and can have negative repercussions since they are politically and economically oppressive in the form of exclusionary and discriminating actions towards specific groups (Ademola, 2006). The depth of the disputes and conflagrations that have accompanied the Nigeria’s post-independence social interactions indicates that Nigeria is facing an exceedingly significant structural problem. These manifest as a perceived lack of true federalism and regional autonomy; resource/tax control; the national revenue allocation formula; the establishment of state police forces; the implementation of Shariah criminal law in certain northern Nigerian states; and calls for a national conference as evidence of the country’s structural conflicts.

The Nigerian society is a social structure characterized by contentious demands for few resources, particularly in the political and economic spheres. It is a civilization characterized by national schisms and man-made conflicts. National ethnic group membership and occupational specialties are challenged by the growing interest of other multiple users in the same or adjacent ecological zones, which creates the conditions for conflict to arise (Orluwene, 2018). The severity or scale of violence, demographic explosion, social fragmentation and decay, sectarian upheaval, communalization of political practice, catastrophic imbalance between ethnic groups, economic and political fissures and suppressions, and explication of primordial and class interests are always on the rise. These structural issues contributed to the violent Nigerian civil war as well as other violent conflicts like the Ife-Modakeke conflict, the Jos-Plateau conflict, the Kaduna dispute, the Kafanchan conflict, the Zango-Kataf conflict, the Tiv-Jukun/Fulani conflict, the Aguleri-Umuleri conflict, and the Ezza-Ezzilo conflict and others.

The structural conflicts have also manifested in agitations by the Movement for the Actualization of the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), the Maitatsine uprising and various violent extremisms in Northern Nigeria, including the Boko Haram insurgency, the secessionist agitations and the Niger Delta crises, which have raged in various forms for over five decades. It might be argued that systemic violence began with the discovery of commercially viable oil resources in the Olobiri village in present-day Bayelsa state in 1958. This and other discoveries fueled what the ‘father of peace’ called characterizes as the “unavoidable impairment of essential human wants,” or “the impairment of human existence that lowers the real degree to which someone is able to fulfill the needs below that which would otherwise be feasible” (Sändig, 2018).

This was due to the fact that oil activities began with little respect for the difficulty that the marshy terrain and fragile ecosystem would offer to countries if disrupted, and second, no thought was given to ultimate loss (Majekodunmi, 2015). Significantly, these crises followed a distinct pattern that called into question basic structural concerns pertaining to the country’s budgetary, governance, security, and constitutional systems. However, it is clear that the worries are not necessarily related to public policies or institutional frameworks, but rather to the implementation of public policies and the administration of institutional frameworks.

Theoretical Framework

Structural Conflict Theory: The structural conflict theory attempts to explain how conflict originates as a result of tensions that arise when societies struggle for scarce resources. In other words, the idea holds that, conflict has snuck into or is being constructed into society as a result of the way society is structured or organized. This theory has two main sub-orientations. First is the radical theory represented by the Marxist school of thought with exponents like Fredrick Engel, Karl Marx and Lenin. The second school of thought is the liberal structuralism which is represented by Scarborough, Ross and Johan Galtung's famous work on structural violence (Siregar, 2022). It is sometimes similar to transformative theory, which addresses the reactions of individuals, groups, cultures, institutions and society to change. It further sees incompatible interests based on competition for resources, which in most cases are assumed to be scarce, as being responsible for social conflicts (Charles and Goodnews, 2022).

The main argument of the structural conflict theory is that, conflict is built into the particular ways societies are structured and organized. The theory looks at social problems like political and economic exclusion, injustice, poverty, diseases, exploitation and inequality as a source of conflict. The structuralists maintain that conflicts occur because of the exploitative and unjust nature of human societies, domination of one class by another and so on. This case is made by radical scholars like Marx, Engels, Mao Tse Tung and others who blame capitalism for being an exploitative system based on its relations of production and the division into the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Thus, the exploitation of the proletariat and the lower class under capitalism creates conflict (Sanyaolu and Chidozie, 2014).

The structuralists present factors such as those listed above as the major motivating factors that explain the emergence of destructive conflicts between individuals and groups. In most cases, problems of overpopulation, economic underdevelopment, unintegrated social and political institutions, as well as demographic factors that put pressure on human settlements and available resources are the main factors responsible for the emergence of internal conflict (Fiori, et al, 2021). Liberal structuralists alike propounded the theory of positive and negative peace to buttress how structural conflict can occur in the society. It is for this reason that the structuralists call for the elimination of structural defects with policy reforms. It must also be noted that the emphasis of the structuralists theory is on how the competing interests of groups tie conflict directly into the social, economic, and political organization of society, as well as the nature and strength of social networks within and between community groups. For instance, in a situation where economic and political discrimination and weak kinship ties are the defining characteristics of a society, the chances that negative conflict are higher than in situations where the conditions are the exact opposite. In other words, when social, political, economic and cultural processes are monopolized by a group, it creates conditions that make people to adopt adversarial approaches to conflict (Siregar, 2022).

Meanwhile, the structural conflict theory has been criticized by a variety of groups and academics throughout the years. Although the theory investigates the power dynamics that cause social and economic inequality in many situations, it has been criticized for its emphasis on change and disregard for societal stability. In reality, some critics recognize that societies are always changing, but point out that most of it is modest or gradual rather than revolutionary. Tukumbi (2020) also argued that the theory focuses too much on the economic causes of conflict, ignoring other types of "non-economic" conflict. Another criticism of this theory is how it disregards many social institutions such as family, education, religion, politics, and so on play important roles in society or might

collaborate to establish a balance. It is for this reason that the concept of functionalism is seen as alternative view.

Analytical Framework

Covid-19 and Social Media Activism during End SARS Protest in Nigeria: There was a global surge of nonviolent resistance in 2019 as people mobilized in response to the mounting environmental disaster and huge questions about democracy across the world. The Covid-19 epidemic, which began in the early months of year 2020 crippled most economy of the world, appears to have seriously disturbed the nonviolent movement itself, despite the fact that the most powerful techniques of peaceful resistance frequently entail disruption. Many forms of structural and cultural violence in our society have been brought to light by the epidemic that may not have been so apparent previously. Although the spread of the virus has shut down the physical aspect of communication and demonstrations, it has opened up others, prompting the need for nonviolent activists to become inventive with their strategies. One option is to take the fight or struggle to the social media. There may be new ways to contact and engage individuals who do not often come to join or support in-person demonstrations, rallies and marches, given that many people are working from home and spending more time in front of screens during the epidemic (Ogele, 2022).

The introduction of social media and globalization in Nigeria has helped to break the hegemony and monopoly of the media. New types of grassroots public relations, such as those carried out through participatory networks have emerged as a result of this “social media”. Social media gives people alternate news sources, avoiding traditional media outlets, and many people in Nigeria may now rely only on media platforms for their information. Political figures' support for social media is indicative of its domination, as seen by Goodluck Jonathan who in 2010 declared his presidential bid on Facebook (Ugbada, 2019).

Relatedly, the exclusionary approach by the government to running the state is no longer as successful at the moment, in large part because digital networks have emerged as a crucial instrument for raising awareness, organizing people, and igniting progressive change and discussions. Youth and adults in Nigeria are becoming more politically aware, and as a result, they are relying more on media platforms to express their opinions and gather information (Opeibi, 2019). They utilize social media channels to spread dissident political viewpoints in order to demand their rights to democratic elections, open governance, injustice, police brutality and an end to corruption. The hashtags such as #Bringbackourgirls, #PoliceReform, #RevolutionNow, #NottooYoungtoRun, #OccupyNigeria and #EndSARS, have been used to highlight some of these problems on media platforms. The rapid transmission of information and the organization of the people for peaceful demonstrations may both be attributed to social media. Social movement groups heavily rely on the internet to improve planning and mobilization efforts when planning large-scale street protests (Carty, 2018).

Clearly related to this, hashtags on social media may be used to bring awareness to certain issues and openly target particular populations. This was especially true during the EndSARS demonstrations when celebrities were criticized for not supporting the demonstrators. It is sufficient to say that social media has played a significant role in the twenty-first century in terms of mobilizing demonstrators, undermining the legitimacy of governments, and drawing attention to their misdeeds on a local and global scale. With many young population voicing out against police brutality and unfairness on social media

as part of the End SARS campaign, Nigerian politics has entered a new age. The current online and physical protests have gained the necessary momentum thanks to increased young participation on social media and the dissemination of information. The mobilization tools of media platforms which have captured the attention of young people will effectively make planning protests practically impossible without them, especially with the rising downsizing of internet-enabled technologies (Murthy, 2018).

To many public analysts, the early level of demonstrations and popularity was greatly influenced by the intense use of Twitter and other social networking platforms. The End SARS movement's online and offline involvement procedures followed the stages of social media-based protest. The processes comprise the use of social media for communication and mobilization, provoking events, media coverage, physical response as well as physical protest. As shown in the creation of supplementary hash tags like #Endpolicebrutality, and #EndSARS, the above steps constitute an instance of a virtual political agitation, which is a significant driver for physical protest. Whether digital networks or online demonstrations translate to actual protests has been questioned by some authors. While some said that online activism does not provide media platforms users a feeling of belonging and that it disintegrates rapidly, others argued that the social media is merely a forum for ideological debate and does not encourage individuals to get involved in true popular movements (Stewart, 2019).

Hwang and Kim (2015) in their study found that the use of media platforms impacts the motivation to take part in social movements and also helps to improve the aforementioned intention by providing the necessary impetus. This was supported by Chilwa (2012) who proposed that citizens who are associated with individuals who are extremely responsive to communication systems on social movement participation have higher intentions to actively engage in a physical mass movement because they have a wider network of bridging social capital. As a result of their members' online activism, three main groupings have emerged. These groupings include "internet warriors," who are more inclined to participate in intense radical discourse online without committing to or participating in actions offline. The bulk of End SARS demonstrators who offered their voices to make the issue trend but were not present on the demonstration grounds reflect this group. The famous people were not permitted, though, as they were asked to assume participatory roles on the demonstration grounds (Ofori-Parku and Moscato, 2018)

There is a second group of people who support a "radical shift" by working to transform changes in the way people interact with one another. These are the people that organized the demonstrations and helped Nigerians in need by giving them artificial limbs and financial support. And as is the case with activists who coordinated on Twitter and were active on the demonstration grounds, the third category, known as "facilitating," mixes several forms of activity, such as online and offline protests. In addition, these people raised money, sought out and provided medical assistance, and placed themselves in harm's way to resist police harassment in the course of the protests (Kennedy et al, 2020).

Even while this study argues that media platforms appear to be a potent instrument for some types of activism, this author believe that it may not certainly have an equal impact on all forms of citizen protest. Moreover, while large-scale political and social protests can benefit from the involvement and interaction of people through online platforms, some smaller-scale movements in the community and the workplace help learners through physical commitments that do not necessitate quite enough support mobilization (Edward, 2021).

Digital Authoritarianism as a Response of the Government

The fundamental principle of digital authoritarianism is the idea that the media must respect and adhere to, as well as serve the interests of the government in charge of the country. The threats posed by digital authoritarianism in both democratic and dictatorial regime are interconnected and growing. Over the past ten years, the constantly changing strategies and methods of digital authoritarianism among states have boosted the goals of repressive states while undermining democratic values, civil liberties, human rights, and social liberties. Feldstein (2021) explained that, state's resolve to regulate transmission of communication and information in the digital era is a major factor in the global trend toward digital authoritarianism, with mainstream media suffering the severity of this tendency.

Almansur (2014) correctly asserts that, from the colonial period to the end of military rule in 1999 and the beginning of the democratic system in 1999 and till the present day, every government in Nigeria has tried to stifle or restrict the press in some manner. Laws, police patrols, media prohibitions and shutdown, and other security mechanism, including the destruction of property in some states, have all been used by different regimes as tools of control. Citizens in so-called democracies where the press is not really free are at a higher risk of being assaulted than those in more truly democratic states.

In the case of Nigeria, social media has until recently given genuine opportunities for productive interactions between individuals, citizens and analysts on important developmental concerns and democratic government. But a succession of legislative and regulatory measures aimed at reducing civic space have changed the country's digital democracy. For example, the introduction of the "Social Media Bill" in 2016 during the eighth Legislative Until recently, social media in Nigeria served as genuine forums for civil discourse on pressing matters of national development and democratic administration. In spite of this, the country's digital democracy has been influenced by a succession of legislative and policy measures aimed at reducing the digital civic space (Ayalew, 2021). Nonetheless, the Assembly was welcomed with fierce public discussion and demonstrations. The Digital Rights Bill was not signed into law in 2019 by President Muhammadu Buhari because it "covers too many technical areas and fails to address any of them thoroughly.

The purpose of the Bill was to guarantee the privacy and security of Nigerians when they use the Internet. On November 5, the Senate proposed the "Protection against Internet Falsehood and Manipulation Bill 2019," the latest iteration of the Social Media Bill. The Senate has declared they would not be taking any more action on the Social Media Bill until 2020. The End SARS demonstrations that shook the nation prompted lawmakers to rethink the Bill's chances of passing after it had been delayed by the outbreak covid-19 parliamentary process. As a result of the End SARS demonstrations that began on Twitter, states leaders in the country have been calling for restriction to be placed on the usage of social media. As the country moves toward the general elections in 2023, the Twitter ban and other examples of digital authoritarianism reveal a bigger political game plan now emerging (Essien et al, 2022).

As the authorities cracks down on Twitter, publishing comments on Twitter itself will be considered criminal behavior. The aftermath of it is the threat posed by the authorities to punish Twitter users. The proclamation followed reports that Nigerians were using Virtual Private Network (VPN) software to access Twitter despite the restriction placed on the

service by their country's network providers. A London-based watchdog, reported an increase in demand for these firewall-evading programs of more than 1,400% on the weekend following the ban. A prohibition on media platforms would not be unprecedented in Africa, and Nigeria would not be the first government to do so. There have been parallel developments in other nations, such as Chad, which ended its 16-month social media ban in July 2019. The authorities justified the extended prohibition by citing security concerns. Lastly, it must be noted that, the emergence of digital authoritarianism stems from the state's 'will' to monitor, restrict, and manipulate the internet media. This illustrates why so many countries have implemented policies to restrict the circulation of information into and out of their territories and to separate their "domestic" internet from the rest of the internet (Akinyetun and Ebonine, 2022).

Conclusion and Recommendation

This paper is focus on nonviolent movement in the covid-19 era and it also explores the role of social-media among youths in Nigeria. The End SARS protesters eventually called for the dismantling of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), whose methods were seen as threatening to the lives and property of its victims most of whom are youth. When the government abolished SARS and replaced it with SWAT, the demonstrators had accomplished their primary goal. However, the demonstrators diverted attention from their original objective. The paper contributes new insights to the ongoing discussion about the efficacy of social media in shaping public policy and promoting democratic reform in Nigeria in a nonviolent way. The findings reaffirmed the need of defending and expanding media freedom and basic human rights in the digital media domain in Nigeria. The paper conclude that the leadership and executive arm of government in Nigeria cannot unilaterally restrict the freedom of expression in the social media space without adhering to the provisions of the constitution. The paper recommends that, nonviolent activists as well as participants should consider more innovative ways to express their commitment to participants. Nonviolent activists should employ novel nonviolent techniques to highlight the injustice or brutality of preemptive repression.

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