SECURITY OF LIVES, RIGHTS TO PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY AND THE ENDSARS PROTEST IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Every country has a constitution, in which human rights are enshrined, but it appears that even with the constitution stipulating such rights; human rights are still questionable. This study investigated Human security and the rights to peaceful assembly and association, the study evaluated the combined effect of constitutional human rights on the security of lives in Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey design of ex-post-facto to provide a relevant and accurate explanation at one or more points in time. The Snowball sampling technique was used to select 100 identified participants of the End SARS protest. Data obtained were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0. The findings revealed that the constitutional right to freedom of expression has a positive effect on the security of lives in Nigeria (Beta=.968, t=37.436, p<0.05). Finally, the constitutional right to life, right to freedom of expression, and right to peaceful assembly and association have combined positive effects on security of life in Nigeria (Beta=1.008, t=16.737, p<0.05). In conclusion, this empirical study established the facts in the literature about the inability of government and its various agencies to secure the fundamental human rights of each individual in its jurisdiction leading to the violations of such human rights, Thus, relevant authorities such as; National Human Right Commission (NHRC), Public Complaints Commission (PCC) should continuously educate the masses of their rights and limits.

KEYWORDS: Human Security, Human Rights, End SARS Protest, Police

Introduction

One of the basic necessities of man as postulated by Abraham Maslow's "Hierarchy of needs" is security.This scholarly work emphasized that man cannot proceed to the next rung of the ladder of needs if lower-level needs are not met. This perhaps explains the dismal level of productivity Nigeria is presently experiencing as a Nation. It is established in Literaturethat the primary duty of any government is to guarantee the security of hercitizens' lives. The quest for security has been a critical andforemost issuein Nigeria where the media is replete with a worrisome frequency of reported cases that suggest a breach in the security of lives (Lester, 2013).

Human security is a critical component of Human rights; therefore, the essence of having a democratic government includes the fact that through its practices, human lives are secure, free from dangers, attacks, and threats to life and able to live meaningfully. In the context of this study security of lives is concerned with formulating and implementing necessary policies that ensure the safeguard and protection of people's vital freedoms- that is, 'freedom from want' and 'absence of fear' (Ezemenake, 2021).It requires both defending people from critical and pervasive threats and empowering them to take charge of their own lives.Situations or incidents that affect the security of human persons may be seen as detrimental to the society as well.

Lately, there has been great concern about the mass exodus of highly skilled citizens of Nigeria to more secure climes, resulting in a brain drain. The importance of individual safety cannot be underestimated; the awareness of safety has psychological and physical effects on the average man, and this translates to innovations, a stable income, habitable housing, clothing, and food supply as part of the predictability of daily life, protection from crime, and even physical wellbeing. It is believed by many people that insecurity and instability affect many lives more than imagined, whether through crime and violence, conflict, or through unresponsive, corrupt, and abusive security actors such as the police (Enweremadu, 2016). The security of individuals is seen as a moral right and intrinsic to development (AusAID, 2012). A high level of security leads to development, further promoting peace in the society (Stewart, 2004). Insecurity, which is mostly an offshoot of deeper issues, increases the susceptibility of communities to conflicts and unrest.Conversely, security expedites the prevention of violent conflict and post-conflict reconstruction.

The importance of the security of life propelled the United Nations' declaration of fundamental human rights in 1900. This declaration was further guaranteed and elaborated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations in 1948. Further, every country's constitution states the right to the security of human lives. Accordingly, entrenched in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (1999) are the human rights of both Nigerian citizens and aliens.

However, the continuous violation and torture of innocent Nigerians by the country's security operatives has posed a threat to the security of human lives in the State. Ironically, this personnel that took the oath to protect citizens have become threats to the existence of the people. According to Siyaidon (2021) Nigeria is a signatory to several International Human Rights Treaties, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, unanimously adopted and proclaimed by the United Nations, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, among others.

Under international law, Nigeria is obligated to uphold and enforce the rights protected under the International Human Rights Treaties that it has ratified.Although the 1999 Constitution of the country guarantees the right to life of every Nigerian citizen except where such a citizen has been sentenced to death by a Court of Law or where Law enforcement agents are defending the life/property of another citizen or seeking to prevent the escape of persons in lawful detention, or in the course of suppressing a violent protest, it is evident that leaders of the same country that signed to ensure the security of lives of its citizens and non-citizens watch its "law enforcement agencies" violate the same law they were set up to enforce (Aniche, 2021).

The security situation of the Nigerian State has reached an alarming; there is a global concern and public outcry regarding the increase in general insecurity and in cases of human rights infractions and violations. These violations occur in the forms of unlawful arrest and detention, arbitrary killings, harassment, forced disappearances, and infringement of citizens' rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and freedom of association, particularly against the youths who are displeased with the high rate of corruption, improper governance and lack of employment opportunities. The Nigerian security agencies are seen to act unabatedly against the very people they were set up to protect.

This study is beaming the spotlight on the "End SARS" protest that reportedly took the lives of some youths, disfigured others, and brought sorrow to many families as a clear example ofsecurity operatives' inhumanity against man. Grievously, the constitution that is supposed to protect the rights of the people appeared incapacitated to guarantee the security of human lives in a democratic State such as Nigeria. A situation where harmless youths that were exercising their right to peaceful protest got massacred (Ibekwe, 2021; Bakare, 2021) calls for questions such as: Are human lives still valuable in Nigeria? Can the constitution be depended upon? And so on.

A situation where Security agents' brutality persists, and there are no commensurate efforts by the government to abate them calls for concern. Relentless assaults against innocent citizens may result in many (especially youths) seeking an unlawful

way to obtain redress, including possessing illegal arms, taking revenge on security operatives, and resisting arrests, to mention but a few.

This empirical study focuses on the right to life, freedom of expression, and peaceful assembly and association as was exercised by the protesters (Nigerian Citizens) of "End SARS," whose rights were violated by the Nigerian security forces.

Thestudy's general objective is to examine the effect of constitutional human rights on the security of Nigerian citizens' lives achieve this aim; th specific objectives are to:

1. Investigate the effect of the constitutional right to peaceful assembly and association on the security of lives in Nigeria; and
2. Evaluate the combined effect of constitutional human rights on the security of lives in Nigeria.

Conceptual Review

Human Rights Abuse in Nigeria

Human rights may be described as one of the most important concepts in this era. Activists, governments, and corporations apply the term to draw on a collective understanding that all individuals deserve certain rights and freedoms. No matter who a person is, where they come from, what they believe, or how they live, everyone has rights that cannot be taken away.

Human rights are the fundamental features of any true democratic setting because the essence of democracy itself is based on the idea of human rights. Human rights are mostly viewed as the undisputable rights of people (Enebe, 2008). They are legitimate rights that citizenscan enjoy without fear of other citizens or the government. Human rights are those rights that cannot be said to have been given to man by man but are earned by man for being a human because they are necessary for his continuous happy existence with himself and his fellow man and for participation in a complex society (Cranston, 2018).

Human rights are the fundamental features of any true democratic setting because the essence of democracy itself is based on the idea of human rights.Eze (1987) sees human rights as rights that all human beings have by their humanity, such as the right to life, dignity of the human person, personal liberty, fair hearing, and freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. These rights provide a common standard of behaviour among the international community. They are natural, rational, inviolable, and unalterable, the deprivation of which would constitute a grave affront to one's sense of justice.

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria highlights the following as rights of the citizens of the country: (i) right to life; (ii) right to dignity of the human person; (iii) right to personal liberty; (iv) right to fair hearing; (v) right to private and family life; (vi) right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; (vii) right to freedom of expression and the press; (viii) right to peaceful assembly and association; (ix) right to freedom of movement; (x) right to freedom from discrimination on the grounds of ethnic group, place of origin, the circumstance of birth, sex, religion or political opinion; and

(xi) right to property and compensation for property compulsorily acquired.

Similarly, the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights addresses matters on torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatments of citizens and its prevention in Africa. The importance of legislation against torture and cruel treatments cannot be overemphasized and article 4 and 5 of the African Charter spells out that; "human beings are inviolable. Every human being shall be entitled to respect for his life and the integrity of his person. No one may be arbitrarily deprived of this right" (Human Rights Watch, 2018).

Relatedly, the Universal Declaration of the United Nations in 1948 declared an increase in the protection of human rights, including the right to life, within the United Nations. The preamble of the U.N. Declaration on Human Rights states; "Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice, and peace in the world." It is submitted that human beings shall enjoy the freedom of speech and belief, and freedom from fear and want has been proclaimed as the highest aspiration of the common people (Gane-McCalle, 2009).

Human Rights to Assemble

Human rights abuses and violations in Nigeria cut across the entire spectrum of rights but the scope of this study is limited to the right to life, freedom of expression, and right to peaceful assembly and association. The right to life covers issues such as extrajudicial killings by State agents, imposition of the death penalty, and enforced disappearance. The right to life is protected in the core national constitution, regional and universal human rights instruments.All things being equal, it is expected that the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria should ensure that the right of citizens are spelt out and ensure their protection, with the security operatives being an instrument to accomplish this. The question is whether the constitution can protect individual rights? And whether or not security officers know the constitutional rights of the citizens before they assault them?

Every individual has the right to freedom of expression. This right includes the freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority. The issue is whether the constitution is capacitated to guarantee the right to freedom of expression without the life of the individuals being threatened.

The right to peaceful assembly protects the right of individuals and groups to meet for a common purpose or to exchange ideas and information, to express their views publicly, and to hold a peaceful protest. The right extends to all gatherings for peaceful purposes, regardless of the degree of public support for the gathering. However, the right applies only to peaceful assemblies, not to those involving violence.

It is expected that the constitution would guarantee the practicality of these rights with the instrument of the government's security personnel. However, due to the minimal empirical studies to confirm the situation, this study hopes to bridge this gap in literature

In Nigeria, one of the main perpetrators of rights violations are the security agents who are hardly or never held accountable or brought to justice due to the myriad of problems besettingthe judicial institutions. Consequently, there is an apparent lack of trust andconfidence in the courts and general apathy towards the judicialprocesses amongst Nigerians as the civil remedies in law are rarely enforced.

Furthermore, the criminal justice system and the judiciary, generally perceived as dysfunctional, are ineffective in bringing security personnel and corporations involved in crimes and violation of rights to justice due to systemic and institutional corruption, lack of independence of the judiciary, political interference, and so on (Olonisakin, Ogunleye, & Adebayo, 2017). The right to life, right to freedom of expression, and right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly were among the human rights abused by the security during the End SARS protest.

Civil Protest in Nigeria's Fourth Republic

Protests, civil unrest, and politically motivated violence hamper economic growth globally *(*Ochi, & Mark, 2021). Since Nigeria's independence from Britain, civil activist and union leaders have utilized civil protest in the forms of strikes and mass protests to make demands from the government (Hari, 2014). They adopt it to clamour against social anomalies such as low standard of living/high cost of living, poverty, unemployment, corruption, military oppression, brutality, and general maladministration (Hari, 2014; Ochi, & Mark, 2021).

Civil protests occurred in Nigeria in the 1990s prior to the Fourth Republic. Mass demonstrations against military regimes were organized by civil society organizations and social activists (Hari, 2014). Social and human rights activists like GaniFawehinmi, BekoRansome-Kuti, and Femi Falana organized protests under the banner of civil society groups like the Campaign for Democracy (CD) during the military tyrannies of General Ibrahim Babangida and General Sani Abacha. The likes of Afrobeat icon FelaAnikulapoRansome-Kuti used music as a form of protest against societal injustices, corruption, and oppressive government policies (Hari, 2014). The activists at some point suffered all manner of hardships and imprisonments, however, they managed to keep protests in the consciousness of Nigerians (Hari, 2014).

In Nigeria's Fourth Republic, the momentous eight-day *"#OccupyNigeria"* mass civil protest from January 9 to, January 16, 2012, marked the first nationwide mass demonstration since the return of democracy in 1999 (Ochi, & Mark, 2021). The mass demonstration was to protest the increase in the pump price of Premium Motor Spirit (PMS). Mass protesters spent nights on major streets around the

country demanding a reversion to the old pump price of PMS (Ochi, & Mark, 2021).

Due to allegations of human rights abuse and cruelty to Nigerians, the protest for the scrapping of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) was started in 2017 by SegunAwosanya and other activists on Twitter (Ochi, & Mark, 2021; Akerele-Popoola,Azeez, &Adeniyi, 2022). It was a relatively subtle social media: Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc. protest. By October 4, 2020, the protest had intensified online and the first #EndSARS demonstrations in Nigeria broke out on October 8, 2020. This was following an allegation of a SARS policeman shooting a young Nigerian man in front of the Wetland Hotel in Ughelli, Delta State(Iwuoha, &Aniche, 2021). Within a few days, as the incident's video became viral on social media there were widespread protests and it assumed global recognition. Despite the fact that these demonstrations were occurring simultaneously in all of Nigeria's major cities, the Lekki Toll Gate in Lagos was regarded as the protest's epicenter (Iwuoha, &Aniche, 2021).

The protest was adjudged to have nearly downed the Nigeria Government (Akerele-Popoola, Azeez, &Adeniyi, 2022). SARS, a division of the Nigerian police force, was first established primarily to combat serious crimes like armed robberies. However, it quickly gained a reputation for abusing the rights of some identified youths without consequence (Akerele-Popoola, Azeez, &Adeniyi, 2022).

Securityof Lives

Security of lives is linked to the need for the establishment of human security, a people-centred notion of security, which also recognizes that all persons are entitled to freedom from fear and freedom from want, with an equal opportunity to enjoy all their rights and fully develop their human potential (Bakrania&Haider, 2016). Human security has to do with "how people live and breathe in a society, how freely they exercise their many choices, how much access they have to social and market opportunities and whether they are in conflict or peace. The phenomenon is seen from two different angles, first, safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression. Second, it means protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the pattern of daily life whether in homes, in jobs or in communities

The right to security of lives is associated with liberty. Security of persons can also be seen as an expansion of rights based on prohibitions of torture and cruel and unusual punishment. Rights to the security of persons can guard against less-lethal conduct and can be used regarding prisoners' rights (Smith, 2005).

Security of lives and property is paramount to any country. Without security, citizens remain exposed to threats and are vulnerable. Security may be seen as the degree of resistance to, or protection from, harm. It applies to any vulnerable and valuable asset, such as a person, dwelling, community, nation,

or organization. According to Adebayo (2011), security could be referred to as a measure that ensures peaceful co-existence and development at large. It is implied from Adebayo's view that with the existence of security, there is the absence of fear, threat, anxiety, tension, and apprehension over the loss of life, liberty, property, goals, and values, among others. And as Akhakpe (2013) rightly pointed out, security could mean different things at different times to different people. But in all, security is important in every aspect of life.

The issue of insecurity has become persistently worrisomein Nigeria. Insecurity has assumed analarming dimension. The deepening crisis of insecurity, now sophisticated and seemingly intractable, has been attributed to the nonchalant attitude of the government. Iregbenu and Uzonwanne (2015) observe that the behavior of the Nigerian government in the discharge of its primary responsibility of ensuring that its security agents discharge their duties professionally over the years has been lethargic. Little wonder, the duo attribute Nigeria's intractable security challenges to the government's apathy and inefficiency of the security agencies and its administration. Security of human lives is emphasized in the country's constitution as the primary duty of the security operatives but its practicability remains a challenge.

Theoretical Review

Social Conflict Theory

The theory adopted for this study is the social conflict theory which sprang from the Marxist theory tradition. The social conflict theory embodies vast criteria of social phenomena such as class, culture, race, morals, ethics, revolutions, religion, and many more. Social in this context refers to group conflict between different groups of people, in this case, the security operatives and the citizens as opposed to conflict between individuals (Marx, 1971). This theory which originates from the Marxist tradition asserts that the police are instruments used by the elite and the powerful in the society to maintain the status quo of inequality(Akinlabi, 2016).

Social Conflict Theory was espoused by Lersch (1998) and holds that the state functions as an instrument of the dominant class, such as race, economic class, and ethnic groups. Government institutions which include the police force, the military, the Navy, and others are the product of political processes which reveal the interests of the powerful in the society. As postulated in the theory, the main function of security personnel is to preserve the status quo of inequality and assist the powerful to exploit the powerless to prevent their resistance to the exploitation that they suffer (Holmes, Smith, Freng, & Munoz, 2008; Lersch, 1998). Also, consequent on the analysis of formal complaints made by Lersch (1998), he discovered that the economically marginalized and politically powerless were more likely to file complaints of police

misconduct and to "experience more serious acts of misconduct" than those with greater power and more resources. Supporting this school of thought, which originated from the Marxist tradition, is documented evidence on the establishment of the Police Force in Nigeria by the colonialists, which was primarily to meet the need of the colonialists to crush civilian opposition (Aborisade&Fayemi, 2015). During the colonial period, both the local police force and the Nigeria Police Force were implicated in numerous acts of abuse and corruption (Human Rights Watch, 2012). The engagement of the police with the populace was situated on the need to enforce colonial laws that attracted debilitating and hateful reactions from the people, including segregation, forced taxation, and crushing of anti-colonial uprisings (Aborisade&Fayemi, 2015).

In present democratic Nigeria, it is evident that classes and groups that have dominant economic power equally control political decision-making, including the enactment of criminal law by the legislature, its enforcement, and interpretation by the police and judiciary respectively. Also, there are differentials in police treatment of high profile and low profile offenders. The respect for human rights is often extended to rich arrestees as against the poor that are often subjected to different forms of abuses, violations, and brutality. Hence, there is a common belief that the law that governs the affluent is significantly different from the law of the poor (Ogunode, 2015). In corroborating this postulation, Human Rights Watch (2010), stated that the police as an institution is often regarded as an instrument of oppression by the ruling class and bureaucrats. They are willing "tools" in the hands of the state rulers and bourgeoisie to secure them from any uprising from the oppressed (Egede, 2007). This explains why the rights of the rich are more protected over and above that of the poor within the society (Ogunode, 2015).

In essence, race and class in a society determine the dynamic of the relationship between the police and civilians in a society; hence the politically powerless and economically marginalized citizens are more likely to experience incidences of police brutality (Ulo, 2021). The inefficiency of the prescribed authority in checking the excesses of the police impunity, therefore, reflects as a manifestation of the powerlessness of the minority in the society (Marx, 1971).

One of the limitations of this theory stems from the fact that this theory asserts that the police force serves majorly the interest of the elites, however, it is not all officers in the police force that seek to control the subordinate class of citizens in a society, merely some of the officers as there still exist a great number of officers within the force that carry out their duties diligently (Ulo, 2021). Also, this theory postulates that the police exist majorly to serve the interest of the upper class, which is not the case in Nigerian society. While this submission is partly true, it fails to encompass the reality of the Nigeria Police officers and their duties in society.

Citizens' Perception of the Nigerian Police Force

Nwosu, Abunike, Onwuchekwe&Onuchukwu(2022) in their empirical study, revealed that the public has continued to perceive the Nigerian Police Force as less accountable in their various operations and believes they do not have sufficient ground to feel secure despite the assurances of the government.

Conventionally, the presence of armed security personnel should give a sense of safety to the citizens and assure them that the security of their lives is paramount; however, that has not been the situation. The concern for the security of human lives continues to permeate the Nigerian society. The ENDSARS protest was the climax of a subtle remonstration that commenced years before the Lekki toll Gate protest; this is to emphasize that if the actions of the SARS policemen had been checked, the situation would have been nipped in the bud. Newspapers in Nigeria have become a daily exhibition of the internal security challenges; there are accounts of terrorist attacks, kidnappings, cult clashes, robberies and banditry attacks in spite of police presence in some of the areas of attack (Omreore&Olajide, 2022). This has culminated in a highly eroded public trust; the police have lost several Nigerians' confidence because of poor work attitude, unethical conduct and a worrisome disregard for fundamental human rights. (Odisu, 2022; Afon, &Badiora, 2016). Social media platforms have even been more prominent in the exposure of the abuse of human rights of the Nigerian citizens, especially the youths, and it has been the avenue to report the different instances of the abuse of their rights by the SARS policemen, with some reporting cases of brutality, abduction, extra-judicial killings and false imprisonment.

Like many institutions in Nigeria, the menace of corruption has also infested the rank and file of the Nigeria Police Force. This has continued to impede the efforts of the police in improving the nation's national security. Despite several administrations' efforts, especially since the beginning of the fourth republic, the distressing situation has continued unabated (Alozie, 2019). There have been reported cases of the police conniving with organised criminals, who are mainly political leaders or highly placed public office holders who have made an habit of manipulating and trampling on the rights of the citizens (Ordu&Nnam, 2017).

A number of Nigerians have, at one time or the other, been detained unlawfully by the police. There have been reported cases of the NPF arresting innocent citizens. Nigerians perceive the Nigerian police force as being brutal and capable of thrusting offences not committed by them on them. This sometimes makes innocent citizens part with their hard-earned money in the name of bail due to ignorance or not wanting to be a victim of circumstances, which has happened to many and which is the crux of this study (Odisu. 2016).

Odisu (2016) in his study stated that the police have the habit of arresting and detaining innocent citizens without any evidence just because of the money they would extort from

them under the guise of bail. He narrated that in 2005, some policemen from the Force Headquarters, Asaba, Delta State, came to Warri and arrested several women putting on trousers. They were detained at A Division police station in Warri, and the relatives of the detainees had to pay to secure their releaseThis is an infringement on the fundamental human rights of these women, especially the right to personal liberty.
It will take deliberate and sustained efforts from the government for the perception of Nigerians to change for the positive and for the Nigerian Police Force to be perceived as friends and not foes

The End SARS Protest

The Special Anti-Robbery Squad was a unit in the Nigeria Police Force. It was set up in 1992 by former police commissioner Simeon DanladiMidenda. The incident that spurred SARS' formation was the death of Col. Israel Rindam (Nigerian Army) at the hands of police officers at a checkpoint in Lagos in September 1992, leading to the arrest of three police officers (United States Department of State, 2020). When the information got to the army, soldiers were dispatched into the streets of Lagos in search of any police officer. The Nigerian police withdrew from checkpoints, security areas, and other points of interest for criminals; some police officers were said to have resigned while others fled for their lives. Due to the absence of police for two weeks, the crime rate increased and SARS was formed with an initial force of 15, operating in secrecy to avoid the army. Due to the existence of three already established anti-robbery squads that were operational at that time, Midenda needed to distinguish his squad from the already existing teams. Midenda named his team Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). After months of dialogue, the Nigerian Army and the Nigeria Police Force came to an understanding, and official police duties resumed in Lagos. The SARS unit was officially commissioned in Lagos following the subsequent ceasefire (Reuters, 2020).

The unit appeared efficient at its inception before the operatives turned themselves to "terror". They became minacious to the very people they were meant to protect. Their activities from onsetwas fraught with issues of corruption, misconduct, and gross abuse of human rights (Human Rights Watch, 2010). They tortured and killed innocent Nigerians under the guise of interrogation and suspicion of being criminals without any meaningful action from the government. The fourth republic was heralded withhopes that an end has come to the nefariousactivities of SARS based on the principles of democracy that thrive on respect for human rights and the tenets of the constitution being the principle upon which society rests, especially as it pertains to the guaranteeing of humans rights (Amnesty International, 2014).

Contrary to expectations, the SARS unit and the Nigerian Police Force became the tool exploited and used by government agents and politicians to carry out their dirty

activities of oppression and corruption. There were reports of cases of political thugs carrying out attacks of intimidation on innocent masses. When the police are informed, they refuse to act simply because they have received instruction from "above"(Akinlabi, 2016). Sometimes, the police are used to carrying out the dirty work of intimidating innocent masses by torturing, bullying, and harassing them into submission, especially during election times. They are the instrument used to subdue the masses into submission to the whims and caprices of government when the masses try to challenge any government's policies (Wolfe &Piquero, 2011).

The pattern of assembling the police force to protect the elites of the society over the masses, to prey on local communities, and to suppress dissents continued well into the 20th century. The Aba Women's War of 1929, the General Strike of 1945, and the Enugu Colliery Strike of 1949 were instances where anti-colonial resistance was met with a quasi-military policing force deployed to subjugate citizens. This trend has continued despite the return to democracy; present day Nigeria is characterized by the abuse of human rights and the killing of innocent citizens (The Washington Post, 2020).

The issue of police reforms has been part of promises made by the government since the return to democracy, but there has been no result gotten in that direction. Once, there is an issue involving the police in the area of extra-judicial killings, torture, and wrongful arrest and detention of innocent citizens that makes national news and as well as draws international attention, the police authority comes out making promises to implement reforms as a way to pacify the masses (Amnesty International, 2020). Bowing to pressure from the protesters, the Nigerian Inspector General of Police had, on 11 October 2020, officially dissolved the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). Previously, the government had announced the 'dissolution' of the same SARS in 2017, 2018, and 2019. That of October 2020 wa the fourth 'dissolution' in four consecutive years, all under the leadership of President MohammaduBuhari. The personnel of the Nigeria Police Force are the product of a society that has little regard for societal values, but rather respect that justice goes to the highest bidder. It is a society that is deeply rooted in corruption, mediocrity, nepotism, unaccountability, and lack of stewardship. (The Washington Post, 2020).

It is surprising to note that few cases of human rights violation had been investigated and hardly any security officer has been brought to justice on account of torture and other ill-treatment. In a few instances where cases became public knowledge, the police authorities usually promised investigations. However, Amnesty International has found that no investigation or prosecution of perpetrators took place in any of the cases documented. The Federal Government of Nigeria has repeatedly promised to reform SARS to no avail. For instance, on 14 August 2018, the Nigerian Vice-President ordered an immediate reform of SARS, citing the widespread public outcry against their conduct, as the basis for the order

(Ulo, 2021). He also directed the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to set up a judicial panel to investigate SARS alleged unlawful activities. However, hours later, the police authority announced a list of reform measures aimed at increasing SARS' public accountability for its actions (Paquette, 2020). The measures included the change of name from Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) to Federal Special Anti-Robbery Squad (FSARS), the appointment of a high-ranking police officer to supervise the operation of FSARS, and the restriction of FSARS operations to the prevention of armed robbery and kidnapping.

Despite these promises of reform and accountability for violations, SARS officers continue to subject detainees in their custody to torture and other forms of ill-treatment with total impunity (CLEEN Foundation, 2018). Amnesty International (2020) believes that the ongoing impunity enjoyed by SARS officers for human rights violations points to deficiencies in policing practice and the absence of an effective police accountability system as reflected in the lack of political will by the federal government to effect reform which climax in the recent protest and mass looting of property and destruction of government infrastructures.

Sequel to the avalanche of calls made by the many Nigerians for the government to end all forms of security operatives' cruelty especially SARS since 2017 which yielded insignificant results; thecall became revitalized in October 2020 following more revelations of the abuses of the unit (Amnesty International, 2020). It thus became a national protest and demonstrations were held throughout the major cities of Nigeria.

Consequently, in October 2020, the situation reached a climaxwithnationwide protests nomenclatedEND SARS. The protests were led predominantly by young Nigerians in different cities alongside many activists and celebrities (Busari, Orji, Salaudeen, 2020).

The protest, although a decentralized social movement, appeared to have its national headquarters at the Lekki Toll Gate, Lagos State. It was aimed to ensure that police and other security operatives' brutality ended in Nigeria. Solidarity protests and demonstrations by Nigerians in diaspora and sympathizers occurred in many major cities worldwide. The protests were also notable for their patronage by demography that is made of entirely young Nigerians (Busari, 2020). The movement eventually expanded to include demands for good and accountable governance.

Subsequently, the peaceful protest and demonstration became violent as miscreants and hoodlum alleged to have been sponsored by the Lagos State Government were seen trying to dismiss the protesters. Resistance by some of the protesters turned the situation into state violence and confusion. Officers of the Nigeria Police Force also came to forcefully disperse the protesters but to no avail.Unfortunately, on the night of the 20th of October, following violent escalations which included

attacks by agitators against both protesters and police, the governor of Lagos State, declared a state-wide 24-hour curfew effective on 20 October. During this time, images of some persons alleged to be working with the Lagos State Government and the Lekki Concession Company removing cameras (later confirmed by the Lagos State Government to be laser cameras and not CCTV cameras as earlier publicized on social media at the toll gate circulated on End SARS on Twitter and street lights at the toll gate vicinity were turned off. A few hours later, it was reported that armed men of the Nigerian Army arrived at the scene of the protest and opened fire on peaceful and unarmed protesters, thereby resulting in a disputed number of deaths. A clip of the shooting videoed by a brave Nigerian youth, known as DJ Switch, trended on the Internet showing how live round of bullets were being shot at innocent protesters who crouched on the ground, holding hands together and singing the Nigerian National Anthem. It was also reported that at least 50 other people were injured. However, the Lagos State government later reported that the shooting resulted in up to 25 injured, and only 2 dead.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This study is a descriptive survey design of *ex-post-facto*. Descriptive survey design of ex-post-facto type attempts to provide an accurate explanation or picture of a particular situation or phenomenon at one or more points in time. The population of this study would comprise living victims of the Lekki Toll Gate End SARS protesters who were brutalized by the security operatives. The total number of End SARS protesters who were at Lekki Toll Gate was not known. However, it was observed that hundreds of Nigerians, especially youths were at the venue of the protest as one of the researchers in this study witnessed the brutality that evidently took place at the venue of the EndSARS protest.Hundred active participants of the ENDSARS were selected using the Snowball sampling technique,that is, one participant leading to others, especially since the actual population is unknown. One of the researchers involved in this study participated actively and was able to recruit survey respondents without copious challenges

The instrument of data collectionutilised was the questionnaire. It was titled End SARS Study (ESARS). The instrument was on five Likert scales. The use of this instrument enabled the researcher to obtain necessary information from the respondents.

The instrument was designed in a Four-Likert scale and divided into three sections as A, B, and C. Section A consisted of the demographic/background data of the respondents; section B focused on human rights sub-variables; while section C dealt with security of life. The options chosen ranged from 1-4. 1 stood for Yes, 2 May Be, 3 No, and 4 Not Really.

Table 1: Analysis of Respondents' Response Rate

Response Rate	Frequency	Per cent (per cent)
Completed Questionnaire	95	95
Uncompleted/Rejected Questionnaire	5	5
Total	100	100

Source: Researcher's Field Work (2022)

Table 1 shows the response rate of the respondents. It reveals that out of the 100 questionnaires that were administered, only 95 (95 per cent) were completely filled while 5 (5 per cent) were incomplete, hence they were rejected.The response rate was considered adequate to give a good representation of the sample size.

Table 2: Age Distribution of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Per cent (per cent)
Below 20 years	10	10.5
Between 21-25 years	25	26.3
Between 26-30 years	30	31.6
Between 31-35 years	15	15.8
Between 36-40 years	10	10.5
40 years & Above	5	5.3
Total	**95**	**100**

Source: Researcher's Field Work (2022)

Table 2 shows the age distribution of the respondents. It reveals that the ages of the respondents were spread across youth ages. Out of the 95 respondents, 10 (10.5 per cent) were below 20 years of age whereas 25 (26.3 per cent), 30 (31.6 per cent), 15 (15.8 per cent), 10 (10.5 per cent) and 5 (5.3 per cent) were between 21-25 years, between 26-30 years, 31-35 years, 36-40 years and 40 years and above respectively. 73.7 per cent were within the age bracket of 21-35 years.

Table 3: Gender Distribution of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Per cent (per cent)
Male	85	89.5
Female	10	10.5
Total	**95**	**100**

Source: Researcher's Field Work (2022)

Table 3 above shows the gender distribution of the respondents. It reveals that 85 (85.5 per cent) of the respondents were males whereas 10 (10.5 per cent) were females. This implies that most of the respondents were males.

Table 4: Educational Background of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Per cent (per cent)
No formal education	**0**	
Primary/secondary education	60	63.2
Tertiary & above	35	36.8
Total	**95**	**100**

Source: Researcher's Field Work (2022)

Table 4 above shows the educational background of the respondents. It indicates that all the respondents had one form of formal education or the other. While 60 (63.2 per cent) had primary or secondary education, 35 (36.3 per cent) had tertiary or higher education. This implies that none of the respondents was an illiterate.

Analysis of Research Hypotheses

Research HypothesesOne: Constitutional right to peaceful assembly and association has no significant effect on security of lives in Nigeria

Table 5: Responses of Respondents on Fundamental Right to Peaceful Assembly and Association

S/N	Comment	Yes	May be	No	Not really	Yes (y+mb)	No (n+nr)
1	It is my fundamental right to gather freely and peacefully with others.	**70**	**20**	**0**	**5**	**90**	**5**
2	There were no restrictions given prior to End SARS protest and gathering at the Lekki Toll Gate	**10**	**10**	**50**	**25**	**20**	**75**
3	The End SARS protest and its gathering were not for any illegal motive	70	20	0	5	**90**	**5**
4	My fundamental right to assemble freely and peacefully with others was violated at the protest	70	20	0	5	**90**	**5**

Source: Researcher's Field Work (2022)

Table 5 shows the response of the respondents on their fundamental right to peaceful assembly and association. It reveals that the respondents understood that it was their fundamental right to gather freely and peacefully with others to protest mistreatments. Their responses further indicate that there were no restrictions stopping them from gathering for the End SARS protest at the Lekki Toll Gate. However, they acknowledged that their right to assemble freely and peacefully with others was violated at the protest by the security agents. Further, a regression analysis of the responses was run and shown on the table below:

Table 6: Effect of Constitutional Right to Peaceful Assembly and Association
on Security of Lives at Lekki Toll Gate during the End SARS Protest

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1 (Constant)	-.838	.324		-2.588	.011
Right to Association	1.555	.042	.967	36.848	.000

Dependent Variable: Security of Life; R=.967, R^2=.936, Adj. R^2=.935, P<0.05

Table 6 shows the effect of fundamental right to peaceful assembly and association on security of lives at Lekki Toll Gate during the End SARS protest. It reveals that the fundamental right to peaceful assembly and association has significant effect on the security of lives of the protesters at the Lekki Toll Gate (Beta=.967, t=36.848, p=0.000). The model summary shows a correlation coefficient of (R=.967), that implies a positive significant effect of fundamental right to peaceful assembly and association on security of lives. This suggests that the protesters acknowledged that their protest had constitutional backup, hence their continued protest. Moreover, the adjusted coefficient of determination (Adjusted R^2) had a value of .936, which means that the constitution significantly backed up the protesters by 93.6 per cent.

Research Hypotheses Two: There is no joint effect of the constitutional right to life, right to freedom of expression, and right to peaceful assembly and association on security of lives in Nigeria

Table 7: Responses of Respondents on Security of Life of the Protesters

S/N	Comment	YES	MAY BE	NO	NOT REALLY	YES (Y+MB)	NO (N+NR)
5	Did you know that there was insecurity in Nigeria before the End SARS period?	**55**	**20**	**10**	**10**	**75**	**20**
6	Did you know that the Nigerian security personnel were noted for assaults before the End SARS protest?	60	20	5	10	**80**	**15**
7	Did you experience any form of assault from the law enforcement agents during the End SARS period?	70	20	0	5	**90**	**5**
8	Are human lives safe in the hands of Nigerian security agents?	10	20	50	15	**30**	**65**
9	Reasons for your participation in the End SARS include to kick against SARS brutality,demand respect for human life, and say no bad governance	70	20	0	5	**90**	**5**
10	Forms of abuse you experienced during End SARS protest include harassment, unlawful arrest, Assault, and death	65	25	2	3	**90**	**5**

Source: Researcher's Field Work (2022)

Table 7 above shows respondents' views on security of life of the End SARS protesters. It further reveals that the respondents knew there was insecurity in Nigeria before the End SARS period. Their responses further indicate that they knew previously that the Nigerian security personnel were noted for assaults. Further, they acknowledged to have experienced some forms of assault from the law enforcement agents during the protesting period such as harassment, unlawful arrest, Assault, and death. These made them to know that human lives are not safe in the hands of Nigerian security agents. However, they protested because they longed to kick against SARS brutality, demanded respect for human lives, and said to no bad governance. A regression analysis to determine a combined effect of constitutional right to life, right to freedom of expression, and right to peaceful assembly and association on security of lives during the End SARS protest at the Lekki toll Gate is shown on the table below:

Table 7: Analysis of Multiple Regression on the Combined Effect of Constitutional Right to Life, Right to Freedom of Expression, and Right to Peaceful Assembly and Association on Security of Life of the End SARS Protesters

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.246	.250		.984	.328
	Right To Life	.444	.098	.276	4.549	.000
	Freedom of Expression	.421	.111	.279	3.806	.000
	Right to Association	.728	.087	.453	8.382	.000

Dependent Variable: Security of Life; R=.985; R^2=.971; Adj.R^2=.970; Std. Error of the Estimate=.79619; P<0.05

Table 7 shows a combined effect of constitutional right to life, right to freedom of expression, and right to peaceful assembly and association on security of life of the end SARS protesters. The table reveals a combined significant and positive effect of the constitutional right to life, right to freedom of expression, and right to peaceful assembly and association on security of live of the end SARS protesters (Beta=1.008, t=16.737, p=0.000).

The model summary shows a correlation coefficient of (R=.985), that implies joint positive significant effect of the fundamental human rights on security of lives. This means that the protesters were fully aware of that their fundamental rights were constitutionally backed up, hence they protested. Moreover, the adjusted R^2 of .970 implies that the protesters' fundamental rights were significantly backed up by the constitution up to 97 per cent.

Conclusion

From the empirical findings, the study concludes as follows:

1. The constitutionalright to peaceful assembly and association has positive significant effect on the security of lives of the protesters at the Lekki Toll Gate (Beta=.967, t=36.848, P<0.05). The protest was peaceful while its reason was just; hence it was backed up by the law.
2. The constitutional right to life, right to freedom of expression, and right to peaceful assembly and association have combined positive significant effect on security of life of the end SARS protesters (Beta=1.008, t=16.737, p=0.000). The protest was backed up by the fundamental human rights of the protesters

Recommendations

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

1. Consequently, authorities such as the National Human Right Commission (NHRC), Public Complaints Commission (PCC), Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), and the United Nations Human Rights in Nigeria (OHCHR) should continuously educate the masses of their right to life and its limits, while the Nigeria Security Council, Nigeria Police Commission, and the Nigeria Army should educate their staff to respect human right.
2. Every individual should be guided while expressing their feelings. Thus, the fact that Nigeria is still practicing democracy, the government and its agencies should allow individuals to exercise their human rights.
3. In recommendation, individuals should only gather for peaceful events and associate themselves with law-abiding persons. Besides, relevant government authorities should educate the masses on the limits to this right.
4. From the empirical findings of the study, it is recommended that individuals should know their rights and use lawful and constitutional means to ensure that these rights are respected by all including the government and its agencies. Regardless of any intimidation, people should demand for equity and justice.

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