



The Imperatives of Police Reforms in Mitigating Crimes in the face of Youth Resistance: Lessons From #Endsars Protest

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Abstract

The study assessed #EndSARS protest as an imperatives of Police reforms in mitigating crimes in the face of youth resistance in South Western Nigeria; with specific set objectives to assess the effect of #EndSARS protest on police/ citizens relationship in Nigeria; ascertain the dimension of punishment against police Brutality in Nigeria; and identify other strategies to reduce police brutality in the region. The study adopted control balance theory and Adopted mixed method of data collection. Multistage sampling technique was used in selecting 648 respondents. It was discovered from the study areas that majority (97%) of the respondents were educated and have a means of generating income. Also, finding from the study revealed a negative relationship between police and citizen. In addition, severe punishment such as summary dismissal and minor punishment such as fine, transfer, were identify as the forms of punishment for Police brutality and finally, proper prosecution of offenders, and spiritual fortification were part of suggested strategies by the respondents to reduce police brutality in Nigeria. The study therefore concludes that the protest did not have substantial effect on curbing Police brutality but traditional spiritual fortification and proper prosecution seemed to be the best strategies sorely to reduce police brutality. The study recommended therefore, that government should be conducting regular checks on police activities to reduce abuse of power.

Keywords: Spiritual Fortification; Human Degradation; Mass Protest; Human Rights, Punishment

Introduction

According to Brannen (2020), mass protests show similarities in the spate, ranging from protracted political violence to worsening economic effects, with many other casualties from 2009 to 2019 across all regions of the world, giving an annual average of 11.5 percent. Interestingly, the high-profile and advanced countries were not excluded from the wave of this upheaval. In fact, the majority of advanced countries, such as Europe and North America, experienced mass protests more than most underdeveloped countries; this was corroborated by Haig & Schmidt (2020), who found that from the regime of President Trump in 2017 to President Joe Biden in 2020, 16000 Americans had participated in protests across the United States.

It is important to emphasize it that police personnel legally carry out their responsibilities to uphold state law and order and to safeguard people's lives and property during the majority of

large-scale demonstrations. However, in recent times, the police force has been accused of breaking the law, from defending human lives to violating human rights, as a result of a number of instances of police brutality and degrading treatment of people that have been witnessed and experienced by people throughout the world, particularly in urban areas. Police officers' egregious violations of the rule of law and human rights have severely violated residents' civil and political rights, which have a negative impact on human security in all of Nigeria's states (Amnesty International, 2021). Despite the efforts of Human Rights activists, the government, the police service commission, international police reform organizations, Amnesty International, and others to limit and end the instances in which police officers can violate citizens' constitutional rights, the end does not appear to be in sight at this time as things continue to take on new forms.



This change in relationship between citizens and police officers and how this police brutality can be reduced, things would be normalized, and imminent acts that led to the reoccurrence and persistence of police brutality on citizens despite series of police reform acts, several activities of NGOs against it, and even citizens protests have been the major concern, which is the focus of this research work.

Statement of the Problem

In every society, there are rules and regulations that guide individuals to ensure peace and the smooth running of the society. Undoubtedly, as there are laws, there are also deviants that always go against society's *modus operandi*. Due to this, law enforcement agents, especially police officers, have a statutory responsibility to ensure that citizens abide by the rules. But the use of unwarranted force by police officers when handling suspects, which had become endemic in the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) operation in Nigeria, had brought a lot of mixed reactions among citizens across the country. In the study conducted by Walker and Kreisel (2006), titled 'Citizen Grievances on Attitudinal Behaviours of the Law Enforcement Agents', noted that the unnecessary use of force is a major issue that has led to a series of awkward reactions and lingering problems between the police officers and citizens over the year. Also, Ogunode (2015) argued that the use of torture as an interrogative technique and other cruel acts against people remain some of the major defects of Nigerian police officers, and this has attracted public hatred, condemnation, and criticism of police activities, especially the SARS operation. Further activities of the law enforcement agents, such as the unlawful searching of phones and laptops of youth, the unlawful labelling of all youth as fraudsters, the illegal killing of innocent citizens, and the illegal torturing of arrested persons by SARS, underlined the deficiencies and unprofessionalism in their operations (Amnesty International, 2020).

Youths across the region mobilised through various social media platforms, took to the streets, protested against the activities of the Special Anti-

Robbery Squad (SARS), and demanded an end to the operations of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad, which was christened #EndSARS. The bone of contention was that SARS operated through torture, unlawful arrests, humiliation, unlawful detention, extrajudicial killings, and extortion. This accelerated to a serious uproar across the country, originating from Lagos State. This resulted in the deaths of many youths and police officers, and some resulted in socio-economic problems. Many houses were razed down by hoodlums, and some companies were ruined due to the aftermath of the protest. The carnage that ensued further led to an increase in poverty and criminal activities across the nation, such as robbery, jail break and kidnapping, with their negative effects on socio-economics and insecurity. This necessitates the need to understand the Imperatives of Police Reforms in Mitigating Crimes in the face of youth resistance, Therefore the Major focus of the study.

Effects of #End-SARS Protest on Police /Citizen Relationship in Nigeria

In line with the Section 215 and sub-section 2 of the 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria, and that of Section 6 of the Nigerian Police Act, 1990, says: 'the Force shall be commanded by the Inspector-General of Police.' This simply means that orders, directives and instructions to all police officers during protest or any of its kind are from the Inspector-General of Police, through the chain of Command, to all officers deployed during the protests. Disobedience or failure to carry out such instruction, directive or order, attracts disciplinary endorsements. The police essentially enforced brutal force to hold down the protesters in a bid to protect the interests of the state and maintain the rule of the regime in power (1999 constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria). Hence, the #EndSARS Protesters' demands for wider political reforms generally attracted state repression and clampdown instead of leading to positive change. It was reported that during the protests, acts of police brutality, stifling of voices of dissent, clampdowns on civic freedoms, and military shootouts at peaceful, innocent and unarmed #EndSARS protesters with live bullets



were perpetrated by agents of the Nigerian state without any pushback (CNN, 2020; CSO Police Reform Observatory, 2020).

Actions to Reduce Police Brutality

In fighting police brutality across the globe both international and national organisation has taken different measures to avert the unrest situation. For instance, the United Nations has taken steps to address police violence internationally. Specifically, the United Nation Human Rights Council, they issued a resolution in June 2020 calling for the protection of Africans from police brutality (Onwunyirimadu, 2022). Apart from UN there are also many private organizations that are acting. For example, Campaign Zero has a list of proposed policy solutions to combat police brutality in the U.S. These include:

- Ending “broken window policing” (policing minor crimes), for profit policing,
- Implementing proper training, and
- International policy shift (Nsirim & Nwakanma, 2022).

Control- Balance Theory (CBT)

Control balance theory of deviant behaviour was developed by Charles R. Tittle, who presented the initial statement of the theory in his book, *Control Balance: Toward a General Theory of Deviance* (Tittle 1995, cited under Initial Statement of the Theory). Following its 1995 publication, the book received distinguished scholarship awards from both the American Sociological Association and the American Society of Criminology.

The Basic Tenets of Control Balance Theory

- The degree to which others and a person's surroundings can limit an individual's behavioural options
- The extent to which an individual can escape from these controls and exercise such controls over others.
- The extent of control to which one is subject is relative to the amount of control one can exercise (the control ratio) affects both the probability of deviance as well as the specific form of deviance

The key assertion of control balance theory is that when control proportion is imbalances this will be associated with deviance because it will lead to an imbalance between motivation toward deviance and constraints on deviance behaviour. Hence, Control imbalances can be of two types:

- 1) Control deficits, which occur when the control that individuals can exercise is exceeded by the amount of control to which they are subject, and
- 2) Control surpluses, which indicate that the controls that individuals can exercise surpass the controls they experience.

Relevance of CBT to the study

This theory attempts to provide interesting insights into why the SARS behave the way they do and various factor that influence these negative behaviours. Also, why youth decided to come out enmass to protest, as the theory explains that at every opportunity for some forms of deviance there are always likely chances and magnitude of counter control which could be vary in control proportions, situational conditions, and the nature of deviant acts. However as regards the Nigeria Police specifically, numerous environmental, sociological, economic factors affect their behaviours and attitude towards the service render to the society. While no single theory may sufficiently provide explanations on all the aspects of police brutality, this call for other theories to compliment control balance theory to provide more insight to the issues of police brutality.

Methodology

This study Adopt a descriptive research design. The research design entails the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data from a relatively homogenous subject within a period of time. The cross-sectional designs produced useful results in assessing imperatives of police reform in mitigating crime in the face of youth resistance in the study areas.

Study Population

The study comprises of selected police officers from the research locations, particularly those



from the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) now SWAT, and chosen youth from particular states in southwest Nigeria (including Lagos, Oyo, Ondo, and Ekiti) made up the study population.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Multistage sampling procedure was used. The first stage involved a purposive selection of Lagos, Oyo, Ondo, and Ekiti states from the region, making four states in all. This selection was based on the severity of the protest in each of the states. The second stage involved a purposive selection of 18 police officers for in-depth interviews and 2 heads of units for key informant interviews, making a total of 20 police officers selected in Lagos State for interviews. Also, 8 police officers were purposively selected for in-depth interviews and 2 heads of units for key informant interviews in Oyo State, making a total of 10 police officers for interviews. Officers were selected for key informant interviews in Lagos and Oyo states due to the severity of the protests in the two states. In addition, 5 police officers were selected each in Ekiti and Ondo states for an in-depth interview, making a total of 40 police officers for interviews in all the selected states. Also, a snowball sampling technique was used to select 10 youths that participated actively in the 2020 #EndSARS protest in Lagos, 4 in Oyo states, and 3 each in Ekiti and Ondo states for interviews, making a total of 20 youths in all for the interview. The selection was based on the enormity of the protest in each of the states selected to solicit information on the remote or immediate causes and effects of the protest on police brutality. In all, 40 interviewees were used.

In addition, 258 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to youths in Lagos states, 150 in Oyo state due to the rigorousness of the protest in the two states, and 100 questionnaires each were distributed to youths in Ondo and Ekiti states, making a total of 648 respondents in all.

Data Collection Method

The study employs both qualitative and quantitative method of data collection. The data were collected using questionnaire, an in-depth interview (IDI), and a key informant interview

(KII). In-depth interviews and key informant interviews were used in this research to evaluate individuals' perceptions, opinions, facts, forecasts, and reactions to initial findings. In addition, questionnaire was used to solicit information from youths. The interview guides were pre-tested by doing a role play to clarify any anomalies that might have caused misrepresentation among the participants. Also, the questionnaire was pre-tested by conducting a pilot study; this helped to identify those questions that could make participants uncomfortable, those that may be misunderstood, and those that did not adequately capture the concepts under study. The interviews were audio recorded to enable further analysis and interpretation without losing details.

Method of Data Analysis

The statistical packages for descriptive and inferential analysis were used to analyse the quantitative data. The relationship between various variables that explains and identifies the determinant of the subject under investigation was demonstrated using such parameters as means, frequency distribution table, percentages, charts, paired sample T-test, Pearson's Correlation, and the One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Three steps were included in the statistical analysis: First, univariate analysis was done to show how the surveyed population was distributed in relation to the studied variable. Second, basic associations between the independent variable(s) and the outcome variables were investigated using bivariate and multivariate analysis. The quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 28.0.1.1); this software helps to categorize quantitative data so that it is possible to identify trends and strength of responses. Through response transcription and coding, the analyses were carried out in stages. Additionally, verbatim quotes were used to describe how the qualitative instrument's responses were expressed.

Results

Extrajudicial dispositions and excessive use of power have become the major trends among law



enforcement agents in Nigeria (Liquan Cao, 2002). Youth humiliation and unlawful detention by Nigerian police have raised a lot of dust among citizens across the state within the country. The majority of this youth seek justice from the Nigerian government by asking for the SARS units of the Nigerian police to be scrapped. This study examined the extent to which the #EndSARS protest embarked upon by youth was able to achieve this goal. Using both qualitative and quantitative data, the findings from the study revealed that the majority of the respondents were still in their youthful years, between the ages of 18 and 24, and a similar trend also emerged from the qualitative information, in which the majority were also between the ages of 20 and 36. The information on religion from both the qualitative and quantitative data revealed that the majority of the population was Christian and married. In addition, the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents showed that a high proportion of the studied population were male with a minimum qualification of a secondary school certificate and were residents of urban areas. The quantitative findings in this research revealed that gender influenced individual experiences of police brutality and that individual residence played a great role in the number of times and the level of brutality an individual would experience. This corroborates the work of Burger (2011) on 'police brutality, criminal behaviour, and other misconducts' that the negative effects of police activities, police cruel acts, public distrust, and insensitivity to civilians are more pronounced among urban dwellers, especially those in business areas, than in rural areas of the country.

Table1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents (Survey)

Variables		Frequency	percentage
Religion:	Christianity	487	80.3
	Islam	112	18.5
	Free Thinker	7	1.2
Age:	15 - 20	299	49.3
	21 - 25	181	29.9
	26 - 30	34	5.6
	31 - 35	18	3.0
	36 - 40	58	9.6
	41 - 45	16	2.6
Gender:	Female	340	56.1
	Male	266	43.9
Marital Status:	Married	143	23.6
	Never married	408	67.3
	Separated	48	7.9
	Widow/widower	7	1.2

Source: Field Report, 2022

The Effect of #EndSARS Protest on Police /Citizens relationship in Nigeria

Every individual deserves to be treated with maximum respect and dignity but when an individual is treated with disgust or in a callous manner, individual tends to seek justice through any means seams available. The #EndSARS protest in Nigeria seems to be one way through which the youth express their dissatisfaction/grievances towards the unpalatable treatment received from police officers in the country and asking the government for justices and correction.

The Nigerian youth in 2020 decided to express their grievances over inhuman treatment received from Police officers especially series of insensitivity to humanity among the men of Special Anti-robbery Squad (an arm of Nigeria Police force) who were supposed to act as a body of law enforcement agency, that represent the civil authority of government. They seemed to have overturned their roles and turn against the citizens through series of illegalities, such as killing of innocent citizen, unlawful torture, arrest etc.

This made the youth to demand for their right by protesting against their activities across the country. In this light, table2, below shows that there was no substantial change in police and citizens' relationship before and after #EndSARS protest in Nigeria. As majority 66.3% of the respondents who claimed that there was frequent occurrence of police officer harassing innocent citizens on the road before the protest and more than half 57.8% of the respondents affirmed the occurrence became worse after the protest in the study area and only 39.9% of the respondents claimed there was little change. This simply means that there was a slight change but there was no significant difference in police/citizens' relationship before and after the protest on relating with citizen on the road. This was in line with response of an interviewee 'a protester' in response to the question "if the protest in anyway have change SARS activities in Nigeria". The respondents affirmed that:



Hummm..... the protest did not change anything except their name, barely after two weeks the police officers were back on the road,..... the police officers to me, are now worse than before,

Extract 1: IDI/Male/24 years/youth

Surprisingly a Police Officer when asked if the protest achieved any goal? Explained that:

“the protest achieved nothing because the crime statistics in Nigeria has grown geometrically and the government is not ready to reduce or curb it, so I can say the protest was just a display of hooliganism”

Extract 2: IDI/Male/Inspector/41 years

Also, a larger percentage 80.5% of the respondents affirmed that police officer frequently collected illegal money from the road users as they did before the protest and in likewise manner, larger percentage 70.5% of the respondents claimed that the situation had become worse after the protest, which also culminated in retrogression in police/citizen relationship in the study areas. More so, 63% of the respondent stated that there was a frequent incidence of police officers arrest and detention of citizens without concrete reasons before the protest and after the protest, it was discovered the situation remain the same as more than half 65.5% of the respondents claimed that the incidence became worse in their areas while only 26.2% of the respondents observed little change. This was validated by a response from a police officer on “what could he say on police brutality? He stated that:

..... to me en, there is nothing called police brutality.....the only problem here is that citizens had failed to read in between lines.....imagine during the protest my neighbour who knows that am a police officer was saying it to my face “kan le gbogbo awon olapa were n danu”.....(meaning: the police force should be disbanded) and the idiot knew I have children and family.....so after the protest, if she had police case , would you expect me to treat her like neighbour....nmba (meaning: not at all) I will add to her problem so that she would know how

important it is to have police officers in the society.....

Extract3: IDI/Male/41 years/Inspector

Although, 66.6% of the respondents attested to frequent occurrences of police Illegal beating of citizens before the protest but a sizeable percentage 47.1% of the respondents in the study area observed little change on it while only 28.2% claimed it became worse. This simply means there was a significant improvement in police relationship with citizens on illegal beating in the study areas.

Table 2: Respondents' Frequency Distribution on the Effect of #End SARS Protest on Police/Citizen relationship in Nigeria

VARIABLES	BEFORE						AFTER					
	Frequent		Rarely		Never happen		Worse		Little change		Never happen	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
Harassing of innocent citizens on the road	401	66.3	139	23.0	65	10.7	350	57.8	242	39.9	14	2.3
Collection of illegal money from road users	488	80.5	97	16.0	21	3.5	427	70.5	170	28.1	9	1.5
Arrest and detention without concrete reason	382	63.0	176	29.0	48	7.9	397	65.5	159	26.2	50	8.3
Illegal beating of civilians	403	66.6	157	26.0	45	7.4	64	28.2	107	47.1	21	9.3

Source: Field Report, 2022

Finally, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis on the effect of #EndSARS protest on police and citizen relationship shows that there is a negative relationship between police and citizens' as the Correlation Coefficient -0.100 is less than Zero, that is, if correlation coefficient is greater than zero, there is positive relationship but if it is less than zero, it shows a negative relationship. Hence, since the correction coefficient is 0, which shows a negative relationship. Also on the effectiveness of the protest shows there is no significant correlation between protest and police brutality in the study areas.



Table 4: Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis on the effect of 'End SARS' Protest on Police and Citizens relationship in Nigeria

Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis		
Variables	Experience with police officers (SARS)	
	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)
Police attitude to civilian	-0.100	0.033
Effectiveness of the protest in Nigeria	-0.099	0.037

Source: Field Report 2022

The Dimension of Punishment taken against Police Brutality in Nigeria

Findings from the study area pointed to punishment constitutionally given to any officer found guilty of misconduct such as police brutality is categorized in to two depending on the level of brutality and status of the victim involved, severe punishment and minor punishment. The severe punishment include but not limited to summary dismissal, suspension and orderly room punishment which usually refers to as detention; the minor punishment are: transfer, confinement to barrack (this is restriction of movement of the officer within the premises and such an officer cannot travel to anywhere until he/she has completed serving his/her punishment), incivility to the public, reduction in rank, major entry, garnishee order and gross insubordination. Remarks:

Constitutionally, we have some punishments attached to police misconduct such as maltreatment of citizen.... What you call police brutality..... but it depends on the status of the victim..... for instance if the victim is of high status and ready to follow up with the case..... no matter how minor the offence such an officer might have committed he might face "summary dismissal or suspension, in fact he can be given orderly room punishment'..... So it depends on the nature of the offense, but if is just because of people's noise..... such an officer can be transferred or confined to the barracks pending the time the issue will fizzle out within the public domain..... **Extract 4: IDI/male/35years/Gazette officer**

In addition, another officer responded that:

.....punishment for police misconduct could in form of garnishing order or fine (in this the

police authority will pay some amount of money as damages to the victim because of the error committed by their staff) and such staff can also face reduction in rank or major entry (denial of promotion) but the truth is that the officer can only be punished if he is found guilty by the authority not by the citizens.....

Extract 5: IDI/male/40years/Inspector

According to many of the interviewee, the dimension of punishment against police brutality in Nigeria varies and there is no specific punishment for a particular misconduct but the punishment is determine by several factors within the police authority. Also what civilians call police brutality in most case are just mere police misconduct and not a serious offence that attract punishments. Hence, the police authority and judicial system are the only institution that can determine if is just misconduct or brutality and also if the officer involve can be punish or not and the kinds of punishment such officer can faced.

Other strategies to reduce Police Brutality in Nigeria

Table5: Regression Analysis on how effective have protest in Nigeria and if reoccurrence of #EndSARS protest in Nigeria can help to reduce police brutality

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	0.202	1	0.202	0.558	0.455a
Residual	217.652	601	0.362		

Source: field Report, 2022.

Interpretation of the Regression Analysis:

If $F \leq$ then, there was a statistical significance in the relationship between the groups to be tested but if $F \geq$ then there was no statistical significance in the relationship between the groups to be tested, in the table below the F value which equal to 0.558 at p values=0.455 shows that there is no statistical relationship in re-occurrence of #EndSARS protest in Nigeria and methods of combating police brutality in the study area. That is, since P-value 0.455 0.05, then we conclude that protest in Nigeria does not have effect on police brutalities. This was in tandem with responses of the interviewee on what they can say on effect of #EndSARS Protest in correcting police extra



judicial activities in Nigeria. She affirmed that:

(Laugh).... The truth was that the protest caught government unawares at the beginning, which made it to be peaceful and goal oriented but after some days the politicians were able to have influence on some of the protesters that has lost value for existence.....it was these people that were used to change the wave of the protest on the government by hijacking the protest and turning it to a violent one, rather than the initial peaceful protest planned by the people. Government sponsored hoodlums and criminals to operate and this led to the death of many innocent citizens and most of the protesters succeeded in incurring series injuries. It was further escalated when the military was instructed to kill the protesters..... **Extract6: IDI/ Female/ Youth/21 years/Lagos State.**

In addition to this another youth affirmed that “youth should now channel their energy on defensive mechanism by using our traditional power and other spiritual power to confront any challenge thrown at them by government, because it has been realized now that officials of Nigeria government only care about their pocket and nothing else. Based on this all needed is total revolution such as launching a social war against them and not protest. Another one responded aggressively to the question that:

.....'See let me burst your brain' (let me surprise you) some of the 2020 protesters are still in detention till date, what can you say about that? See I am a Christian but forget religion and we should all have learnt our lessons by now, all we need is not protest but spiritual fortification, I don't mean going to church or mountain ooooo..... I mean fortifying ourselves with spiritual power like what our forefathers were using then..... Let us imagine that those soldiers bullet could not penetrate the youth and the youths were able to turn against them and killed all of them do you think police will still be on the road by now in fact there won't be ASUU strike because they will not want the

reoccurrence but because the youth were kill like Christmas chicken why won't they lock student home for months.....

Extract7: IDI/ male/ Youth/24 years/ Ondo State.

Finally, information from the interviewee across the selected states in the south western part of Nigeria, revealed several other ways through which effective positive attitude can be enforced on Nigeria police force and how the citizens without passing through the rigour of protest could force the men of Nigeria police to respect human right in their dealings with civilians. Some of recommended measures identified include severe punishment such as detention, dismissal from service, prosecution, spiritual fortification among others.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study conclude that police attitude to the civilians in the study area was cruel and there were cases of police brutality such as assault, false accusation, harassment of citizen etc. Also acknowledged that #EndSARS protest did not have significant effect on incidence of police brutality in the study area. Therefore, recommended that:

- The government should be sensitive to the feeling of the mass to avert societal unrest by providing urgent solution to reoccurring issues
- Members of the society should device other methods other than protest in addressing issues of abuse of right
- Proper punishment should be apportioned to any officers found guilty of brutalizing
- Police Authority should engaged in unbiased monitoring team to ensure their men did not abuse their constitutional power.
- Enlightenment programme should be conducted on proper methods to report police brutality in the society

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