

Social Media and Social Movement Decentralisation: The 2020 Nigerian EndSARS Social Movement



Ufuoma Oliver Komiti^{*}
&
Comfort E. Obaje, PhD[†]

Abstract

The main objective of this study was to examine how the use of the social media facilitated the decentralization of the 2020 Nigerian EndSARS social movement to global recognition. The study was anchored on technology determinism and resource mobilization theories. Mixed-methods research design was adopted. The questionnaire was administered to 500 active Nigerian social media users across 5 select major Nigerian towns: Abuja, Benin City, Birnin Kebbi, Lagos, and Warri through the social media and obtained 403 responses. The data collated were processed with the aid of the SPSS (vers. 20) while the analysis of testing of the formulated hypothesis was done with Chi-square. Ten offline respondents were interviewed and data generated were analysed qualitatively. The findings of the study were: the 2020 Nigerian EndSARS social movement was decentralized through social media, thus fast-tracking the spread of the movement to global recognition as 72.2% of the respondents believed that effective application of social media by users during the 2020 Nigerian EndSARS movement played a dominant role in facilitating the decentralization of the movement through the use of hashtags etc; and the social media significantly contributed to the rapid globalization of the movement. However, the findings showed that the impromptu and reactionary nature of the protests contributed to the decentralization strategy and the globalization of the movement. It was therefore recommended, among others that, proponents and promoters of social movements in the future should deploy social media, especially decentralization tactics to their social movement campaigns.

Keywords: *Decentralisation, Social Media, Globalisation, EndSARS, Social Movement*

Introduction

In October 2020, the world of social media was beset with news stories of EndSARS protests in Nigerian, which within a few days, spread to different parts of the world. However, 2020 was not the first time the term EndSARS was used on social media. From the available literature, it is apparent that the catchword "EndSARS" was first invented in 2016 and appeared first on social media (Twitter) in 2017 (Obia, 2020). It is believed that social media users and protesters framed the stories and issues around the EndSARS

^{*} Ufuoma Oliver Komiti, Department of Mass Communication, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria, +2347061823670 ufukom40@gmail.com

[†] Comfort E. Obaje, PhD, Department of Mass Communication, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria, +2347067983784 ene.obaje@uniben.edu

leading to the 2020 Nigerian EndSARS social movement (Omeni, 2022; Ugochukwu & Nwolu, 2021). The 2020 Nigerian EndSARS social movement consisted of widespread protests in major cities and towns in Nigeria against police brutality and later extended to include demands for good and accountable governance, spreading beyond Nigerian borders (Ekoh & George, 2021). The protests lasted literally for 17 days, from 4th to 20th October, 2020 (Iwuoha & Aniche, 2021), but are believed to have continued as riots in some cities and towns till 24th October 2020, making it a 20-day social movement.

The EndSARS protests were believed to be decentralised because they were not majorly directed or controlled by known individual leaders or activists. Decentralisation refers to a switch from the centre to the peripherals. According to Ozmen (2014, p.415), the concept of decentralisation expresses that the move “of authority from the centre to subordinate ends, is important both for more effective and productive management of the areas outside the centre organisation in public administration and for strengthening these areas in terms of democracy conception.” Social media decentralisation centres on “distributed architectures, where control and decision-making are shared by participants rather than being centralised in a single entity” (Kapoor, 2023). Social media are decentralised forms of media because each user, to a large extent, has a degree of authority to what they publish and what they see. Yet social media systems are centralised because each user is linked to a giant body with centre technological control.

The decentralisation of the 2020 EndSARS social movement could have some connections with social media decentralisation. Most campaigns of the EndSARS protests were on social media where the impetus for the movement was built. The dominant use of hashtags in the campaign helped in the decentralisation tactics of the movement. Agbashi *et al.* (2021) and *Amnesty International* (2021) observe that the hashtag – #EndSARS first surfaced on the Internet in 2017 via an individual’s Twitter handle following the gathering of hundreds of Nigerian youths (comprising activities and celebrities) across some streets to create awareness about SARS’ cruelty and the demands for its disbandment. In a slight contrast, Obia (2020) asserts that the hashtag actually “began on Twitter in 2016 as a protest against police brutality.” Obia adds that the real recent “protests began on 3 October 2020 after a video was shared on Twitter purportedly showing SARS officials killing a man and fleeing with his vehicle in the Delta region, Southern Nigeria.”

Therefore, how social media decentralisation facilitated the globalisation of the EndSARS movement was core of the problem that this study sought to unravel. The study filled the identified research gap by studying perception of Nigerian social media users on the impact of the social media decentralisation of the 2020 Nigerian EndSARS social movement. The study intended to contribute to on-going empirical and scientific debates on the subject by examining the impact of social media decentralisation on the 2020 EndSARS movement.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How did the use of social media facilitate the decentralisation of the 2020 Nigerian EndSARS social movement to global recognition?
2. What was the relationship between social media and the rapid globalisation of the 2020 Nigerian EndSARS social movement?

Hypotheses

H₀ There is no significant relationship between the use of the social media and the decentralisation of the 2020 Nigerian EndSARS movement to global recognition.

Literature Review

Understanding Social Movements

Social movements in the Global South and other places have been great forces of social change, especially in the 21st century. According to Turner et al. (2024), a social movement is "a loosely organized but sustained campaign in support of a social goal, typically either the implementation or the prevention of a change in society's structure or values. Although social movements differ in size, they are all essentially collective." Libre Texts (2020) believes that social movements are broad alliances of people who are connected through their shared interest in social change. Usually, social movements seek a particular societal change(s), seek to maintain the status quo or move to oppose certain change created or about to be created by social stakeholders. What differentiates social movements from other groups such as crowds is that social movements are usually structured or organised. Thus, it is clearer to conceive a social movement as an ordered or organised effort by a considerable number of people to revolutionise or oppose the change in some critical facets of a particular society. According to Libre Texts, for there to be a social movement, three major factors must be observed, namely; a degree of orderliness and organising, involvement to some extent in a large population of participants, and shared interests, which in totality is to reverse certain critical decisions or policies or to keep the status quo.

It suffices to note that prevalent poverty and misery, deficiency, discontentment, and frustration are precursors to the births of social movements though it has not been scientifically and empirically proved that the most deprived groups in a society are the most likely participants in social movements (Turner *et al.* 2024). This implies that people are likely to participate in social movements when they believe they have been deprived at one point or the other, and that the deprivation might continue unless they swiftly take radical and somewhat punitive measures against the unenviable incumbent order or status quo. Philipp *et al.* (2016) argue that the rise of social movements is due to the escalation of social struggles against severe socio-economic and political segregation as well as environmental crises arising from the rooted economic neo-liberalism of the modern era.

Social movements can also be explained as struggles for changes in extant unfavourable order and authorities between a mass of aggrieved people and usually the operators of apparatuses of powers. Tilly (as cited in Eren-Erdogmus & Ergun, 2017, p. 226) avers that "Social movements comprise an extended battle for authority between opponents and power holders." This buttresses the foregoing fact that a social movement thrives in the midst of wanton poverty, inequalities and grievances usually against the political and economic elites. This however, does not suggest that only the poor promote social movements as there have been cases of the affluence promoting movements in the most zealous manner. For instance, the two friends - Alicia Garza and Patrisse Cullors - and Opal Tometi, the trio who started Black Lives Matter in the United States were personally doing well economically (Encyclopedia of Arkansas, 2023).

For a further appreciation of the concept of social movements, it is pertinent to elucidate conceptual issues, such as social change, protests, social movement organisation, interest groups, etc.

Social Change: It involves any alteration in social relations. Deeksha (n.d.) succinctly puts social change thus:

When changes in social structure, social order, social values, certain customs and traditions, socio-cultural norms, code of conduct, way of conducting oneself in the society, standards, attitudes, customs, and traditions of the society, and related factors take place, it is said that there is social change.

Deeksha (n.d.) adds that “the process of socialization also changes accordingly. The individual who is an active member of society becomes an agent and target of social change. He brings social changes and also is influenced by such changes.”

In light of the above, social movement is a form of social change as it seeks to alter the particular existing social structure or opposes a change in the society. Factors attributed to the spread of social changes include the following; social movements, common motivations, shared needs, enduring suppression and oppression, communication impact, education, and technological changes (Deeksha n.d.).

Protests: Protest has been misconstrued as social movement in some quarters. Opp (2009) posits that protest is behaviour though there is disagreement on what kind of behaviour should be referred to as protest. Opp (2009, p. 33) adds that activities such as demonstrations against certain changes:

Initiating a petition or signing it in order to prevent or demand a government action, and boycotts that are intended to prevent or demand some of the actions of government or organisation. Sit-ins, street blockades, and occupying sites are other examples that are generally classified as protest actions.

While some protest activities are indices of social movements, some others may not. A protest in its simplistic form may be carried out by an individual but a social movement usually involves a huge amount of people. This assertion, however, has been disputed by many scholars of social movements. Conceiving protest concerning social movement, Opp (2009, p. 3) avers that:

Most social movement scholars conceive protest as a joint action. Thus, it is not a protest if a single citizen writes a harsh letter to a politician demanding the withdrawal of a decision. But if a group of individuals signed the letter, this counts as an act of protest.

The above submission of Opp (2009) is in line with Adisa (2021) who conceives protests in terms of social movements as “often regarded as physical or online activities that involve mass demonstrations in particular physical or virtual spaces.”

Interest Groups (IGs): Interest groups refer to any formal group of individuals or organisations with common concerns that strive to influence public policies for the common good of their members. Interest groups are also referred to as pressure groups, special interest groups, or advocacy groups (Ugwukah & Adam, 2010). Every interest

group has an intention to influence government policy to members' advantage. To Thomas (2024), "They attempt to achieve their goals by lobbying—that is, by attempting to bring pressure to bear on policymakers to gain policy outcomes in their favour." Interest groups are not the same as social movements though both concepts have some commonalities yet the former are usually formally organised. Interest groups serve or attempt to serve the collective and shared concerns of members of their groups while social movements seek to resist decisions, policies, etc. perceived to be anti-public or demand to keep the status quo. Interestingly, in some situations, activities of interest groups could lead to social movement, and social movement can culminate in the creation of an interest group.

Social Movement Organisations (SMOs): A social movement is conceived as combined efforts by comparatively powerless groups using extra-institutional means to promote or resist social change (e.g. political, cultural, economic, ethnic, sexual identity) in a society (University of Minnesota, 2007). However, social movement organisations are formal organisations engaged in activities for the advancement of a social movement's goals. In its simplest definition, SMOs are components of a particular social movement that share and help to drive the ideals of the movement. That is, a particular social movement usually, will have many SMOs pursuing its change agendas.

From the foregoing, it is clear that the term 'social movement' refers to a web of networks of social interfaces and collaborations of an array of individuals, groups, organisations, etc. with shared goals, involved in socio-cultural and socio-political conflicts to seek change or resist change in the social system. There are emergences of social movements for two basic reasons: when a handful of people are dissatisfied and displeased with the status quo and or when they try to create a new social order, in the process causing social unrest.

Social Media and Decentralisation of the EndSARS Movement

Decentralization refers to a switch from the center to the peripherals. According to Ozmen (2014, p.415), the concept of decentralisation expresses that the move "of authority from the centre to subordinate ends, is important both for more effective and productive management of the areas outside the centre organisation in public administration and for strengthening these areas in terms of democracy conception." Social media decentralisation centres on "distributed architectures, where control and decision-making are shared by participants rather than being centralised in a single entity" (Kapoor, 2023). Social media are decentralised forms of media because each user, to a large extent, has a degree of authority to what they publish and what they see. Yet social media systems are centralised because each user is linked to a giant body with centre technological control. The 2020 Nigerian EndSARS movement is perceived as decentralised movement due to its lacked of a central administrative or political leadership. This was also the view of Oyewole (2020) that EndSARS was a "decentralised social movement against police brutality in Nigeria."

The social media contributed immensely to making the EndSARS movement decentralised. Government and security could not possibly tame protest activities on social media because of the user-decentralized nature of social media. Various media influencers in Nigeria and across the world participated in the protests at least on social media first before considering replicating it on the streets. In Nigeria for instance, the few known influencers who promoted the movement were either arrested or arrest attempts

were made on them. A Nigerian musician and disc jockey, Obianuju Catherine Udeh, popularly known as DJ Switch had to hastily exile the country to avoid arrest due to her contributions to the spread of the movement, Haynes (2020). Haynes observes that:

As the movement gathered force, DJ Switch, a Lagos resident, shared more social media posts encouraging her followers – she has more than 900,000 on Instagram and more than 220,000 on Twitter – to march in the streets in peaceful protests. “I remember taking a picture on one of the days to say to my fans: if you have the opportunity to come out, do it, if you can’t, just do it online, but whatever you do, you must speak up, because this affects all of us.”

The social media especially Twitter, enabled the decentralisation of the EndSARS movement to have a smooth sail. Obia (2020) discloses that the movement started on 3rd October, 2020 “after a video was shared on Twitter purportedly showing SARS officials killing a man and fleeing with his vehicle in the Delta region, Southern Nigeria. Before long, decentralised and youth-led protests against police brutality spread within and outside Nigeria.” By way of reiteration, there seems to be ingenuity in the application of hashtags via Twitter and other social media platforms in prosecuting the ideals of the movement. Obia identifies these three ways EndSARS hashtags were used during the movement:

- a. Twitter was massively used to co-ordinate the protest actions of the movement, such as demonstration venues and to updating protesters on relevant happenings, and without Twitter it would have been difficult for protesters “to spread across the country to co-ordinate themselves in highly organised and effective ways” (Obia (2020)).
- b. Protesters used Twitter platforms to amplify conversations around the issues of the movement around the world using hashtags such as #EndSARS, #SARSMustEnd, #EndPoliceBrutality and #EndSARNow; “users wanted coverage of the protests by international news outlets and they saw this as a success, celebrating every clip of international media reportage” (Obia (2020)).
- c. Twitter was used to criticize brands and public figures considered to be opposed to the movement. In some cases, banks as well as actress Toyin Abraham, singer Burna Boy, President MuhammaduBuhari etc. were berated on Twitter for not tweeting #EndSARS and for not supporting the campaigns.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on two theories: technology determinism and resource mobilisation theories. The technology determinism theory is situated majorly within the field of media and communication studies. The theory is one of the theories classified under general information theories (Asemah *et al.*, 2017). According to *University of Kentucky* (n.d.), “Technological Determinism state that media technology shapes how we as individuals in a society think, feel, act, and how society are operates as we move from one technological age to another (Tribal- Literate- Print- Electronic) {sic}.” Asemah *et al.* (2017) believe that the term was a coinage of an American sociologist and economist, Thorstein Veblen (1857-1929). The theory proposes that people study, experience and think the way they do because of the items of information they receive via existing technology available to them. Media and communication, whether inter-persons,

conventional mass media, new media, and or social media, are routed and sustain in various technological devices. Audiences of the media encode the messages received and then transfer them directly or indirectly into their daily living. This also explains the communication cliché "The medium is then our message" as propounded by Marshall McLuhan in 1962. Importantly, the technology determinism theory was "introduced by Herbert Marshall McLuhan in his epic work, *The Medium Is the Message*, in 1964" (Ibout, 2022).

The theory assumes that existing technology defines the nature of a particular society, and so, technology is seen as the primary driver of a society's culture and it is a determining factor of the history of that society (Asemah et al., 2017). Pieces of evidence abound in the history of how various technological inventions ordered socio-cultural ways - from the tribal age to the literate age to the print age and the current electronic age. According to Oladele and Asemah (2022), the technology determinism theory has two identifiable hypotheses:

- a. The technology of a given society is a funder and mental influencer of the various ways in which a society exists.
- b. Changes in technology are the primary and most important source that lead to change in society." The theory is popular for its simplicity, straightforwardness, and clear explanations "that when new systems of technology are developed, the culture or society is immediately changed to reflect the senses needed to use the new technology" (Asemah et al., 2017).

However, the theory, like every other theory, is not without criticisms. Critics believe that the theory puts too much emphasis on technology being the determining factor of changes in a given society, thus neglecting other social factors and trying to isolate cause and effect. The technology determinism theory is significant to this study because of its applicability to social media, new media, and ICT studies. This study, *Nigerians perception on the social media and the globalisation of the 2020 Nigerian EndSARS social movement*, was majorly an attempt to study the interface between the social media and the EndSARS movement, given that the evolvment and capabilities of the social media depend on continuing emergence of new technologies.

The resource mobilisation theory on the other hand is a social movement theory that can easily be situated in sociology and political sciences. The theory focuses on the importance of the availability of appropriate resources in the emergence, development, and success of a social movement. The theory posits that certain people who have some grievances in a society may be able to mobilize the necessary resources to do something to reduce or eradicate those grievances. Sen and Avci (2016), define the term "resources" to include: money, labour, social status, knowledge, support of the media political elites, etc. Resource mobilisation is unique in that it provides a lucid explanation of the reasons certain grievances may lead to a successful social movement, and why others, even with similar grievances may not produce anything similar. Golhasani and Hosseinirad (2016) assert that "The resource mobilization (RM) theory was developed in the early 1970s to challenge social breakdown and relative deprivation theories that identify individual grievances as the primary stimulus for collective action." The theory can be argued as propounded by John McCarthy and Mayer Zald in 1977 (Crossman, 2020). Proponents of the theory believe that social movement organisations (SMOs) acquire resources in various ways: social movements self-produced resources, members' resources

aggregated to the movements, or make out ways through outside means which can be through small donations or in form of big funding. They argue that the centrality of the theory is that any successful social movement campaign must have being able to marshal resources and utilise same efficiently.

According to Crossman (2020) and LibreTexts (2020), the theory assumes that the type of resources being deployed defines the accomplishments of the movement. The theory is not without pitfalls as critics observe holes in overemphasis on resources, especially fiscal resources neglecting other key resources such as human beings and social media which is not too capital intensive. Some movements are effective without an influx of money and are more dependent upon the movement of members for time and labour (LibreTexts, 2020), for instance, the Nigerian 2020 EndSARS. Secondly, critics argue that other approaches or factors besides organisation resources are also necessary to wholly appreciate social movements. The resource mobilisation theory is pertinent to this study as it provided a lucid explanation of the reasons certain resources were mobilised for the success of the 2020 Nigerian EndSARS movement. The theory was used to explain how and what media resources were deployed to execute the movement to a global one.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods design. Mixed methods research like triangulation “facilitates validation of data through cross-verification from one or two methodological approaches or sources to increase the credibility and validity of the results” (Asemah *et al.*, 2012, p. 245). The population of the study comprised active Nigerian social media (especially Twitter and Facebook) users. *Social Media Stats Nigeria* (2024) observes that, among social media users in Nigeria, 57.2% are on Facebook, 14.06% are on Twitter followed by Instagram with 13.62% users, hence the preference for Facebook and Twitter in this study. The total number of Twitter users in Nigeria in 2020 when the EndSARS protests took place was 27 million (Sasu, 2024), and 23.88 million users for Facebook (Sasu, 2024 a). Not all the social media users are active, but most are active both on Facebook and Twitter (Petrocchi *et al.*, 2015).

The sample size of the study was 500, using the formula suggested by Wimmer and Dominick (as cited by Asemah *et al.*, 2012, p. 161) on larger population and multivariate studies “as follows: 50 = very poor; 100 = poor; 200 = fair; 300 = good; 500 = very good; 1000 = excellent.” The instruments for data collection were a questionnaire and an interview guide. Of the 500 copies of the questionnaire in Google forms administered to respondents through email, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Facebook platforms, 403 filled and were retrieved, while 10 offline respondents were interviewed. The 403 who responded represented an 80.6% response rate, which was valid for appropriate analysis. According to Baruch and Holton (as cited in Aduloju & Egunjobi, 2022, p. 5), “a response rate of 55% above is adequate to permit the analysis of data in a study.” The data collated were processed with the aid of the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 while the analysis of testing of formulated hypothesis was done with Chi-square. Interview data were presented qualitatively; answers from the key offline respondents were analysed according to the research questions, followed by explanations.

Data Presentation

Table 1: Social Media Facilitating Decentralisation of the EndSARS Movement

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	106	26.3	26.3	26.3
Agree	185	45.9	45.9	72.2
Neutral	47	11.7	11.7	83.9
Disagree	54	13.4	13.4	97.3
Strongly Disagree	11	2.7	2.7	100.0
Total	403	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The data in table 1 above show that a significant majority of respondents (72.2%) believed that the effective application of social media by users during the 2020 Nigerian EndSARS movement played a role in facilitating the decentralisation of the movement. This suggests that the social media empowered individuals to participate and collectively contributed to decentralising and rapid globalisation of the movement.

Table 2: Promotion of the EndSARS Movement by Leading Mobilisers and Influencers on Social Media Using Decentralisation Tactics

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	136	33.7	33.7	33.7
Agree	175	43.4	43.4	77.1
Neutral	46	11.4	11.4	88.5
Disagree	37	9.2	9.2	97.7
Strongly Disagree	9	2.2	2.2	100.0
Total	403	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The finding in Table 2 above indicates that a majority of respondents (77.1%) believed that leading mobilisers and influencers were instrumental in promoting the 2020 Nigerian EndSARS movement on social media through decentralisation tactics. This suggests that leading mobilisers and influencers promoted the globalisation of the 2020 EndSARS movement on social media using decentralisation tactics.

Table 3: Hashtags Contribution to Decentralisation of the EndSARS Movement

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	121	30.0	30.0	30.0
Agree	169	41.9	41.9	71.9
Neutral	56	13.9	13.9	85.9

Disagree	47	11.7	11.7	97.5
Strongly Disagree	10	2.5	2.5	100.0
Total	403	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The finding in Table 3 above reveals that a significant majority (71.9%) of respondents believed that the use of related hashtags on social media was instrumental to the decentralisation and rapid spread of the 2020 EndSARS protests across the world. This suggests that hashtags served as effective decentralisation tool in globalising the movement.

Table 4: Hashtags - EndSARS, Police Brutality, Rape, Extortion, Assaults, Intimidation, Extrajudicial Killings as Decentralising Connectors of EndSARS

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	150	37.2	37.2	37.2
Agree	171	42.4	42.4	79.6
Neutral	33	8.2	8.2	87.8
Disagree	36	8.8	8.9	96.7
Strongly Disagree	13	3.2	3.2	100.0
Total	403	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The data in Table 4 above reveal that a significant majority (79.6%) of respondents believed that hashtags related to issues like "EndSARS," "police brutality," "rape," and others were common decentralising connectors of the 2020 Nigerian EndSARS movement on social media. This suggests that these hashtags served as powerful tools for mobilising and organising participants in facilitating the decentralisation of the movement.

Table 5: International Recognition of the pro-EndSARS Campaigns without the Maximum Application of the Social Media like Twitter and Facebook

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Agree	212	52.6	52.6	52.6
Agree	129	32.0	32.0	84.6
Neutral	13	3.2	3.2	87.8
Disagree	39	9.7	9.7	97.5
Strongly Disagree	10	2.5	2.5	100.0
Total	403	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, 2023

The data provided in table 5 above suggest that a majority (84.6%) of the respondents believed that without the maximum application of social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook in the pro-EndSARS campaigns, the movement would not have been

recognised internationally. This suggests that the social media was pivotal in the international recognition of the EndSARS movement.

Analysis of In-Depth Interview

Results from the interview suggest that the application of the social media facilitated the decentralisation of the EndSARS movement to global recognition. All the offline respondents interviewed affirmed that the social media contributed immensely to the decentralisation of the movement towards securing global attention. For instance, one of the activists interviewed (who claimed to have participated in the movement in Warri) revealed that the social media was also used to push some templates for successful rallies or protests and that that helped the movement to pick up steam in various cities and towns. She retorted that the "social media allowed people to share information, coordinate their efforts, and organise protests without the need for central authority or leader. This helped to ensure that the movement remained decentralised and everyone had a voice in the movement."

Another angle some of the interviewees perceived the decentralisation from is that the events leading to the movement were the major factors responsible for the decentralised nature of the protests and not just the use of social media. To O. O. Akinola in Lagos, it was an unplanned and impromptu protest and a reaction to police cruelty. Regardless of whatever platforms used, the impromptu and reactionary nature of the protest would always make it decentralised. This implies that besides the impact of the social media in helping the movement to be decentralised, the spontaneous emergency and evolving of the EndSARS movement was also a factor that facilitated the decentralisation. According to S. Echenim, there was no time for leadership enthronement.

Broadcaster M. K. Ikpen from Nigerian Television Authority Abuja observed that there was deployment of certain devices like hashtags, shares, tweet and retweets which helped the decentralisation and consequently enhancing the movement's global outreach. He maintained that leading "influencers latched on to what was trending about the movement to expand and grow their influences on the cyber space. The protests afforded yet another opportunity to influence and be counted among those who participated in the protests." M. K. Ikpen added that "there were users with few followers who posted weird and obscene comments, audio and motion images about the protests and for that, earned large followership on the social media within a short time." P. N. Komiti, (a lawyer who also said he participated in the protests in Benin) concurred with the view of M. K. Ikpen. According to P. N. Komiti:

The tactics of decentralisation and the use of hashtags helped to raise awareness about the movement, mobilise people to join the protests, and put pressure on the government to take action. By not having a central leader or figurehead, the movement was able to move at its own pace and everyone had a voice in the movement. This also helped to protect the movement from being taken down by bad actors or the government. It was important to have a decentralised movement because different people had different experiences and pain from the police brutality and violence, and everyone needed to have a voice in the movement.

All the offline respondents agreed that the use of specific hashtags made the movement to trend easily on social media and emblazon all over the world. They listed certain hashtags such as EndSARS, police brutality, rape, extortion, assaults, intimidation, and extrajudicial killings as preeminent among others. To journalist S.Echenim, “Once the people are mobilised with relevant hashtags, it is like wide fire. You don’t have to wait for any leader.”

The interviewees also confirmed that the 2020 Nigerian EndSARS movement started with a tweet. O. Yusuff, an activist, postgraduate student of computer science and avid Twitter user in Birnin Kebbi, observed that the use of social media facilitated the 2020 Nigerian EndSARS, giving it the needed publicity. He added that “social media played a big role in transmitting the events of the movement thereby gaining global recognition.” Thus, social media activities during the movement led to the quick globalising of the movement as social media became easy platforms through which the movement spread.

Testing of Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between the application of the social media and the decentralisation of the EndSARS movement to global recognition. The study used data in Tables 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 for testing the acceptance or otherwise of the hypothesis as seen in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Relationship between social media application and decentralisation of EndSARS to global recognition

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	547.294 ^a	56	.000
Likelihood Ratio	257.406	56	.000
N of Valid Cases	403		

a. 58 cells (80.6%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .00.

The Chi-Square test results indicate a significant relationship between the decentralisation of the EndSARS protests and the successes of the movement. The p-value for both the Pearson Chi-Square test and the Likelihood Ratio test is less than 0.001 ($p < 0.001$), which means that the relationship is statistically significant. Therefore, based on the data and the test results, the null hypothesis (H_0) that there is no significant relationship between the application of the social media and the decentralisation of the EndSARS movement to global recognition can be rejected. Instead, there is a statistically significant association between social media and decentralisation of the movement to global status.

Discussion of Findings

A major focus of this study was to examine the application of the social media in facilitating decentralisation of the 2020 Nigerian EndSARS social movement to global recognition. First and foremost, findings align with the existing literature as most (72.2%) of the respondents believed that the effective application of social media by users during the EndSARS protests played a role in facilitating the decentralisation of the movement. This suggests that social media empowered individuals to participate and lead collectively, contributing to a decentralised structure within the movement. This affirms

the view that social media decentralisation centres on "distributed architectures, where control and decision-making are shared by participants rather than being centralised in a single entity" (Kapoor, 2023).

Leading mobilisers and influencers were instrumental to promotion of the movement on social media through decentralisation tactics – 77.1% of the respondents held the perception that influencers and mobilisers had a noteworthy impact in spreading and mobilising support for the movement through decentralised means on social media platforms, thus leading to a rapid globalisation of the movement. For instance, findings reveal that the majority (71.9%) of the population believed that the use of certain hashtags on social media was instrumental to the decentralisation of the protests. This suggests that hashtags served as an effective tool for mobilising and organising participants in decentralising movements. According to findings, 79.6% of the respondents believed that hashtags related to the movement like "EndSARS," "police brutality," "rape," etc. were common decentralising connectors of the 2020 Nigerian EndSARS movement on social media. This was also the position of Oyewole (2020) as seen in the literature review. Findings suggest that without the maximum application of the social media like Twitter and Facebook in the pro-EndSARS campaigns, the protests would have not been recognised internationally. This was supported by majority (84.6%) of the respondents. This was also the position of Obia (2020). All these perspectives cumulatively suggest that social media played a pivotal role in spreading awareness and gaining international attention for the EndSARS movement; thus underscoring the significant relationship between the social media and the rapid globalisation of the 2020 Nigerian EndSARS social movements.

Importantly, most of the interviewees were in uniformity with the above submissions which sums up means that the application of social media contributed immensely to the decentralisation of the movement towards securing global attention. For instance, one of the activists interviewed (who also participated in the movement in Warri) revealed that social media was also used to push some templates for successful rallies or protests, and that escalated the movement in various cities and towns. This also allowed people to share information, coordinate their efforts, and organise protests without the need for a central authority or leader. This helped to ensure that the movement remained decentralised and everyone had a voice in the movement. Then there was the deployment of certain devices like hashtags which helped the decentralisation in equipping the movement's global outreach. Leading influencers capitalised on trends about the movement to exert and grow their influence in cyberspace. These also accentuate certain elements of the technology determinism theory that existing technology defines the nature of a particular society, and so, technology is seen as the primary driver of a society's culture and it is a determining factor of the history of that society (Asemah *et al.*, 2017). As seen in the findings, social media were the driving force of the decentralisation of the movement. The social media are being driven by new media technology and devices. Thus, there were users with few followers who posted weird and obscene comments, audio, and motion images about the protests and for that, earned large followership on social media almost immediately. A key offline respondent and lawyer interviewed in Benin City, P. N. Komiti, concurring posited that:

The tactics of decentralisation and the use of hashtags helped to raise awareness about the movement, mobilise people to join the protests, and put pressure on

the government to take action. By not having a central leader or figurehead, the movement was able to move at its own pace and everyone had a voice in the movement. This also helped to protect the movement from being taken down by bad actors or the government. It was important to have a decentralised movement because different people had different experiences and pain from the police brutality and violence, and everyone needed to have a voice in the movement.

All the offline respondents agreed that the use of specific hashtags made the movement to trend easily on social media, and emblazoned across the world, and listed hashtags such as EndSARS, police cruelty, rape, extortion, assaults, intimidation, extrajudicial killings etc. as high-flying. To S. Echenim, an interviewee and journalist in Lagos, "Once the people are mobilised with hashtags, it is like wide fire. You don't have to wait for any leader." The findings agree with Adisa (2021): "The #EndSARS hashtag was used to organize the protests on social media. The EndSars protests introduced new hashtags such as #EndPoliceBrutality, #NassSalaryCut, #EndSWAT, #EndBadGovernanceInNigeriaNow and many more."

Contrarily, some of the offline respondents perceived that the events leading to the movement were the major factors responsible for the decentralisation of the protests, and not just the use of social media. It was an unplanned and impromptu protest and a reaction to police brutality. Regardless of whatever platform aside from the social media that could have been used, the impromptu and reactionary nature of the protest would always make it decentralised. This implies that the spontaneity of the movement as a factor facilitated the decentralisation, devoid of any procrastination that could lead to leadership enthronement or dethronement.

More so, one of the interviewees and news producer at NTA Abuja, M. K. Ikpen revealed that the consciousness grew with the hashtag EndSARS (#endsars) and Nigerians (and non-Nigerians) in other parts of the world displayed solidarity with the youths back at home by equally posting their own photos and videos of solidarity protests. Social actors focus on the potency of the social media in creating social, political awareness and mobilising political protests in the country. The interviewees also confirmed that the 2020 Nigerian EndSARS movement started with a tweet, thus corroborating with the existing literature that the movement began after an individual tweeted an alleged video of SARS official shooting a youth and carting away with his car in Ughelli (Adisa, 2021). O. Yusuff, an activist, postgraduate student of computer science and avid Twitter user in Birnin Kebbi, observed that the use of social media facilitated the 2020 Nigerian EndSARS, giving it the needed publicity. He added that "social media played a big role in transmitting the events of the movement thereby gaining global recognition." Thus, social media activities during the movement led to quick globalising of the movement as the social media became easy platforms through which the movement spread.

From the foregoing, findings agree with certain assumptions of the *resource mobilisation theory*. The theory assumes that the type of resources being deployed shapes the activities of the movement (LibreTexts, 2020). As seen in the above discussion, social media were the major resources deployed by aggrieved persons, protesters, and proponents of the movement in the global spread and decentralization of the 2020 Nigerian EndSARS movement. The movement became decentralized and global through

the active and overwhelming use of the overriding influence of social media resources. A hypothesis has emerged from the study, which has the potential of translating into a theory, if it is proven by further empirical studies, thus leading to the emergency of the following: *Social media decentralisation of social movement can fast track the rapid globalisation of the particular social movement.*

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study became pertinent following the engagement of social media in the success of the 2020 EndSARS protests across the world. Based on the findings of the study, social media facilitated the decentralisation of the 2020 Nigerian EndSARS movement through the overwhelming deployment of relevant hashtags, tweets, retweets, sharings, sensational video pieces of evidence of alleged police brutalities, and protest activities. This enabled the global recognition of the movement. There was also effective display of framing as the study reveals that there is a strong relationship between the social media and the rapid globalisation of the 2020 Nigerian EndSARS social movement – through the social media, the movement was born, breaded, bred, and borne across the world. However, other factors such as international and corporate organisation support of the movement, and the impromptu and reactionary nature of the protests also contributed to the decentralisation strategy vis-à-vis the globalisation of the movement. Therefore, the study recommended: Proponents and promoters of social movements in the future should deploy the social media, especially decentralisation tactics to their social movement campaigns, and government officials saddled with information management and those in ministries of information should invest more in the social media, and make sure they and the governments they represent have solid and vibrant presence in the social media across all platforms.

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