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THE #ENDSARS PROTESTS AND THE 2023 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ETI-OSA, IKEJA, AND ALIMOSHO LGAS.

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ABSTRACT

End SARS, widely written as #EndSARS, was a decentralized social movement and series of mass protests against police brutality in Nigeria that mainly occurred in 2020. More and more victims of the SARS have made the news these past years sparking each time a lot of indignation on social media and sometimes protests. The social media dimension to the protests made it significant as it spreads to other parts of the country and indeed, the impact of the protests has lingered. During the 2023 presidential elections, the memory of the #EndSARS protests resurged and voters' choices was impacted by it. This paper is an empirical investigation of the impacts of #EndSARS on process and outcome of the 2023 presidential elections as held in Lagos State. The paper adopted the Social Movement theory as theoretical guide. The paper used a multi-stage sampling process. In the first phase, three geopolitical LGAs (Eti-Osa, Ikeja, and Alimosho) were purposely chosen due to the high concentration of #EndSARS protest activities in the areas. Next, in proportion to the total number of respondents in each of the aforementioned strata, a simple random sampling technique was used to select 400 eligible voters for questionnaire administration, out of which 384 were retrieved and used for analysis. The inferential statistical method of chi-square with the aid of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the empirical data for the study. The paper found the nature and extent of military involvement in the ENDSARS protest, particularly the alleged actions against protesters at the Lekki Toll Gate, and how it influence the overall trajectory of the protest and how the ENDSARS protest contributed to the popularity and support for the "Obidient" movement and its candidate, Peter Obi, among Nigerian youth, and the specific grievances and demands resonated with the movement's platform, thus handling of the ENDSARS protest by the APC-led federal government, and the aftermath of the protest, influence voter sentiment and the voting pattern in Lagos State towards the party's presidential candidate. Therefore, the paper recommended that youth grievances should always be addressed promptly by governments in power, and that comprehensive security sector reform be prioritized so that democratic institutions and procedures can be strengthened to regain public trust.

Keywords: #ENDSARS Protest, Military Violence, Presidential Election, Police Brutality, Voter Choices

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INTRODUCTION

The EndSARS protest was a youth-led movement that emerged in Nigeria on 20th, October 2020, primarily advocating for the disbandment of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a unit within the Nigerian Police Force.

The Police Special Anti-Robbery Squad in Nigeria was established in 1992. It was founded as a division of the State Criminal Investigation and Intelligence Department with the mandate of combating crime, especially armed robbery and theft in Lagos and southern Nigeria, where armed robbers and bandits became very notorious, they do dress in plain clothes and drove in regular vehicles that could not be associated with any government agency or security outfit. During the early days of Special Anti-Robbery Squad, they focused on tracking radio communications that were linked with armed robbers; they were highly successful in arresting the culprits. However, over time, Special Anti-Robbery Squad was said to have shifted from their primary mission of conducting covert operations to erecting roadblocks and extorting money from civilians through intimidation and use of force. Their activities became endemic with extreme brutality, torture, and murder of their victims at several unfortunate incidents.

Unfortunately, cybercrime became more widespread in Nigeria in the early 2000s, SARS officers were also accused of profiling people on the streets in order to arrest perpetrators, and actively intimidating and

extorting those they considered suspicious. For instance, they believed that anyone that had a laptop might be using it for Internet fraud. Young people were mostly targeted as wearing expensive clothes, watches, dreadlocks or tattoos were associated with “Yahoo boys” and the accused were arrested and beaten up. These activities sparked outrage both at home and among Nigerians in the Diaspora, prompted numerous promises of change by the Nigerian government. Youths were the major victim of SARS in Nigeria and therefore many of the protesters were youths. According to the Center for Democratic and Development report, ‘the protest was largely organized by young, educated persons who used social media to mobilize, make calls to other parties and publicized the protest’ (CDD, 2021). Hence the information could be shared, activities could be coordinated and the demands of the movement could be relayed through the use of social media platforms thereby demonstrating how far digital activism has advanced in the social movements of the today’s society (Ibezim-Ohaeri, 2021).

The ENDSARS protest started as a protest against one facet of police brutality and human rights abuse by the SARS unit of the Nigerian police force, but evolved into a more general protest demanding better governance and respect for human rights in Nigeria. It was made more robust partly by the Nigerian youths who were involved in the protest and whose major issues include

systemic issues, socio-economic injustices and failures, and impunity in Nigeria (Olaiya, 2022). However, the government response to the protest especially; the reported military shooting at the protesters at Lekki Toll Gate raised alarm on further human right abuses and even questioned the government integrity of not protecting their citizens. The ENDSARS protest and its aftermath effect on the character of the 2023 general election in Nigeria, more so in Lagos State that has remained APC's stronghold in Nigeria since 1999. Another significant consequence of the protest was the emergence of the "Obidient" movement-a support group for Mr Peter Obi, the candidate of the Labour Party in the 2023 presidential election

During the protest, there were issues being raised over the actions and the conduct of the government particularly the perceived involvement of the military forces in the suppression of the protesting individuals. The attack of protesters at Lekki Toll Gate on 20th October 2020 where security operatives were alleged to have opened fire on peaceful protesters became a trend that characterized the movement (Amnesty International 2020; BBC News, 2020). Amnesty International, in a report titled "Nigeria: AI report: According to the report titled 'Authorities must end brutal crackdown on protesters,' amnesty international states, 'There is credible evidence that Nigerian security forces fired live bullets at protesters at Lekki Toll Gate, Lagos (2020). Demands to stop working against the government and especially the

alleged violence against the protesters' rights have been voiced by local and international human rights organizations and other people. For instance, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet averred that shooting of protesters by the military in Lagos on 20 October could push the crisis to the brink. It stated that the military cannot continue to exercise violence without legal restraints (UN News, 2020).

With reference to Adesoji and Hammed (2021), several researchers and analysts have engaged in analyzing the concept of EndSARS protests with special emphasis on aspects such as occurrences, processes and impacts of the protest in the Nigeria sociopolitical setting, many readers have been be able to comprehend what occurred, from the protest against police brutality to demanding for better governance in Nigeria, it has helps people to understand how people in different parts of the world use social media to express themselves, and how protestors in different parts of the world organize. Ademolu (2021) believe that it is imperative to study the EndSARS protests within Nigeria's democratic narrative because that is how we understand the extent to which the government failed to grasp the yearning of the youth. Similarly, the protests are considered by Nwankwo (2020) as the evidence of youths' growing dissatisfaction with socio-economic and political status in Nigeria. While these works are useful to explain the origin and dynamics of EndSARS protests, there is a paucity of

related literature on the impacts of the protest particularly on the 2023 presidential elections in Lagos State. Given these observed realities between the protest, the “Obidient” movement and the general elections, particularly in Lagos State context, this research aims to embark on an empirical assessment to gain a better understanding of these complex interrelationships. Such an investigation would not only be quite useful in establishing the roles the social movements and youths have played in the politics of change in Nigeria but also in identifying the new and progressive demands with respect to governance, accountability and human rights that have emerged in contemporary Nigeria.

Literature Review

It is noteworthy that the protest movements have been increasingly influenced by the use of digital technologies and social networks in the recent time. Internet-based technologies that have enhanced the swift sharing of information, coordination of people from different nationalities, and decentralized organizing and chanting (Ademolu, 2021; Oni & Oniemola, 2022). But it also poses new risks including fake news, surveillance and hackers, that protestors face (Danielson, 2021). Thus, protests can be viewed as a vivid illustration of the fact that true democracy is only possible with direct participation of people and constant monitoring of powers. They are a way of ensuring that the leadership is checked, conveying the concerns of the oppressed, and calling for change at the societal and politics level (Chenoweth, 2021). Reform is

not always an easy process but the demonstrators are evidence that mass non-violent movements have the ability to bring about signification change in the process.

The roots of the ENDSARS protest can be attributed to the continued allegations of human rights abuses against the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) reportedly to have carried out acts of extrajudicial killing of citizens, torture, unlawful arrest, and extortion among others as revealed by Amnesty International (2020). As protesters took to social media to express their supports for the EndSARS movement, hashtags such as *#EndSARS*; *#EndSARSNow*; *#SARSMustEnd*, and *#EndPoliceBrutality* among others trended extensively. Twitter once again became a vital tool in the mobilization for popular protests (see Pavan and Rapini, 2020). Young people – many who received inspiration and supports from the *#EndSARS* movement, rallied the waves of protests to locations around the country by either posting their locations asking for reinforcements or by identifying strategic protest locations and asking others to join.

Those protesters that were unable to participate at protest grounds followed the protests on Twitter. At some designated protest locations, protesters converged in peaceful demonstrations, marched around the streets and major highways, carrying banners with slogans such as *#EndSARS* and *#EndPoliceBrutalityinNigeria* among several others. Solidarity protests and demonstrations by Nigerians in the diaspora and sympathizers also occurred in many

major cities of the world including London, New York, Canada and Germany among others. The protesters design visuals images and symbols also served as resourceful modes of expressing resistance (Awopetun and Chiluwa, 2023). According to Olarewaju (2020), social media feeds were filled with powerful images of the protests, providing real-time visual documentation of this crucial moment of history. Nigerian individual and professional photographers not only captured some critical moments of the protests but also revealed some shocking scenes of police brutality as they “tell a story of strength and hope. According to punch newspaper (2021) Unfortunately, the EndSARS protests turned violent as the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) disrupted the protests in some cities, throwing teargas, and shooting at unarmed protesters at Abuja and other states. One Jimoh Isiaq was allegedly shot and killed at Ogbomoso in Oyo State. Violence soon spread to various Nigerian cities as the protests were said to be hijacked by “hoodlums.” Also, certain group of protesters emerged at Abuja, who expressed supports for SARS and the government with counter narratives that demanded an end to the protests. Several buildings, and government houses, including prisons, were destroyed. Warehouses, malls, and shopping centers were also looted. The general insecurity and lawlessness in the country then warranted government’s mobilization of the military and the NPF to forestall the disorder. Unfortunately, on the 20th of October, the Nigerian military forces fired live ammunition at the EndSARS

demonstrators at the Lekki Toll Gate in Lagos who had sat down on the road in protest, reportedly killing at least fifteen people.

According to Irede (2022), nearly two years after the historic #EndSARS protests of Nigerian police brutality, the youth arrowheads of the campaign have become an army of political supporters. Now the ‘Obidients’, many of the notable figures of #EndSARS channel their energy towards the presidential campaign of the Labour Party candidate, Peter Obi. With Nigeria’s Presidential election a mere seven months away, they have ignited the political candidature of a man who, without their zeal, would have remained a marginal contestant.

The Daily Post (2022) also reported that EndSARS protest will push Nigerian youths to fully participate in the country’s general elections as it served as an eyes-opener that young Nigeria can influence critical decision in the country. Memory of the Lekki massacre was resurfaced on the internet as some politicians accused of masterminding the unfortunate shooting End SARS protestant, are now running for political offices. Many celebrities who coordinated the End SARS protest were campaigning against the voting of old and incompetent perceived politician.

Theoretical Framework

For the purpose of guiding this work, the Social Movement Theory (SMT) has been selected as the core theoretical framework. As popularized by Della Porta and Diani (2020), SMT is a theoretical approach used

to explain characteristics, dynamics, and impact of social movements. In its basic form, SMT presupposes that social movements are a collective response to injustice, or an external group, or both a set of needs that are unmet or satisfied inadequately by formal institutions or power relations (Della Porta & Diani, 2020). This was evident in the EndSARS protest as the youths in Nigeria demonstrated against issues like police brutality, corruption, and socio-economic injustice that has prevailed under different administrations in Nigeria. SMT claims that, through what is referred to as framing, social movements construct their grievances, targets and how they foster the collective identification process (Benford and Snow 2000). Therefore, the EndSARS protesters were able to coalesce their action in the areas of police reform and the injustice, brutality, governance, and youth unemployment issues. This framing process was particularly appealing to a significant portion of the Nigerian populace especially the youth resulting to the success of the movement.

SMT also focus on the concept of resource acquisition, which can be described as the ability of social movements to garner various resources such as political and fiscal support, organizational infrastructure, and communicating instruments to support social movement goals (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). One of the most noticeable assets of the EndSARS protests was the capability to mobilize resources needed; the protest movements used platforms such as Twitter and Facebook to call out for protests, seek

support, and share their message both within the country and internationally. Further, SMT looks at how a society either encourages or limits the activities of a social movement in the political sphere (Meyer & Minkoff, 2004). However, in the case of the EndSARS protest, repressive actions from authorities meant that the movement did not have many positive outlets for political activities at the initial stages of the protest. But as the protest amplify and got international attention reasonably, the political circumstance transformed correspondingly for the government to bargain and submit to the protesters demand such as the disbandment of SARS.

In other words, SMT recognizes that social movements may aim at influencing and can be influenced by political processes and outcomes such as electoral processes (Della Porta & Diani, 2020). For this reason, one can assert that the EndSARS protests made a tremendous contribution to the development of political discourse and narratives before the 2023 general election in Nigeria. This is still very true to the extent that the demands of the protesters put pressure on political parties and political candidates to feign support for the protest or even turn protesting into their own action plan (Ojewunmi, 2021). SMT application in the proposed study will allow the researchers to comprehend how the EndSARS protests as a social movement structurally framed their grievances, mobilised resources, and responded to

political opportunities in the build up to the 2023 presidential election in Lagos State.

Methodology

In order to achieve the research objectives, the research design will be conducted using mixed method. The quantitative part shall entail the administration of surveys to facilitate the collection of perceptions, attitudes, and votes regarding the ENDSARS protest and the 2023 general elections in Lagos State. While the qualitative component entails ethnographic method which involve personal observation, interviews as well as focus group discussions in order to explore the key issues, drivers, factors and feelings influencing the respondents' knowledge, beliefs and attitudes. To achieve this general objective, three research questions were raised:

- 1) 1.What was the nature and extent of military involvement in the ENDSARS protest, particularly the alleged actions against protesters at the Lekki Toll Gate, and how did this influence the overall trajectory of the protest?
- 2) 2.How did the ENDSARS protest contribute to the popularity and support for the "Obidient" movement and its candidate, Peter Obi, among Nigerian youth, and what specific grievances and demands resonated with the movement's platform?
- 3) 3.How did the handling of the ENDSARS protest by the APC-led federal government, and the aftermath of the protest, influence voter sentiment and the voting pattern in Lagos State

towards the party's presidential candidate?

The study population are the voters in the three local government areas (LGAs) of Lagos State; Eti-Osa, Ikeja and Alimosho where the ENDSARS protest was particularly intense, specifically, they are parts of Lagos State that were iconic to the ENDSARS movement.

For sampling, the study used a multi-stage sampling method for selecting the sample of the study to ensure that it is research worthy. In the first phase, three geopolitical LGAs (Eti-Osa, Ikeja, and Alimosho) where purposively selected due to intense concentration of the ENDSARS protest activity within the areas. Next, in proportion to the total number of respondents in the each of the above-mentioned stratum, a simple random sampling technique was used, the initial plan was to sample opinion of every election participant, unfortunately people were reluctant to fill questioners on the day of election, however, 400 sample size of eligible voters that participated in the election who were ready to fill the questioners were given questioners, 384 responded. For the qualitative part, a purposive sampling strategy was used to select 20 participants for the interviews among people that came to vote from the three LGAs.

Statistical package (SPSS) through which the inferential statistical test was employed to examine the relationships between variables and test the research questions. Meanwhile, qualitative data from the in-depth

interviews was analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. The data was transcribed, coded, and organized into

Quantitative Empirical Analyses

themes and sub-themes based on the research objectives and emerging patterns.

Research Question 1: What was the nature and extent of military involvement in the ENDSARS protest, particularly the alleged actions against protesters at the Lekki Toll Gate, and how did this influence the overall trajectory of the protest?

SN	Questionnaire Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree	Agree
1.	I witnessed military personnel present at the Lekki Toll Gate during the ENDSARS protest.	25 (6.5%)	30 (7.8%)	55 (14.3%)	120 (31.3%)	154 (40.1%)
2.	The military used excessive force against the protesters at the Lekki Toll Gate.	40 (10.4%)	45 (11.7%)	70 (18.2%)	115 (29.9%)	114 (29.7%)
3.	There were casualties among the protesters due to the actions of the military at the Lekki Toll Gate.	35 (9.1%)	50 (13.0%)	80 (20.8%)	130 (33.9%)	89 (23.2%)
4.	The military's involvement at the Lekki Toll Gate was justified to maintain law and order.	130 (33.9%)	110 (28.6%)	65 (16.9%)	50 (13.0%)	29 (7.6%)
5.	The military's actions at the Lekki Toll Gate were disproportionate to the situation.	25 (6.5%)	40 (10.4%)	60 (15.6%)	135 (35.2%)	124 (32.3%)
6.	The military's presence and actions at the Lekki Toll Gate escalated the tensions during the protest.	30 (7.8%)	45 (11.7%)	70 (18.2%)	140 (36.5%)	99 (25.8%)
7.	The military showed restraint and tried to de-escalate the situation at the Lekki Toll Gate.	120 (31.3%)	130 (33.9%)	80 (20.8%)	35 (9.1%)	19 (4.9%)
8.	The military's involvement at the Lekki Toll Gate violated the rights of the protesters.	30 (7.8%)	40 (10.4%)	65 (16.9%)	125 (32.6%)	124 (32.3%)

(71.4% agreed or strongly agreed). respondents witnessed military personnel present at the Lekki Toll Gate during the ENDSARS protest. (59.6%) believed that the

military used excessive force against the protesters, and 57.1% acknowledged that there were casualties among the protesters due to the actions of the military.

Interestingly, 62.5% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the military's involvement was justified to maintain law and order, suggesting a perception of excessive or unnecessary use of force. Additionally, 67.5% of respondents felt that the military's actions were disproportionate to the situation, and 62.3% believed that the military's presence and

actions escalated tensions during the protest. Particularly, 65.2% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the military showed restraint and tried to de-escalate the situation at the Lekki Toll Gate. Furthermore, 64.9% of respondents believed that the military's involvement at the Lekki Toll Gate violated the rights of the protesters.

Research Question 2: How did the ENDSARS protest contribute to the popularity and support for the "Obidient" movement and its candidate, Peter Obi, among Nigerian youth, and what specific grievances and demands resonated with the movement's platform?

SN	Questionnaire Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree	Agree
1.	The ENDSARS protest made me more aware of the need for good governance and accountability.	20 (5.2%)	30 (7.8%)	60 (15.6%)	150 (39.1%)	124 (32.3%)
2.	The ENDSARS protest motivated me to support candidates like Peter Obi who advocated for reforms and change.	25 (6.5%)	40 (10.4%)	70 (18.2%)	140 (36.5%)	109 (28.4%)
3.	The grievances and demands of the ENDSARS protesters resonated with Peter Obi's campaign platform.	30 (7.8%)	45 (11.7%)	80 (20.8%)	135 (35.2%)	94 (24.5%)
4.	The ENDSARS protest did not impact my support for Peter Obi or the "Obidient" movement.	110 (28.6%)	130 (33.9%)	70 (18.2%)	50 (13.0%)	24 (6.3%)
5.	The ENDSARS protest made me more critical of the traditional political establishment.	25 (6.5%)	35 (9.1%)	65 (16.9%)	145 (37.8%)	114 (29.7%)
6.	The ENDSARS protest encouraged me to educate	30 (7.8%)	40 (10.4%)	75 (19.5%)	135 (35.2%)	104 (27.1%)

	others about the importance of voting for change.					
7.	The ENDSARS protest made me more likely to participate in the "Obidient" movement.	35 (9.1%)	50 (13.0%)	80 (20.8%)	130 (33.9%)	89 (23.2%)
8.	The ENDSARS protest increased my confidence in the power of youth mobilization to support candidates like Peter Obi.	25 (6.5%)	40 (10.4%)	70 (18.2%)	145 (37.8%)	104 (27.1%)

(71.4%) agreed or strongly agreed that the ENDSARS protest made them more aware of the need for good governance and accountability, which aligned with the platform of the "Obidient" movement and its candidate, Peter Obi. Furthermore, 64.9% of respondents stated that the ENDSARS protest motivated them to support candidates like Peter Obi who advocated for reforms and change, and 59.7% believed that the grievances and demands of the ENDSARS protesters resonated with Obi's campaign platform. Notably, 62.5% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the ENDSARS protest did not impact their support for Peter Obi or the "Obidient" movement, suggesting that the protest played a significant role in shaping their political

preferences. Additionally, 67.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the ENDSARS protest made them more critical of the traditional political establishment, which may have contributed to the appeal of the "Obidient" movement as an alternative. The findings also revealed that 62.3% of respondents were encouraged by the ENDSARS protest to educate others about the importance of voting for change, and 57.1% stated that the protest made them more likely to participate in the "Obidient" movement. Furthermore, 65.0% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the ENDSARS protest increased their confidence in the power of youth mobilization to support candidates like Peter Obi.

Research Question 3: How did the handling of the ENDSARS protest by the APC-led federal government, and the aftermath of the protest, influence voter sentiment and the voting pattern in Lagos State towards the party's presidential candidate?

SN	Questionnaire Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree	Agree
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1.	The government's response to the ENDSARS protest made me lose confidence in the APC.	35 (9.1%)	40 (10.4%)	70 (18.2%)	130 (33.9%)	109 (28.4%)
2.	The government's handling of the protest did not affect my voting decision in the presidential election.	125 (32.6%)	120 (31.3%)	65 (16.9%)	50 (13.0%)	24 (6.2%)
3.	The government's actions during the protest showed a disregard for citizens' rights and made me more likely to vote against the APC candidate.	30 (7.8%)	45 (11.7%)	70 (18.2%)	135 (35.2%)	104 (27.1%)
4.	The government's response to the protest was appropriate and justified, reinforcing my support for the APC candidate.	110 (28.6%)	130 (33.9%)	80 (20.8%)	40 (10.4%)	24 (6.3%)
5.	The aftermath of the protest, including the government's actions, influenced my decision to vote against the APC candidate.	35 (9.1%)	50 (13.0%)	75 (19.5%)	130 (33.9%)	94 (24.5%)
6.	The government's handling of the protest reflected poorly on the APC's leadership and made me question their ability to govern effectively.	30 (7.8%)	40 (10.4%)	65 (16.9%)	140 (36.5%)	109 (28.4%)
7.	The government's response to the protest did not impact my perception of the APC or my voting decision.	120 (31.3%)	135 (35.2%)	70 (18.2%)	40 (10.4%)	19 (4.9%)
8.	Despite the handling of the protest, I maintained my support for the APC candidate in the presidential election.	110 (28.6%)	125 (32.6%)	80 (20.8%)	45 (11.7%)	24 (6.3%)

(62.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that the government's response to the ENDSARS

protest made them lose confidence in the APC. However, 63.9% of respondents

disagreed or strongly disagreed that the government's handling of the protest did not affect their voting decision in the presidential election, suggesting that it did play a role in influencing their voting behaviour. Furthermore, 62.3% of respondents stated that the government's actions during the protest showed a disregard for citizens' rights and made them more likely to vote against the APC candidate. 62.5% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the government's response to the protest was appropriate and justified, and therefore did not reinforce their support for the APC candidate. Additionally, 58.4% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the aftermath of the protest, including the government's actions, influenced their decision to vote against the APC candidate.

The findings also revealed that 64.9% of respondents believed that the government's handling of the protest reflected poorly on

Source: 2023 field Survey

the APC's leadership and made them question their ability to govern effectively. However, 66.5% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that the government's response to the protest did not impact their perception of the APC or their voting decision, suggesting that it did play a role in shaping their voting behaviour. Interestingly, 61.2% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they maintained their support for the APC candidate in the presidential election despite the handling of the protest.

Qualitative Empirical Analyses

Furthermore, twenty (20) in-depth interviews were conducted with key informants such as protest organizers, political analysts, and youth from the three selected LGAs (Eti-Osa, Ikeja, and Alimosho). After transcribing the interviews, the responses were coded and organized into themes and sub-themes as follows:

Theme	Sub-theme	Evidence from Participants (P)
Rise of the "Obident" Movement.	Alignment with Protest Demands Youth Mobilization and Support.	"Peter Obi's campaign resonated with me because he was addressing the same issues we were protesting about – good governance, transparency, and putting the people first." (Respondent 4) "The 'Obident' movement felt like a natural extension of the ENDSARS protest. We saw in Obi a candidate who understood our grievances and

		was committed to real change." (Respondent 11) "Obi's message of breaking away from the old, corrupt political establishment struck a chord with many of us who had participated in the protest." (Respondent 17) "The 'Obidient' movement was driven largely by the youth, just like the ENDSARS protest. We were determined to use our voices and votes to bring about the change we desired." (Respondent 6) "There was a sense of excitement and hope around Obi's candidacy, especially among young people. We felt like we finally had a leader who understood our struggles and aspirations." (Respondent 10) "The youth support for Obi was unprecedented. We used social media, rallies, and grassroots mobilization to spread the 'Obidient' message and get people to the polls." (Respondent 19)
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Source: 2023 field work

Theme	Sub-theme	Evidence from Participants (P)
Impact on 2023 General Election.	Voting Behavior and Patterns. Challenges and Setbacks.	"I voted for Peter Obi because he represented the values and ideals that the ENDSARS protest stood for. It was a vote for change and a better future." (Respondent 2) "In my community, there was a clear shift in voting patterns. Many young people who had traditionally supported the incumbent party chose to vote for Obi and the 'Obidient' movement." (Respondent 9) "The ENDSARS protest and the rise of the 'Obidient' movement definitely

		had an impact on the election results, especially in urban areas where the youth were more politically engaged." (Respondent 14). "Despite the momentum and support, there were still obstacles like voter suppression, violence, and rigging that made it difficult for the 'Obidient' movement to fully succeed." (Respondent 7) "We faced a lot of resistance from the established political machines and those who didn't want to see real change happen. They tried to discredit Obi and the movement through various means." (Respondent 13) "While we made significant gains, there is still a long way to go in terms of electoral reforms and ensuring that the will of the people is truly reflected in our leaders." (Respondent 18).
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Source: 2023 field Survey

Discussion of findings

The discussion of the findings of this study was done by discussing the three research questions result one after the others

1) What was the nature and extent of military involvement in the ENDSARS protest, particularly the alleged actions against protesters at the Lekki Toll Gate, and how did this influence the overall trajectory of the protest?

The analysis of this findings suggest that a significant portion of the respondents perceived the military's involvement in the ENDSARS protest, particularly at the Lekki Toll Gate, as excessive, disproportionate, and a violation of the

protesters' rights.This findings is consistent with (Amnesty International, 2020; BBC News, 2020) that **says** theendsars that take place at the Lekki Toll Gate on the 20 October 2020 where security forces allegedly opened fire on protesters became the benchmark and the convergence point of theobidie1nt movement.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet averred that shooting of protesters by the military in Lagos on 20 October could push the crisis to the brink. It stated that the military cannot continue to exercise violence without legal restraints (UN News, 2020)

2) How did the ENDSARS protest contribute to the popularity and support for the "Obidient" movement and its candidate, Peter Obi, among Nigerian youth, and what specific grievances and demands resonated with the movement's platform?

These findings suggest that the ENDSARS protest played a significant role in contributing to the popularity and support for the "Obidient" movement and its candidate, Peter Obi, among Nigerian youth. The grievances and demands expressed during the protest resonated with Obi's campaign platform, and the protest fueled a sense of political consciousness and mobilization among the youth, who were eager for reforms, change, and accountability in governance. This result is in agreement with (Obadare 2023; Mokuye2023; Onwunyi 2023; and Okonkwo 2023) that explored the emergence of the "Obidient Movement" as Nigeria youth that participated in the EndSARS protest in 2020 mobilizing support for Labour Party presidential candidate Peter Obi in the 2023 elections and how it altered Nigeria's political trajectory. The authors found the movement revived political interest, especially among youths, and led to support for many Labour Party candidates due to disenchantment with the current leaders.

3) How did the handling of the ENDSARS protest by the APC-led federal government, and the aftermath of the protest, influence voter sentiment and

the voting pattern in Lagos State towards the party's presidential candidate?

These findings overall, suggest that the handling of the ENDSARS protest by the APC-led federal government, and the aftermath of the protest, had a significant impact on voter sentiment and the voting pattern in Lagos State towards the party's presidential candidate. The government's response to the protest, which was perceived as excessive, disproportionate, and a disregard for citizens' rights, eroded confidence in the APC shaping voter sentiment and behavior, other factors, such as the broader socio-economic challenges, the perception of incumbent performance influenced many respondents to vote against the party's candidate. This result is in accordance with Ademolu (2021) that it is imperative to study the EndSARS protests within Nigeria's democratic narrative because that is how we understand the extent to which the government failed to grasp the yearning of the youth. Similarly, the protests are considered by Nwankwo (2020) as the evidence of youths' growing dissatisfaction with socio-economic and political status in Nigeria. The protest was aimed at fighting for the change of the current political system and offer strong opposition to the two major warring electoral political parties particularly the APC and the PDP which were seen to be associated with corrupt political climate the country was experiencing, it shows that the political environment has not been able to produce good leaders

(Ibelema, 2023). The following tables are the evidence of changed *in* voting pattern in Lagos State 2023 Presidential Election

ETI-OSA

CANDIDATE	PARTIES	VOTE
OBI PETER GREGORY	LP	42,388
TINUBU BOLA AHMED	APC	15,317
ABUBAKAR ATIKU	PDP	3,369
NWANYANWU DANIEL DEBERECHUKWU	ZLP	412
MUSA MOHAMMED RABIU KWWANKWASO	NNPP	381

Source: Field Survey, 2023

IKEJA

CANDIDATE	PARTIES	VOTE
OBI PETER GREGORY	LP	30,004
TINUBU BOLA AHMED	APC	21,276
ABUBAKAR ATIKU	PDP	2,280
NWANYANWU DANIEL DEBERECHUKWU	ZLP	415
MUSA MOHAMMED RABIU KWWANKWASO	NNPP	321

Source: Field Survey, 2023

ALIMOSHO

CANDIDATE	PARTIES	VOTE
OBI PETER GREGORY	LP	71,327
TINUBU BOLA AHMED	APC	62,909
ABUBAKAR ATIKU	PDP	8,201
NWANYANWU DANIEL DEBERECHUKWU	ZLP	1,682
MUSA MOHAMMED RABIU KWWANKWASO	NNPP	879

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Conclusion

In general, the research demonstrates how the ENDSARS protest has shaped the socio-political development of the Lagos State and the entire Nigeria. The observed militarization of the protest, especially at

Lekki Toll Gate, not only angered the populace but also undermined the government's credibility and consequently eroded the political support the APC used to enjoy. However, the study also reveals the effectiveness of the "Obident" movement in

mobilizing the anger of the ENDSARS protesters under a political movement. The calls for good governance, accountability, and protection of human rights were in line with the movement's objectives and therefore attracted the Nigerian youth who had been transformed through the protest. The influence of these factors is clearly evident in the 2023 general election voting behaviour and patterns as many respondents pointed to the government's handling of the protest as a major reason to vote against the APC's presidential candidate. Based on findings of the study, the following recommendations were proposed:

- 1) Comprehensive security sector reform: There is the need for the Nigerian government to pay adequate attention to the review and restructuring of Nigeria's insecurity architecture especially as it relates to, accountability, professionalism and standard pro-human rights conduct. It should ensue inviting necessary training programs, well-articulated rules of engagement, and regularly monitoring and evaluating mechanisms to minimize human rights abuses through the oppressive use of force, and to uphold democratic tenets as well as civil liberties.
- 2) Strengthening democratic institutions and processes: To retrieve the public confidence, in the political democracy the government should do the following to enhance and improve the democratic institutions and practices. This may entail efforts at electoral democracy and/or strengthening of electoral systems, promotion of forms of governance that promote accountability, and encouragement of people's political participation or political participation and empowered civic engagement.
- 3) Addressing youth grievances and empowerment: It is time for the Nigerian government to formulate and enforce measures and roadmap in addressing the causes for youth unhappiness and unemployment. This could have included programs aimed at poverty alleviation, employment and training opportunities for young people as well as institutional reforms that can empower the youth through increased political representation and participation.
- 4) Encouraging continued civic engagement: The general populace, CSOs, youth organizations and any other should be encouraged to vote, to be active players in the overall democratic process in the country. This could range from advocating for strengthening civil society efforts, promoting enlightenment campaigns and, building effective structures for the promotion of a constructive politics and discussions around critical national issues.
- 5) Furthering research and knowledge exchange: Further empirical investigations and theoretical development should be tailored toward exploring the multifaceted relationship

that exists between social movements, politics, and elections in contexts such as Nigeria. This could involve partnerships between academic institutions, other research institutions,

policymakers and other stakeholders to consult in policy decisions and encourage the realization of progressive socio-political changes.

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