

Human Rights Abuse: An Assessment of the End-SARS Protests in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria

Edward Obi^{1*} and Osinachi C Obiora¹

Abstract

Nigeria had witnessed too many protests right from the pre-colonial to the colonial era, the military regimes and presently, democratic dispensations. End-SARS protest is one of the numerous protests, highlighting gross human rights violations, bad governance, and the persistence of police's excessive abuse of powers. However, this study adopted the survey research design method that is deemed most appropriate due to the large population. Although, it was difficult to study the entire population, but a representative sample was drawn to generalize the population under study. The population projection of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja is 419,007 (NPC Trial Census, 2022). The population of the study comprises of individuals and institutions who were directly or indirectly affected by police's excessive use of force in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used to select the respondents. A structured questionnaire was used to administered questionnaire to three hundred and eighty-four (384) respondents in the study area, and out of this number, only two hundred and fifty-nine (259) questionnaire were retrieved. In the process of sorting and cleaning the questionnaire, only one-hundred and fifty (150) questionnaires were properly filled by the respondents. The statistical method used for the analysis was the Chi-square (X^2) at 0.05 levels of significance, and with a degree of freedom of 4. The findings have shown that there is a significant relationship between unlawful detention and extrajudicial killings of citizens by the Nigeria police.

Keywords: End-SARS Protest, Human Rights Violation, Police Brutality, Abuja, Nigeria

Introduction

The End-SARS protest in Nigeria is a significant event in the nation's history, symbolizing widespread discontent with police's excessive use of force, bad governance, and human rights violations. The protest which originated as a social media campaign in the early 2020s aimed at dismantling the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a unit of the Nigerian Police Force involved in extrajudicial killings, unlawful detentions, and gross human rights abuses. Amnesty International, (2021) opined that despite Government's dissolution of SARS, reports still indicate that similar abuses have continued under different security formations, raising questions about the effectiveness of Government's reforms in ensuring the protection of human's rights. Akinwotu, (2020) observed that the campaign gained unprecedented momentum when Nigerian youths took to the streets in mass protests across major cities, including Abuja, Lagos, and Port

¹ Ave Maria University, Piyanko, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Email: eddy2k2004@yahoo.com

Harcourt. The protest was fueled by accumulated grievances of police use of excessive force and lack of governmental accountability in addressing police misconduct. Akinwotu, (2020) further holds that the events of October 20, 2020, at the Lekki Toll Gate, where peaceful protesters were allegedly shot at by security forces, further solidified the protest as a struggle not just against the abuse of powers by the police but bad governance, transparency, and accountability in Nigeria. Human Rights Watch, (2022) noted that the establishment of judicial panels of inquiry across various States was initially welcomed as a step towards addressing police misconduct, but the slow pace of implementation has raised concerns about the political will as many victims who testified before the panels are yet to receive compensation or see the perpetrators brought to justice. Furthermore, Human Rights Watch, (2022) stated that some of the law enforcement officers accused of abuses are still in active service which have eroded public confidence in Governance. Government's responses to the deployment of security forces had crackdown on protesters, thereby raised critical concerns about the State of democracy and human rights in Nigeria.

Amnesty International, (2021) observed that arbitrary arrests, intimidation, and freezing of protesters' bank accounts further exemplified the repression of dissenting voices. After the protests, the Government established judicial panels of inquiry across various States to investigate police abuse of powers and make recommendation for victims' compensation, but unfortunately, their effectiveness has been questioned due to delays in the implementations. According to Human Rights Watch (2022), victims and eyewitnesses who testified in courts highlighted persistent issues of extrajudicial killings and illegal detentions, but the Government's commitment to reform remained uncertain. The inability of the Government to hold security operatives accountable for their actions has raised concerns about the State's willingness to uphold human rights standards. Human Rights Watch, (2022) further hold that the post-End SARS period has witnessed an increase in digital surveillance and restrictions on freedom of expression. This development had sparked debates on the challenges of ensuring true democracy in the aftermath of mass protests. Similarly, Ojo, (2021) observed that the End-SARS protests had exposed the Governments' lack of engagement with the populace, thereby highlighting its' deficiencies in participatory democracy. The non-inclusion of youths in decision-making processes has continued to fuel political apathy and disillusionment, thereby raising questions on the future of governance in the country.

Egbon, (2023) stated that the protests demonstrated the power of youth-led activism in influencing public policy and challenging State authority. Civil society organizations, human rights advocates, and legal practitioners have continued to push for the implementation of the judicial panel's recommendations and governance reforms. The protests led to increased discussions on police accountability and establishment of independent oversight mechanisms to monitor law enforcement agencies. Egbon, (2023) suggested that the persistence of human rights violations, police extortion and illegal detentions, implies that the structural issues underlying the protests remain unaddressed. The government's reluctance to implement reforms has led to growing frustration, as many Nigerians continue to demand justice for victims of police excessive use of powers and bad governance. Olumide, (2024) holds that they have been continued efforts between 2021 and 2025 by human rights organizations and activists to keep the End SARS agenda alive. The legal battles, advocacy campaigns, and international human rights interventions have pressured the Nigerian Government to uphold to its commitment to justice and accountability. Olumide, (2024) further stated that the resistance faced by the groups reflects the struggle for human rights in Nigeria as the political landscape remains tense, with governance challenges persisting despite increased civic awareness and advocacy.

The seat of political power, Government responses to the protests were marked by excessive force, mass arrests, and militarization of public spaces. These actions contradict democratic principles that emphasize dialogue, participation, and the protection of civil liberties. Ojo, (2021) observed that despite the Nigerian government's commitment to international human rights treaties, the handling of End SARS protests reveals a gap between policy pronouncements and actual implementation. The persistent use of force to suppress dissent has led to growing disillusionment among young Nigerians, many of whom view Government as unresponsive and resistant to reform. Ojo, (2021) further asserted that the Government's response towards fostering reconciliation and addressing grievances has often been punitive, with many forced into exile. Also, the socio-economic implications of the End SARS protest further complicated Governance challenges as many of the protesters faced job losses, and economic hardships due to their participation in the protest. Egbon, (2023) observed that the economic impact of the protests and the subsequent crackdowns has been severe, as businesses faced disruptions due to curfews and heightened security measures. The absence of a post-protest economic policy to address these challenges has further been seen in Government deficit as Government

ought to be more proactive in resolving societal issues through policies that will promote justice and economic stability. Egbon, (2023) further opined that the aftermath of End-SARS is seen in Government's failure to address the economic and social consequences of the protest thereby leaving many protesters marginalized and disillusioned.

Concept of Human Rights

Human rights are the fundamental freedoms and entitlements that belong to every individual by virtue of being human, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, gender, or any other status. Donnelly, (2013) assert that these rights are considered inalienable and universal, meaning that they apply to all individuals without discrimination. The concept of human rights is rooted in natural law philosophy, which asserts that certain rights are inherent to human existence and cannot be granted or revoked by any authority. Freeman, (2017) observed that over time, human rights have evolved from philosophical and religious traditions into legally binding international norms, primarily codified in documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted by the United Nations in 1948 (United Nations, 1948). The UDHR outlines key civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights, serving as a global standard for human dignity and freedom. Clapham, (2015) opined that despite these legal frameworks, the implementation and protection of human rights remain inconsistent across different societies, often influenced by political, economic, and cultural factors. Nickel, (2019) holds that in many parts of the world, authoritarian governments, weak legal institutions, and systemic discrimination pose significant challenges to the realization of human rights. In his part, Mutua, (2002) asserts that the international organizations, civil society, and human rights activists continue to advocate for the protection of these rights, violations such as the excessive use of powers by the police, and suppression of political opposition remain prevalent, particularly in regions with fragile democratic structures (Forsythe, 2018). The enforcement of human rights requires a strong commitment from both national governments and the international community to ensure accountability and adherence to established human rights principles.

Donnelly, (2013) stated that the classification of human rights into different categories helps in understanding their scope and application. Civil and political rights, often referred to as "first-generation rights," focus on protecting individuals from government overreach and ensuring personal freedoms such as the right to life, freedom

of speech, and due process. These rights are enshrined in legal instruments like the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and have been widely adopted by democratic nations. Also, Nickel, (2019) opined that the economic, social, and cultural rights known as "second-generation rights," emphasize the importance of material well-being and access to essential services such as education, healthcare, and employment (Clapham, 2015). These rights are outlined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and their implementation requires active government intervention to provide necessary resources and policies for societal development. The third category, known as "third-generation rights" or collective rights, includes environmental rights, the right to self-determination, and the right to development. According to Mutua, (2002), these rights reflect the growing recognition of global challenges that transcend national boundaries and require collective efforts to address issues such as climate change, economic inequality, and social justice. For Forsythe, (2018), the interdependence of these categories underscores the fact that the full realization of human rights cannot be achieved by prioritizing one category over another, as they are all essential for human dignity and progress.

Freeman, (2017) stated that the protection of human rights is primarily the responsibility of national governments, but international mechanisms play a crucial role in monitoring and addressing violations. International human rights law provides a legal foundation for holding states accountable for their obligations to uphold and protect human rights. The United Nations, through its various bodies such as the Human Rights Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), oversees compliance with international treaties and investigates cases of human rights abuses (United Nations, 2021). Additionally, Mutua, (2002) asserted that regional human rights systems, such as the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the European Court of Human Rights, and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, offer legal avenues for individuals and groups to seek redress for violations. However, enforcement remains a challenge, as many governments resist external scrutiny, citing national sovereignty as a justification for non-compliance. More so, Donnelly, (2013) stated that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch had played a critical role in documenting abuses, raising awareness, and advocating for policy changes (Forsythe, 2018). Despite these efforts, systemic barriers such as political repression, corruption, and lack of access to justice continue to

hinder the effective implementation of human rights protections in many parts of the world.

Clapham, (2015) observed that Human rights violations take various forms, ranging from civil and political repression to economic and social injustices. In many authoritarian regimes, political dissidents, journalists, and activists face arbitrary arrests, torture, and extrajudicial killings as governments attempt to suppress opposition and maintain control remain unachievable. Nickel, (2019) maintained that freedom of expression is often curtailed through censorship, internet shutdowns, and restrictive media laws designed to silence dissent. In conflict-affected regions, war crimes such as genocide, forced displacement, and sexual violence are rampant, often committed by both state and non-state actors. Forsythe, (2018) holds that economic and social rights violations are widespread, particularly in underdeveloped countries where inadequate access to healthcare, education, and decent work conditions perpetuate cycles of poverty and inequality. Freeman, (2017) stated that systemic discrimination on race, gender, religion, and other factors further exacerbates human rights violations, marginalizing entire communities thereby limiting their access to opportunities. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach that includes legal reforms, institutional strengthening, and active civil society engagement to promote accountability and justice. The role of education in promoting human rights awareness cannot be overstated as Donnelly, (2013) opined that human rights education fosters a culture of respect, tolerance, and non-discrimination, equipping individuals with the knowledge and skills needed to advocate for their rights and those of others. Nickel, (2019) hold that schools and community organizations play a vital role in integrating human rights principles into curricula and public discourse. Governments and international organizations must prioritize human rights education as a means of preventing violations and fostering civic engagement (Mutua, 2002). Through awareness campaigns, training programs, and policy initiatives, the societies can build a more just and equitable world where human dignity is upheld.

Concept of Police Brutality

Police brutality is a widespread phenomenon that involves the excessive and unwarranted use of force by law enforcement officers on civilians which includes physical violence, unlawful arrests, intimidation, torture, and extrajudicial killings. The issue of police excessive use of force is a significant human rights concern, undermining

democratic principles, erode public trust in law enforcement agencies and weakening the rule of law. Hope, (2020) holds that the police are expected to maintain public order, enforce the law, and protect citizens, many cases of abuse of powers arise due to lack of accountability, weak oversight mechanisms, and widespread corruption within police institutions. For Reiner, (2016), the abuse of power by security forces is often justified under the pretext of law enforcement, especially in countries where democratic structures are weak and authoritarian tendencies prevail. Olaniyan, (2021) observed that in some cases, governments use the police forces as instruments of repression to silence political dissent, control opposition groups, and suppress protesters. Even in democratic settings, police abuse of powers remains a pressing issue with the minorities and marginalized groups bearing the brunt of excessive force. Human Rights Watch, (2022) opined that the international community, through human rights organizations and advocacy groups, has consistently condemned police brutality, thereby calling for increased accountability, transparency, and adherence to legal standards in policing.

Historically, Police abuse of powers can be traced to colonial rule where Ocheje, (2020) stated that the law enforcement agencies were designed to serve the interests of colonial authorities rather than protect the populace. During colonial administrations, policing was a tool of oppression, used to suppress resistant protesters, enforcing colonial policies, and control the populace through coercion. Hills, (2007) asserts that in post-colonial African states, this legacy of authoritarian policing has persisted with law enforcement agencies continuing to operate with a culture of violence. Nigeria provides a striking example of this, where the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) has been widely criticized for its involvement in human rights violations, including illegal detentions, torture, and extrajudicial killings (Human Rights Watch, 2022). The notorious Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) gained infamy for its brutality, leading to the 2020 End SARS protests, which saw thousands of Nigerians demanding police reforms and accountability. Nwosu, (2021) asserts that despite government promises to address these issues, reports indicate that police excessive use of force against civilians remains rampant with officers continuing to engage in extortion, unlawful arrests, and detention. Amnesty International, (2021) opined that the institutional abuses are a reflection of the structural problems within the law enforcement agencies, including poor training, corruption, and the absence of effective disciplinary measures to curb misconduct. Alemika & Chukwuma, (2000) opined that the primary causes of police abuse of power are the lack

of strong oversight mechanisms and accountability structures that allowed the law enforcement officers to act with impunity. In many developing countries, the absence of independent police complaint commissions means that allegations of misconduct are often ignored, and offending officers are rarely held accountable for their actions. Tankebe, (2009) stated that the major factor is the militarization of the police, where security forces are equipped with heavy weapons and trained to use force as a means of control rather than focusing on community-oriented policing strategies.

Bruce, (2007) maintains that the increasing militarization of the police leads to an escalation in violence, as officers are more likely to perceive civilians as threats rather than citizens they are meant to protect. Also, Hope (2020) stated that the socio-economic issues such as poverty and unemployment played a role in police misconduct, as poorly paid officers often resort to extortion, bribery, and illegal activities to supplement their incomes. The intersection of these factors creates an environment where police use of excessive powers becomes systemic, affecting vulnerable populace the most. Globally, police abuse of power is not confined to developing nations, but also to developed nations. Butler, (2017) held that in the United States, police violence against African Americans and other racial minorities, has been a major concern. Taylor, (2016) stated that the killings of African Americans have sparked widespread protests which has called for police reform. The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement has played a crucial role in advocating for accountability, highlighting the disproportionate use of force against people of color, and pushing for policy changes to address racial biases in policing. Goff et al., (2016) indicate that racism in the system, racial profiling, and implicit bias contributed significantly to Police excessive use of force in the United States. Goff et al., (2016) further holds that in countries like Brazil and South Africa, security forces have been accused of excessive use of force, against the poor and marginalized communities, reinforcing long-standing patterns of inequality and discrimination. Also, Bruce, (2007) stated that the global prevalence of police abuse of power underscores the urgent need for structural reforms, including changes in law enforcement training, enhanced oversight mechanisms, and accountability to prevent abuse and protect citizens' rights.

In Nigeria, the persistence use of force by the Police despite constitutional protections highlights the challenges of enforcing human rights laws. The Nigerian Constitution of 1999 as amended explicitly guarantees fundamental human rights, including the right to dignity and freedom from torture or inhumane treatment (Federal

Republic of Nigeria, 1999). However, Falana, (2022) stated that enforcement remains a significant challenge, as legal institutions are often weak, and corruption within the judiciary hampers efforts to hold law enforcement accountable. Reports from Amnesty International (2021) showed numerous instances of police misconduct, including illegal arrests, enforced disappearances, and sexual violence against vulnerable populace. Nwosu, (2021) observed that the failure to addressing these issues has led to widespread public distrust in the police, with many citizens being afraid of law enforcement officers rather than seeing them as protectors. The aftermath of the End-SARS protests revealed institutional resistance to change with many police officers returning to previous practices despite government promises of reform. Nwosu, (2021) noted that some measures have been introduced, such as the establishment of human rights desks within the police force and the disbandment of SARS, which have largely been seen as superficial rather than transformative.

Causes of Police Brutality

Police use of excessive powers has been extensively studied by scholars, particularly where law enforcement agencies have long history of human rights violations. Alemika & Chukwuma, (2000) suggests that the problem is rooted in colonial policing structure which was designed to suppress dissent rather than serve and protect citizens. Ojo (2020) conducted a study on police brutality between 2015 and 2020 in Nigeria, and found out that officers disproportionately targeted young men under the pretext of tackling cybercrime, extorting money and subjecting them to physical abuse. Ojo (2020) concluded that such violations persist due to weak institutional accountability, ineffective oversight mechanisms, and complicity within the judiciary. Also, Aborisade (2021) conducted a study on the role of police violence during the End-SARS protests and found out that security forces frequently used live ammunition against unarmed protesters, thereby leading to mass casualties. Aborisade (2021) study further revealed that despite public outrage and international condemnation, the Nigerian government failed to hold perpetrators accountable, reinforcing a culture of impunity. Similarly, Akinlabi (2021) examined police legitimacy and procedural justice and found out that public trust in law enforcement remains alarmingly low due to repeated instances of police use of excessive powers. Akinlabi (2021) further emphasized that the police officers often act with excessive force because of inadequate training, poor remuneration, and political

interference. Okafor & Agbakwuru (2019) analyzes the judicial responses to Police abuse of powers in Nigeria and found out that while some courts have ruled against security agencies, enforcement of these rulings remains weak due to executive interference. The study also pointed out that victims of Police abuse of powers often face difficulties in seeking redress, as the legal system is riddled with bureaucratic obstacles and corruption. This lack in accountability fosters a cycle where law enforcement agencies continue to engage in human rights abuses with little fear of consequences. Furthermore, there are instances where detained individuals were subjected to torture and inhumane treatment in the Police custody. Reports from Amnesty International (2021) emphasized that Nigeria has ratified international treaties against torture, but implementation remains ineffective due to institutional resistance.

Structure of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF)

There exist three different structures in the Nigeria Police Force, and these structures are patterned to meet the constitutional expectations of the Police Force to perform the duties assigned to it. These structures are:

- i- Command Structure;
- ii- Organisation Structure and
- iii- Administration Structure.

Command Structure of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF)

The command structure, also referred to as the authority or power structure of the Nigeria Police Force is predicted on the regimental nature of the Force and conducted along the Force rank structures. Thus, in accordance with section 215(2) of the 1999 Constitution, section 6 of the Police Act, 2020 laws provide that “the Nigeria Police Force shall be commanded by the Inspector-General of Police”. This means that orders, directives and instructions to perform or carry out the duties with which the Police is assigned to, flows from the Inspector-General of Police, through the chain of command to any officer positioned to implement such order, failure to carry out such directive or order, attract punitive measures (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 as amended). However, according to Arase, & Iwuofor, (2006), every member of the Police Force irrespective of his rank, perform certain duties according to their specialization and as it’s been conferred on them by the constitution. The creation of ranks in the Police Force makes it a disciplined and functional institution that has been taken care of by the

command structure. Ranks differential in the Police helps the Police assign officers to different responsibilities. It is worthy of note that the command structure is a sine qua non for a disciplined and functional organization. The command structure is secondary and the status which a police officer enjoys under the law takes a primary position since it serves as the basis for the performance of Police work. This status is not generated by the fact that a Police officer is a public servant, but by reason of the origin of his powers which enables him carry out his work. Unlike other public servants in the civil and public service corporations or institutions who act on delegated authority, the authority of a Police officer flows from the constitution (Iheriohanma, Opara, & Raimi, 2020).

Organizational Structure of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF)

The Nigeria Police Force is organized into various departments and units, each tasked with specific functions, ranging from criminal investigation to counter-terrorism (Kelvin & Faruk, 2024). The departments and units operate under the supervision of the Inspector General of Police (IGP) and structured into state commands, zonal commands, and divisional police stations. This organization is in line with the geo-political structure of the country, with provisions for supervisory formations. The formation enables the Nigeria Police to operate within the internal territory of Nigeria, and by this arrangement, the police operational crime fighting function is felt by the populace, but the relevance of structuring the Police to defend internal security of the nation can be appreciated by the role of Police in internal security (Ojo, 2019). The powers and duties of the Police are spread on the balance of these structures; a periodic assessment and review of these structures to determine their relevance in the defense mechanism of the nation has remained a traditional exercise in the Nigeria Police Force, in order to catch-up with current global policing strategies as prescribed in international defense policies. Also, it provides avenue for getting along with other national security out-fits (Ojo, 2019).

Administrative Structure of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF)

The administrative structure of the Nigeria Police Force is divided into eight (8) departments with each department charged with peculiar duties for efficiency and functional specialization. Although, their duties are inter-woven, but are distinguishable from others. These departments are as follows: Finance and Administration (formally 'A' Department); Operations (formally 'B' Department); Logistics and Supplies (formally 'C' Department); General Investigation and Intelligence (formally 'D' Department); Training

and General Policy on Manpower Development (formally 'E' Department); and Research and Planning (formally 'F' Department)

Theoretical Framework

Social conflict theory was propounded by Karl Marx (1848) in his views of the capitalist societies which argued that power struggles between dominant and subordinate groups shaped the social structures. The State institutions serve the elite interests, and unlawful detention will be significantly higher among marginalized groups. According to Dahrendorf, (1959) the State functions as an instrument of the ruling elite, using institutions such as the police, the judiciary, and the military to maintain control over the lower classes. In the context of Nigeria, Ojo, (2020) holds that this perspective helps explain why police excessive use of force disproportionately affects the poor and the marginalized communities, who lack the political influence to resist State repression. Police abuse of powers in Nigeria is often directed at young people, activists, and impoverished citizens rather than wealthy elites. Aborisade, (2021) asserts that this pattern reflects a broader socio-political dynamics of State repression where law enforcement agencies serve the interest of those in power while suppressing opposition. The End-SARS protests exposed how security forces act as enforcers of elite interests, violently suppressing peaceful demonstrators demanding justice and police accountability (Osaghae, 2021). Therefore, social conflict theory suggests that such repression is not accidental but rather a structural feature of governance in societies where power is concentrated among small elite groups. The persistence on extrajudicial killings, unlawful detentions, and violence on protesters suggests there exist a disconnect between legal commitments and State practices. The continuous use of force against protesters, and opposition groups reveals that the State relied on coercion to maintain authority. Hence, the social conflict theory is essential in the understanding of why State violence persists in spite of the legal frameworks designed to protect human rights abuses in Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted the survey research design, this design method was deemed most appropriate because it deals with a large population. Although, it was difficult to study the entire population, but a representative sample was drawn to generalize the population under study. With the population projection of Federal Capital Territory, Abuja

put at 419,007 (NPC Trial Census, 2022), it was difficult for the entire population to be interviewed. Hence, a sampled population from three (3) Area Councils; (Abuja Municipal Area Council, Gwagwalada Area Council, and Kuje Area Council) out of the six (6) Area Councils that made up of the Federal Capital Territory was 285,527. With this population and the margin of error of 0.05 confidence level of 95% and with the recommended sample size of the study based on the total population of people living in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja was 384 (Research Advisor, 2006). However, the population of the study comprises of individuals and institutions that are directly or indirectly affected by police abuse of powers in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. In carrying out the selection, the probability and non-probability sampling technique was used to select the respondents. The simple random sampling techniques was used to select 80 representatives of human rights activists, 98 representatives of civil society organizations, 105 law enforcement officers, 77 legal experts and other members of the public who have witnessed or experienced police misconduct, and 24 victims of police brutality. After the first selection of victim of police excessive use of force, others were selected using the snowball sampling technique to get other victims who were affected during End-SARS Protests. A structured questionnaire was administered to three hundred and eighty-four (384) respondents through the aid of a research assistant and only two hundred and fifty-nine (259) questionnaire retrieved. Out of these number, only one hundred and fifty (150) questionnaires were properly filled and so the analysis was based on those questionnaires properly filled and returned using the Chi-square (X^2) statistical tool at 0.05 levels of significance.

Ethical Considerations

The study avoided direct engagement with some victims of police excessive use of force, as discussing traumatic experiences could cause distress and raise ethical concerns related to informed consent and confidentiality. Also, ethical restrictions had prevented the study from conducting interviews with some of the government officials who may be reluctant to discuss sensitive policy matters related to End SARS protests. Also, while ethical constraints protect the rights and well-being of potential participants, it restricts the depth of firsthand information that could enrich the research findings.

Results and Discussions

Table 1: *Respondents' Views on Unlawful Detentions of Citizens during End-SARS Protests*

Variable	Observed N	Expected N	Residual	D.F	X ² = Value	Sig.
SA	56	30.0	26.0	4	50.733 ^a	0.05
SD	15	30.0	-15.0			
A	44	30.0	14.0			
D	25	30.0	-5.0			
U	10	30.0	-20.0			
Total	150					

Source: Field Work 2024

The table above shows the relationship between unlawful detention of citizen and End-SARS protests in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Since the calculated X² (50.733) value is greater than the table X² (9.488) value at a given degree of freedom, and a significance level of 0.05, we therefore accept the alternate hypothesis (H_i) and reject the null-hypothesis (H_o). Out of 150 respondents, 100 respondents representing 66.6% gave positive responses, 40 respondents constituting 26.7% gave negative responses while 10 respondents representing 6.7% had no idea. Therefore, the finding shows that the Nigeria police use force, intimidation and threats to unlawfully detain citizens which thereby led to mass protests by the citizens not only in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, but Nigeria in general.

Table 2: *Respondents' Views on Extrajudicial Killings of Citizens during End-SARS Protests*

Variable	Observed N	Expected N	Residual	D.F	X ² = Value	Sig.
SA	67	30.0	37.0	4	87.133 ^a	0.05
SD	11	30.0	-19.0			
A	46	30.0	16.0			
D	18	30.0	-12.0			
U	8	30.0	-22.0			

Total	150						
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Source: Field Work 2024

The tables above show the relationship between extrajudicial killings of citizens and End-SARS protests in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Since the calculated X^2 (87.133) value is greater than the table X^2 (9.488) value at a given degree of freedom, and a significance level of 0.05, we therefore accept the alternate hypothesis (H_i) and reject the null-hypothesis (H_o). Out of 150 respondents, 113 respondents constituting 75.4% gave positive responses, 29 respondents representing 19.3% gave negative responses while 8 respondents constituting 5.3 % had no comment on the issue. Therefore, the finding shows that the Nigeria police carry out extrajudicial killings of innocent citizens in the country and this led to mass protests by the citizens not only in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, but Nigeria in general.

Discussion of Findings

Findings have shown that there exist significant relationships between unlawful detention of citizen and End-SARS protests in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. This finding extends Egbon (2023) by providing quantitative evidence from Abuja respondents that 66.6 % strongly agree unlawful detention was a trigger. The persistence human rights violations, police extortion and illegal detentions, suggests that the structural issues underlying the protests remain unaddressed, and that government's reluctance to implement reforms led to growing frustration as many Nigerians continue to demand for justice for victims of police excessive use of force in the country. In a similar way, reports from Amnesty International, (2021) showed that the Nigeria police carry out arbitrary arrests, detentions, intimidation, and the freezing of protesters' bank accounts. This report collaborates Nwosu (2021) who argued that police abuse of powers remains rampant with officers' continuous engagement in extortion, unlawful arrests, and excessive use of force against civilians. However, Olumide, (2024) stated that activists, journalists, and the human rights organizations have reported a rise in State surveillance, arbitrary detentions, and restrictions on freedom of expression since the protests, and that the social media, which played crucial role in mobilizing protests, has become a target of Government control with legislative attempts to regulate digital platforms. More so, findings revealed

that there exists a significant relationship between extrajudicial killings of citizens and End-SARS protests in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The finding provide evidence from respondents that 75.4% gave positive responses that police abuse of powers has led to extrajudicial killings of citizens. The findings aligned with studies carried out by Human Rights Watch, (2022) which assert that there have been testimonies from victims and eyewitnesses highlighting the persistence of extrajudicial killings and illegal detentions of citizens by the Nigeria police and Government's commitment to reform remained uncertain. Hence, the reluctance to hold security operatives accountable has raised concerns about State's willingness to uphold human rights standards in Nigeria.

Conclusion

The assessment of End-SARS protests in Abuja highlights a significant failure of the State to protect the fundamental rights of its citizens. The continued lack of accountability for atrocities committed by the police during the 2020 protests remains a major unresolved issue by Government. They have been reports indicating that police officers engage in extortion, unlawful arrests, and excessive use of force against civilians. This abuse is a reflection of the problems within the law enforcement agencies, including inadequate training, corruption, poor remunerations, inadequate funding, poor welfare package, political interference and the absence of effective disciplinary measures to curb misconduct. In developing countries, the absence of independent police complaint commissions shows that allegations of misconduct are often ignored, and officers are rarely held accountable for their actions. Also, the militarization of the police, a situation where the security forces are equipped with heavy weaponry and trained to use force as a means of control rather than focusing on community-oriented policing strategies has given rise to police abuse of powers in the country. This increase militarization of the police has led to an escalation in violence, as officers perceive civilians as threats rather than citizens they are meant to protect. More so, the socio-economic status of the police has played an important role in police misconduct, as poorly paid officers often resort to extortion, bribery, and illegal activities to supplement their incomes. This factor has created an environment where police excessive use of force becomes systemic with the vulnerable populace being affected mostly in society.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- i- Based on the significant χ^2 result for extrajudicial killings, the Nigeria Police Force should establish an independent oversight body within 12 months with power to prosecute officers.
- ii- The Nigeria police should be accountable, transparent, and adhere to the legal standards in policing as entrenched in the Police Act.
- iii- Barriers such as corruption and lack of access to justice that have hindered effective implementation of human rights protections should be discouraged.
- iv- Legal reforms, strengthening of institutions, and the active engagement of civil society to promote accountability and justice should be encouraged.
- v- Advocacy for human rights education is needed through campaigns, training, and policy initiatives. This will build a more just and equitable societies where human dignity will be upheld.

Limitation of the Study

The inability of interviewing some victims, activists, government officials, limit the depth of getting firsthand information which is crucial in understanding human rights in the post-End SARS protest in Nigeria. The geographic scope of the study restricted to Federal Capital Territory, Abuja had a nationwide impact with significant protests and government responses occurring in other States. The focus on Abuja means that regional variations in governance responses, police reforms, human rights protections etc. in other States are not analyzed. This will limit the generalization of the findings, as governance dynamics may not necessarily reflect those in other regions of Nigeria. Also, time constraints was a limitation to this research as the study focuses from 2021 to 2025 which may not be sufficient to fully assess the long-term impact of End SARS protest. Governance reforms, particularly those related to human rights and institutional accountability, often take years to materialize, and their effectiveness can only be properly evaluated over an extended period. As a result, some ongoing or future reforms may not be adequately captured within the study's timeframe. Another limitation of this study is the potential for media bias in the sources used for data collection. Since media organizations played a crucial role in documenting the End SARS protests and their aftermath, their reports are valuable for understanding governance responses, but other media outlets often have political

affiliations, and their reporting may be influenced by ideological or economic interests. Some sources may exaggerate or downplay certain aspects of the protests, government actions, or police reforms.

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