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Political Economy of Police Brutality and Human Rights Violation in Nigeria's Fourth Republic: A Study of End-SARS Violent Movement in 2020

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Abstract **Original Research Articles**

The influence of social media on electoral outcomes has become increasingly significant, largely due to the rapid growth of the internet, which has transformed the world into a global village. This research investigates the political economy of police brutality and human rights violations in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, focusing specifically on the 2020 End-SARS protest movement. To achieve this, relevant literature and scholarly works were reviewed, alongside the application of theoretical frameworks such as the frustration–aggression theory and relative deprivation theory. These theories highlight the relationship between individuals' behaviors and their socio-economic conditions—for example, acts of brutality and hostility among police officers can be traced to frustrations arising from inadequate remuneration. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 399 respondents, employing a survey research design and a cluster sampling technique. Three hypotheses were formulated to guide the study, and the data were analyzed using chi-square statistical tools. Findings revealed, among other things, that low police remuneration significantly contributes to incidents of police brutality. Based on these findings, the study recommends that the government implement extensive reforms within law enforcement agencies, emphasizing human rights education, community policing, de-escalation skills, and ethical standards. The study concludes that sustained governmental and institutional reforms that ensure better treatment of both citizens and law enforcement personnel can significantly curb brutality and extrajudicial practices, paving the way for a more just society.

Keywords: Police Brutality, Extra-judicial killings, Human right violations, Violence, Protest, Movement.

Introduction

Human rights violations carried out under the pretext of extrajudicial actions represent one of the most troubling weaknesses of policing in Nigeria. Extrajudicial killings are not limited to Nigeria alone; they are a widespread problem in many parts of the world. Countries with alarming rates of such incidents include Nigeria, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Colombia, Honduras, Ethiopia, Syria, Sudan, and the United States (Early Warning Project 2017; World Organization against Torture 2019; US Department of State 2021). According to the US Department of State (2021), between 2018 and 2020, there were 606 reported cases of extrajudicial executions in Bangladesh, 28 in Colombia, 15 in Honduras, 217 in South Africa, 1,116 in Syria, and 180 in the Philippines. Within Nigeria, the Centre for Democracy and Development reported that approximately 13,241 individuals lost their lives to such unlawful killings between 2011 and 2021.

Bhargava (2021) observes that the enforcement of COVID-19 lockdown protocols in countries like Nigeria, Kenya, and South Africa became a justification for serious human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings. By May 2020, Nigeria had documented 209 complaints, 29 of which were linked to unlawful killings; Kenya recorded 87 complaints and 15 deaths; while South Africa registered at least 10 such cases. Similarly, the war on drugs initiated in 2016 by President Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines dramatically escalated killings by state forces, with an estimated 4,948 deaths between 2016 and 2018. Duterte's administration openly supported law enforcement officials involved in the campaign, vowing to continue it until the end of his term in 2022 (Human Rights Watch 2018).

Comparable situations have been documented elsewhere. In India, police forces exercise excessive powers with little restraint, while in the United States, multiple incidents of extrajudicial killings have drawn global attention. One of the most notable was the death of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, at the hands of police officer Derek Chauvin, sparking worldwide protests against police violence (Bhargava 2021). Extrajudicial killing, also referred to as extralegal execution, involves the illegal taking of life outside any recognized legal or judicial procedure (Igbo 2017).

In this study, extrajudicial killing is conceptualized as the deliberate or concealed execution of individuals without adherence to constitutional or legal safeguards. In Nigeria, this practice has become a disturbing feature of law enforcement operations, particularly within the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) (Odunaike, Lalude & Odusanya 2021). Despite the Nigerian government's ratification of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the NPF has frequently been implicated in corruption, violence, extrajudicial killings, and other serious abuses of power. These acts have persisted since the onset of the Nigerian Fourth Republic in 1999 (Akinsanmi 2020; Amnesty International 2021).

The The New Humanitarian (2010) reported that police officers killed nearly 2,987 individuals in 2004 alone, with an additional 329 deaths in 2006. In 2009, during a security crackdown in Maiduguri, hundreds of civilians were unlawfully executed, including Mohammed Yusuf, leader of Boko Haram, who died in police custody under suspicious circumstances. These incidents highlight a persistent pattern of violence linked to the Nigerian police. Scholars such as Igbo (2017) and Akinyetun (2022) attribute this trend to the extensive, poorly regulated powers granted to the NPF and its militarized structure, which has historically enabled abuse.

Reports by Amnesty International (2021) show that specialized units like the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) have consistently acted as agents of abuse. For example, during a protest calling for the release of Ibraheem Zakzaky, five members of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria were killed. Similarly, during the enforcement of COVID-19 lockdown measures, at least 18 people were killed by security forces between March 30 and April 13, 2020. These violent practices provoked nationwide protests in October 2020 under the End SARS protests movement, with Nigerian youth demanding accountability and police reform (Akinyetun 2021).

According to Network on Police Reform in Nigeria (2010), systemic failures—such as the absence of proper investigative tools, weak accountability, poor working conditions, centralized control, inadequate human rights training, and corruption—encourage such unlawful practices. Excessive use of force, often termed police brutality (Reiss 1971), encompasses any unnecessary or unjustified action that restricts individuals' rights, degrades their dignity, or involves the misuse of physical power. Police authority to use force is intended for legitimate law enforcement purposes, but the misuse of this power lies at the core of many contemporary misconduct cases (Kerstetter 2018).

Empirical studies on police brutality have been limited in scope and methodology, with many focusing narrowly on individual-level complaints and a few jurisdictions (Dugan & Breda 2019; Kerstetter 2018; Littlejohn 2019; Pate & Hamilton 2019; Toch 2015; Wagner 2019; Worden 2015). The International Association of Chiefs of Police defines

the use of force as the level of effort required to ensure compliance from an unwilling subject (NIJ 2012). Standard policy dictates that officers employ no more force than necessary to maintain control, make arrests, or protect the public and themselves from immediate threats (Taylor & Woods 2010; Terrill & Paoline 2012).

Many agencies outline this in their "use of force continuum," which includes verbal commands, physical restraint, non-lethal force, and lethal force. Tools such as Tasers or Conductive Energy Devices (CEDs) are widely used as alternatives to lethal means, although their use remains controversial (White & Ready 2007).

Ultimately, the persistent use of torture, excessive force, and other violations by the NPF has deeply eroded public trust and generated widespread condemnation (Amnesty International 2015; Ogunode 2015). Against this backdrop, this study critically explores the dynamics of police brutality, extrajudicial killings, and human rights violations in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, with particular emphasis on the 2020 EndSARS protest movement.

Statement of the Problem

The persistence of police brutality in Nigeria does not stem merely from isolated acts of misconduct but is rooted in deeply entrenched systemic dysfunction. The political and economic architecture of the Fourth Republic has created an environment where such violence not only thrives but is actively sustained. Patronage networks provide shields of protection for those who commit abuses, ensuring they remain beyond the reach of justice. Training programs are poorly structured, focusing more on control and coercion than on public service and protection. Corruption, in turn, corrodes ethical standards, turning law enforcement into an instrument of extortion rather than a vehicle for public safety. These interconnected structural failures foster a system in which brutality is incentivized—used both to maintain power and to exploit vulnerable populations for personal and institutional gain.

Out of this oppressive environment emerged the End SARS protests, a movement that was not an accidental uprising but rather the result of prolonged frustration and deep socioeconomic disparities. In a society where opportunities are scarce, wealth is concentrated among the privileged, and the state's violent arm disproportionately targets the marginalized, the youth became the most frequent victims of police excesses. Years of economic exclusion, unemployment, and insecurity galvanized young Nigerians to resist through collective action, turning their frustrations into organized protests.

Their struggle was not confined to physical spaces. Social media became their rallying ground—a digital battleground where hashtags transformed into slogans of resistance, amplifying their voices globally and bypassing state-controlled narratives. These platforms mobilized supporters across borders, drawing international attention to the brutality within Nigeria's security apparatus. Yet, the state responded with force. Crackdowns, propaganda, and empty promises of reform followed. The tragic incident at the Lekki Toll Gate served as a chilling reminder of the government's willingness to suppress dissent through violence.

The End SARS protests highlighted the entrenched nature of police brutality and exposed the complexity of dismantling such systems in a political environment dominated by vested interests. The 2020 demonstrations revealed not just a security problem but a governance crisis—a failure of institutions meant to uphold justice and human rights.

Guided by these realities, this study seeks to:

1. Investigate the immediate factors driving police brutality, extrajudicial killings, and the End SARS protests in Nigeria.
2. Analyze how the erosion of professional ethics within the police force contributed to the escalation of the movement.
3. Examine the ethical tensions arising from police operations and how these shape public perceptions of law enforcement in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

This research is anchored on the Frustration–aggression hypothesis, developed in 1939 by John

Dollard, Neal E. Miller, Leonard W. Doob, Orval Hobart Mowrer, and Robert R. Sears. Their work proposed that when individuals are blocked from achieving their goals or desires, the resulting frustration can lead to aggressive behaviors. This aggression is often expressed through physical violence, hostility, or other harmful acts if the frustration is not resolved.

Applied to the Nigerian policing context, the theory offers useful insights into why some officers resort to violent and unlawful actions. Systemic problems such as poor remuneration, limited resources, inadequate training, widespread corruption, and harsh working conditions can generate frustration among police personnel. These frustrations, if unaddressed, can manifest in the form of brutality, extrajudicial executions, and other abuses against civilians.

However, the issue is far more complex than the theory alone suggests. Historical factors, societal inequalities, institutional decay, and cultural attitudes towards authority also contribute significantly to these patterns of abuse. Modern scholars have expanded on the original theory, noting that frustration does not always automatically lead to aggression. Other mediating factors, including social learning, cognitive processes, and cultural norms, shape how frustration is expressed.

Understanding the End SARS protests through this theoretical lens underscores how both the police and the general population experience and express their frustrations. For the police, it emerges through aggression and control tactics. For the youth, it erupts as resistance, protest, and in some cases, opportunistic looting during moments of state breakdown. The protests reflected not only anger at state violence but also the deep-seated consequences of poor governance, unemployment, poverty, and inequality.

To meaningfully address police brutality in Nigeria, any reform effort must therefore move beyond surface-level interventions to tackle the structural frustrations that fuel aggression on all sides. This requires multidisciplinary engagement drawing on criminology, sociology, psychology, and human rights perspectives to build sustainable frameworks for accountability and justice.

Research Design

This study employed a survey research design, chosen for its effectiveness in examining social issues through direct engagement with respondents. The design was particularly suitable for interrogating the political economy of police brutality and human rights violations in Nigeria's Fourth Republic, focusing on the 2020 End SARS protests as a case study. Data collection was conducted through the administration of questionnaires within Oyi Local Government Area of Anambra State. Out of 399 questionnaires distributed, 395 were successfully retrieved and constituted the dataset for analysis.

Participants

A cluster sampling technique was adopted for selecting respondents. This method was considered appropriate because of the presence of multiple political wards in the study area, which needed to be grouped for more effective and manageable sampling. Cluster sampling involves dividing the target population into smaller clusters—such as communities, schools, or wards—and then randomly selecting specific clusters to form the study sample. Ideally, each cluster serves as a miniature representation of the entire population.

The study concentrated on four political wards within Awkuzu community (Awkuzu I, Awkuzu II, Awkuzu III, and Awkuzu IV), identified as hotspots for police brutality and extrajudicial killings during the 2020 End SARS movement. To select participants, all kindreds within each ward were assigned numbers and written on folded slips of paper. These were placed in a container, thoroughly mixed, and one kindred was randomly chosen per ward through a simple random sampling process.

From each selected kindred, 100 respondents were identified using a combination of purposive and simple random sampling. Individuals were approached at common gathering points such as village squares, business areas, and local drinking spots. Where necessary, home visits were conducted to reach additional participants. Each person within

the selected kindreds was assigned a number, and respondents were chosen through random draws until the required sample size was achieved. In total, 400 respondents were drawn from the four wards.

Data Collection Techniques and Instrument

For the purpose of obtaining credible and relevant information, a self-designed structured questionnaire was used as the primary instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was carefully constructed to address the core objectives of the study. It was divided into four sections:

- Section A captured respondents' socio-demographic characteristics.
- Sections B, C, and D contained four key questions each, corresponding directly to the research objectives.

The questionnaire items were designed to elicit factual, perceptual, and attitudinal data regarding issues of police brutality, extrajudicial killings, and human rights abuses in the study area.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were processed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentage distributions were employed to summarize the data, providing a clear picture of respondents' views and experiences. To test the study's hypotheses, the Chi-square (χ^2) statistical technique was applied at a 0.05 level of significance, enabling the researcher to determine the strength and significance of relationships between key variables.

Results

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Male	298	75.4
Female	97	24.6
Age		
20 years and below	29	7.3
21 – 25years	58	14.7
26 - 30years	204	51.6
31 – 35years	69	17.5
36 – 40years	23	5.8
41 years and above	12	3.1
Marital status		
Single	254	64.3
Married	66	16.7
Widowed	30	7.6
Divorced	45	11.4
Religious affiliation		
Christianity	354	89.2
Muslim	11	3.0
African tradition	30	7.8
Family structure		
Monogamy	204	51.6

Polygyny	191	48.4
Polyandry	0	0
Highest educational qualification		
No formal education	6	1.5
FSLC	31	7.8
SSCE	209	53.0
OND/NCE	93	23.5
B.SC/HND	53	13.4
M.SC/PHD	3	0.8
Occupation		
Students	307	77.7
Civil servants	12	3.0
Traders	21	5.3
Artisans	55	14.0

Field work 2024 (N=395)

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the respondents

Table 1 above shows that 298 respondents representing 75.4% are male while 97 respondents representing 24.6% are female. It also shows that 29 respondents representing 7.3% are within the age bracket of 20 years and below, 58 respondents representing 14.7% are within the age bracket of 21 to 25 years, 204 respondents representing 51.6% are within the age bracket of 26 to 30 years, 69 respondents representing 17.5% are within the age bracket of 31 to 35 years, 23 respondents representing 5.8% are within the age bracket of 36 to 40 years, while 12 respondents representing 3.1% are within the age brackets of 41 years and above. The table displayed that 254 respondents representing 64.3% are single, 66 respondents representing 16.7% are married, 30 respondents representing 7.6% are widowed, while 45 respondents representing 11.4% are divorced. It also shows that 354 respondents representing 89.2% are Christians, 11 respondents representing 3.0% are Muslims while 30 respondents representing 7.8% are of African traditional religion.

The table equally shows that 204 respondents representing 51.6% are from monogamous family structure, 191 respondents representing 48.4% are from polygynyous family structure, while none of the respondents are from polyandrous family structure. It shows that 6 respondents representing 1.5% have no formal education, 31 respondents representing 7.8% have FSLC, 209 respondents representing 53.0% have SSCE, 93 respondents representing 23.5% have either of OND or NCE, 53 respondents representing 13.4% have either of B.SC or HND, 3 respondents representing 0.8% have either of M.SC or PHD. And it shows that 307 respondents representing 77.7% are students, 12 respondents representing 3.0% are civil servants, 21 respondents representing 5.3% are traders, while 55 respondents representing 14.0% are artisans.

Table 2: Causes of police brutality, extra-judicial killings and Ends SARS violent movement

Field work 2024 (N=395)

Variables	**SA**	**A**	**U**	**D**	**SD**
Poor remuneration	189 (47.8%)	106 (26.8%)	8 (2.0%)	55 (14.0%)	37 (9.45%)

lack of compliance to police order	92 (23.3%)	189 (47.8%)	9 (2.3%)	49 (12.4%)	56 (14.2%)
Untamed use of power by the police	89 (22.5%)	211 (53.4%)	17 (4.3%)	62 (15.7%)	16 (4.1%)
Confrontation of police personnel	34 (8.6%)	54 (13.7%)	32 (8.1%)	97 (24.5%)	178 (45.1%)
Excesses of the police personnel	78 (19.7%)	209 (52.9%)	19 (4.8%)	54 (13.7%)	35 (8.9%)

Causes of Police Brutality, Extra-Judicial Killings, and the End SARS Violent Movement

The data presented in Table 2 highlight respondents' perspectives on the underlying factors contributing to police brutality and extra-judicial killings, as well as the causes of the End SARS violent movement.

Regarding whether police brutality is linked to poor remuneration of police personnel by the government, 189 respondents (47.8%) strongly agreed, 106 respondents (26.8%) agreed, 8 respondents (2.0%) were undecided, 55 respondents (14.0%) disagreed, and 37 respondents (9.4%) strongly disagreed. This distribution indicates that the majority of participants believe that inadequate salaries and welfare packages for law enforcement officers significantly contribute to their violent conduct.

On the question of whether police brutality results from civilians' failure to comply with police orders, 92 respondents (23.3%) strongly agreed, 189 respondents (47.8%) agreed, 9 respondents (2.3%) were undecided, 49 respondents (12.4%) disagreed, and 56 respondents (14.2%) strongly disagreed. These findings suggest that lack of compliance with police instructions is perceived by many as another factor that can trigger acts of brutality.

In relation to extra-judicial killings and the unchecked use of power by police personnel, 89 respondents (22.5%) strongly agreed, 211 respondents (53.45%) agreed, 17 respondents (4.3%) were undecided, 62 respondents (15.7%) disagreed, and 16 respondents (4.1%) strongly disagreed. This shows that a large portion of respondents believe that the misuse of authority by security operatives plays a critical role in extra-judicial killings.

However, when asked whether frequent confrontations between civilians and police officers are responsible for extra-judicial killings, only 34 respondents (8.6%) strongly agreed, 54 respondents (13.7%) agreed, 32 respondents (8.1%) were undecided, 97 respondents (24.5%) disagreed, and 178 respondents (45.1%) strongly disagreed. This pattern suggests that the majority of respondents do not attribute such killings to civilian confrontations.

Finally, the survey examined whether the violent dimension of the End SARS movement was caused by the government's failure to regulate police excesses. Here, 78 respondents (19.7%) strongly agreed, 209 respondents (52.9%) agreed, 19 respondents (4.8%) were undecided, 54 respondents (13.7%) disagreed, and 35 respondents (8.9%) strongly disagreed. The findings indicate a strong consensus that weak oversight and lack of accountability within the security sector were major triggers of the 2020 End SARS protests.

Variables	SA	A	U	D	SD
Resistance to the police brutality	208 (52.7%)	178 (45.1%)	5 (1.3%)	3 (0.7%)	1 (0.2%)
Attack to the extra-judicial killings	295 (74.7%)	56 (14.2%)	0 (0%)	24 (6.1%)	20 (5.0%)
Calling public attention	189 (47.8%)	178 (45.1%)	8 (2.0%)	13 (3.3%)	7 (1.8%)
Seeking redress on their right	156 (39.5%)	193 (48.9%)	15 (3.8%)	12 (3.0%)	19 (4.8%)

In summary, the results underscore that poor remuneration, misuse of power by the police, and inadequate government regulation are key drivers of police brutality, extra-judicial killings, and the escalation of the End SARS movement. Conversely, frequent confrontation by civilians was largely not viewed as a major contributing factor.

Table 3: Ways non-adherence to police professional ethics triggered End-SARS violent movement

Field work 2024 (N=395)

Ways non-adherence to police professional ethics triggered End-SARS violent

Variables	SA	A	U	D	SD
Profiling based on ethnicity, religion, or socio-economic status	98 (24.8%)	88 (22.3%)	65 (16.5%)	78 (19.7%)	66 (16.7%)
Uphold the law and pressure to prioritize political interests	125 (31.6%)	109 (27.6%)	43 (10.9%)	36 (9.1%)	82 (20.8%)
Corruption and bribery over honesty and integrity	190 (48.1%)	171 (43.3%)	0 (0%)	21 (5.3%)	13 (3.3%)
Dependency and non-transparent	183 (46.3%)	129 (32.7%)	20 (5.1%)	45 (11.4%)	18 (4.5%)
Executing individuals outside the judicial process	200 (50.6%)	100 (25.3%)	0 (0%)	47 (11.9%)	48 (12.2%)

Table 3 above shows respondents' opinion on whether the youth began EndSARS movement as a form of resistance to the police brutality. 208 respondents representing 52.7% strongly agreed, 178 respondents representing 45.1% agreed, 5 respondents representing 1.3% are undecided, and 3 respondents representing 0.7% disagreed while 1 respondent representing 0.2% strongly disagreed. From the result we deduce that the youth began EndSARS movement as a form of resistance to the police brutality. The table shows respondents' opinion on whether the youth began EndSARS movement as a counter attack to the extra-judicial killings by the police. 295 respondents representing 74.7% strongly agreed, 56 respondents representing 14.2 agreed, none of the respondents are undecided,

and 24 respondents representing 6.1% disagreed while 20 respondents representing 5.0% strongly disagreed. From the results we can observe that the youth began EndSARS movement as a counter attack to the extra-judicial killings by the police.

The table also shows respondents' opinion on whether the youth began EndSARS movement as a way of calling public attention to the police extra-judicial killings. 189 respondents representing 47.8% strongly agreed, 178 respondents representing 45.1% agreed, 8 respondents representing 2.0% arte undecided, and 13 respondents representing 3.3% disagreed while 7 respondents representing 1.8% strongly disagreed. From the result above, we understand that the youth began EndSARS movement as a way of calling public attention to the police extra-judicial killings. The table equally displayed respondents' opinion on whether the youth began EndSARS movement as a way of seeking redress on their right to life denied them through extra-judicial killings. 156 respondents representing 39.5% strongly agreed, 193 respondents representing 48.9% agreed, 15 respondents representing 3.8% are undecided, and 12 respondents representing 3.0% disagreed while 19 respondents representing 4.8% strongly disagreed. From the result above we can conclude that the youth began EndSARS movement as a way of seeking redress on their right to life denied them through extra-judicial killings.

Table 4: Ethical dilemmas on police operations in Nigeria and its impact on public perceptions of police force in Nigeria

Field work 2024 (N=395)

Ethical dilemmas on police operations in Nigeria and its impact on public perceptions of police force in Nigeria

Table 4 above shows respondents' opinion on whether ethical dilemmas arise when police engage in profiling based on ethnicity, religion, or socio-economic status. 98 respondents representing 24.8% strongly agreed, 88 respondents representing 22.3% agreed, 65 respondents representing 16.5% are undecided, and 78 respondents representing 19.7% disagreed while 66 respondents representing 16.7% strongly disagreed. From the result we observe that ethical dilemmas arise when police engage in profiling based on ethnicity, religion, or socio-economic status. The table also shows respondents' opinion on whether ethical dilemmas arise when the police must choose between their duties to uphold the law and pressure to prioritize political interests. 125 respondents representing 31.6% strongly agreed, 109 respondents representing 27.6% agreed, 43 respondents representing 10.9% are undecided, and 36 respondents representing 9.1% disagreed while 82 respondents representing 20.8 strongly disagreed. From the result we understood that ethical dilemmas arise when the police must choose between their duties to uphold the law and pressure to prioritize political interests.

The table portrayed respondents' opinion on whether ethical dilemmas arise when police are placed to choose between corruption and bribery over honesty and integrity that should guide law enforcement. 190 respondents representing 48.1% strongly agreed 171 respondents representing 43.3% agreed, none are undecided, and 21 respondents representing 5.3% disagreed while 13 respondents representing 3.3% strongly disagreed. From the result we can deduce that ethical dilemmas arise when police are placed to choose between corruption and bribery over honesty and integrity that should guide law enforcement. The table displayed respondents' opinion on whether ethical concerns arise when police investigations into misconduct are not independent and transparent, leading to a lack of accountability. 183 respondents representing 46.3% strongly agreed, 129 respondents representing 32.7% agreed, 20 respondents representing 5.1% are undecided, and 45 respondents representing 11.4% disagreed while 18 respondents representing 4.5% strongly disagreed. From the result we observe that ethical concerns arise when police investigations into misconduct are not independent and transparent, leading to a lack of accountability.

Finally, the table shows respondents' opinion on whether the prevalence of extra-judicial killings, where police officers execute individuals outside the judicial process, is a grave ethical issue. 200

respondents representing 50.6% strongly agreed 100 respondents representing 25.3% agreed, none are undecided, and 47 respondents representing 11.9% disagreed while 48 respondents representing 12.2% strongly disagreed. From the result we observe that the prevalence of extra-judicial killings, where police officers execute individuals outside the judicial process, is a grave ethical issue.

Hypothesis testing

Hypothesis one:

H_0 There is no significant relationship between police brutality, extra-judicial killings and End-SARS violent movement in Nigeria

Table 6: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	40.307[a]	3	.000
Likelihood Ratio	41.290	3	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	12.433	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	395		

a. 1 cells (12.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.12.

H_1 There is a significant relationship between police brutality, extra-judicial killings and Ends SARS violent movement in Nigeria

The table above displays the result of the Chi-Square analysis to test the claim that there is no significant relationship between police brutality, extra-judicial killings and Ends SARS violent movement in Nigeria. From the result obtained, the p-value (0.000) is found to be lesser than the level of significance (0.05), thus we reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between police brutality, extra-judicial killings and Ends SARS violent movement in Nigeria

Decision rule: reject null hypothesis if X^2=40.307, DF=3 and p-value (0.000) is lesser than 0.05; we then conclude by accepting the alternate hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between police brutality, extra-judicial killings and Ends SARS violent movement in Nigeria.

Hypothesis two:

H_0 There is no significant relationship between non-adherence to police professional ethics and End-SARS violent movement in Nigeria

H_1 There is a significant relationship between non-adherence to police professional ethics and End-SARS violent movement in Nigeria

Table 6: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1055.409[a]	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	608.468	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	346.609	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	395		

a. 12 cells (60.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .00.

The table above displays the Pearson Chi-square analysis to test the null hypothesis (H_0) that there is no significant relationship between non-adherence to police professional ethics and End-SARS violent movement in Nigeria. From the result obtained, the p-value (0.000) was found to be less than the level of significance (0.05), thus we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a significant relationship between non-adherence to police professional ethics and End-SARS violent movement in Nigeria.

Decision: from the above, since X^2=1055.409, DF=9 and p-value (0.000) is less than 0.05, thus we reject the null hypothesis and conclude by accepting the alternate hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between non-adherence to police professional ethics and End-SARS violent movement in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

This study examined the immediate causes of police brutality, extra-judicial killings, and the EndSARS violent movement in Nigeria. Findings revealed that police brutality is primarily driven by poor remuneration of police personnel, civilians' non-compliance with police directives, and the excessive use of force by law enforcement officers. Additionally, the EndSARS movement was triggered by the government's failure to effectively regulate police misconduct. These findings align with Akinyetun and Shola (2021), who argued that the inability of the Nigerian government and the Police Service Commission to prosecute officers who violate citizens' rights perpetuates impunity. If erring officers were adequately sanctioned or prosecuted, such deterrence could prevent future violations. Victims of police brutality have often reported that officers threaten them with statements such as, *"I will waste you and nothing will happen,"* reflecting a deep-seated culture of impunity within the force.

Furthermore, the study revealed that police brutality and extra-judicial killings were central triggers of the EndSARS movement. Nigerian youths, burdened by years of frustration and systemic oppression, organized the movement as a collective response to police violence and to demand justice for victims of unlawful killings. This finding supports Nnadozie (2020), who contended that the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) exceeded its legal mandate by arresting individuals accused of non-violent crimes such as financial and economic fraud, which fall under the jurisdiction of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). Similarly, Kazeem (2020) reported that SARS officers frequently established illegal roadblocks, conducted unauthorized searches, detained individuals without warrants, extorted money, and sexually harassed women. Consistent with these reports, Amnesty International (2020) documented in its June 2020 special report that detainees in SARS custody were subjected to severe torture methods, including mock executions, beatings, near-asphyxiation, and sexual violence.

The study also identified a range of ethical dilemmas in police operations that impede reform. These dilemmas arise when officers engage in ethnic, religious, or socio-economic profiling, or when they

must choose between enforcing the law and yielding to political pressure. Corruption and bribery also present major ethical conflicts, eroding public trust in the police. Moreover, the lack of transparency and independence in investigating police misconduct fosters impunity. These findings corroborate the observations of Human Rights Watch (2019), which noted that extra-judicial executions by police officers constitute severe ethical violations. The absence of accountability mechanisms fuels public outrage and weakens institutional legitimacy. Similarly, Transparency International (2021) highlighted that pervasive corruption within the Nigerian Police Force undermines professionalism and obstructs reform efforts. Addressing these ethical challenges requires systemic restructuring, enhanced oversight, and the establishment of independent investigative bodies.

Finally, hypothesis testing established significant relationships between police brutality, extra-judicial killings, and the EndSARS violent movement in Nigeria. Likewise, there was a significant correlation between non-adherence to police professional ethics and the escalation of the EndSARS protests.

Conclusion

The EndSARS movement in Nigeria's Fourth Republic exposed the intricate link between political economy, police brutality, and human rights violations. The violent incidents that accompanied the protests underscored systemic weaknesses in governance, law enforcement, and accountability. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive institutional reforms, effective accountability systems, and a sustained commitment to human rights protection.

The movement illuminated how economic inequality, governance failure, and social discontent converge to sustain state violence. Through a political economy lens, it becomes evident that police abuse and human rights violations are symptoms of deeper structural inequities. The overreach of security forces, coupled with economic hardship and systemic corruption, exacerbates citizens' vulnerability and erodes democratic values.

Ultimately, the lessons of the EndSARS movement must serve as a catalyst for lasting transformation. Achieving a just, equitable, and inclusive society demands collective efforts from the government, civil society, and the citizenry. Only through transparency, accountability, and respect for human dignity can Nigeria build a democracy that truly protects and empowers all its citizens.

Recommendations

The following recommendations, if implemented holistically, could foster accountability, enhance professionalism in law enforcement, and promote respect for human rights:

1. Police Reform and Training

The government should institute comprehensive police reforms emphasizing continuous training on human rights, community policing, de-escalation techniques, and ethical conduct. Incorporating modern policing methodologies will strengthen professionalism and accountability.

2. Enhanced Accountability Mechanisms

Independent oversight bodies should be established to monitor police activities, investigate human rights violations, and prosecute offenders. Transparent disciplinary procedures are essential to restore public confidence in law enforcement institutions.

3. Economic Empowerment and Social Investment

To address underlying socio-economic grievances, the government should implement inclusive economic policies that promote job creation, education, and equitable access to healthcare. Reducing economic inequality will help mitigate factors that fuel social unrest.

4. Citizen Participation and Advocacy

Institutionalized platforms should be created to facilitate citizen engagement in policy formulation and governance. Strengthening civil society organizations and promoting open dialogue between citizens and the government are essential for

sustainable democratic accountability.

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